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LATE-MEDIEVAL  
PRISON WRITING AND  
THE POLITICS OF  
AUTOBIOGRAPHY



*Joanna Summers*

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# Late-Medieval Prison Writing and the Politics of Autobiography

JOANNA SUMMERS

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*For my mother, husband, and son:*

MADLINE, TONY, and THOMAS

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## Preface

Boethius's *Consolation of Philosophy* has long been taken as one of the seminal works of the Middle Ages, yet despite the study of many aspects of the *Consolation's* influence, the legacy of the figure of the writer in prison has not been explored. Equally, despite the flourishing of prisons in the later Middle Ages, and the increase in texts purported to have been written in prison, this aspect of late-medieval literature remains overlooked. In answer to this, what follows is the study of a group of late-medieval texts that demonstrate the ways in which the imprisoned writer is presented, both within and outside the Boethian tradition. These are: Thomas Usk's *Testament of Love*, James I of Scotland's *The Kingis Quair*, Charles d'Orléans's *English Book of Love*, George Ashby's *A Prisoner's Reflections*, *The Testimony of William Thorpe*, *The Trial of Richard Wyche*, and Sir Thomas Malory's *Le Morte Darthur*. Several of the texts remain neglected, others are well known, yet in each case scant or no consideration at all has been given to the presentation of the author's imprisoned identity and his motive for this. Certainly such authors and their texts have not been considered before as a group; nor has the question been asked whether they form a genre of early autobiographical prison literature.

Each of the authors I discuss inscribes himself and his imprisoned situation within his text. I examine, therefore, how far each text invites a reading as autobiography, with discussion incorporating the available modes of self-construction and the varying types of first-person narrators at this time. Each chapter also considers the ways in which the creation of an autobiographical identity is achieved partly through intertextual reference. Indeed, such reference appears incorporated for the purposes of a political self-presentation, as opposed to simply literary aesthetics, or formal or philosophical considerations. Here the texts of Boethius, Chaucer, and Gower are particularly pertinent.

I also examine the textual relationship between universal concerns and the individual—whether in the professed concern with imprisonment as a collective ontological state, in actual fact, the specific and literal, rather than the allegorical or anagogical, remains foremost and does so for political and pragmatic reasons, primarily



relating to the intended audience of each author. My argument therefore is predominantly concerned with whether the self-presentation of each author has a motivation of self-justification or self-promotion, leading to a manipulation of historical evidence for political ends, as the persuasion of the audience—whether this is envisaged as coterie, patron, heretical sect, or opponent—is effected through the manipulation of these devices. My primary aim, therefore, has been to demonstrate the impact of persecution and imprisonment upon the mode of self-presentation, and to focus, therefore, upon the underlying political motivation.

In writing this book my debts of gratitude are many. I would like to thank the Arts and Humanities Research Board of the British Academy for providing me with the funding for my doctoral research. I would also like to thank the Department of Special Collections at Glasgow University Library for their kind permission to use the illustration from MS Hunter 374, fo. 4, for the jacket picture.

My academic debts are many. My greatest debt, however, and most heartfelt thanks are to Professor Anne Hudson, who supervised my doctoral research, upon which this book is based. I really cannot thank her enough for her encouragement, and her unfailing generosity with her time and suggestions.

I also thank my close friends and colleagues in Oxford and my family too for their unfailing encouragement, most especially my mother and my husband for their patience and unstinting support, without which this book would not have been possible.

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# Abbreviations

App.	Appendix
BD	<i>The Book of the Duchess</i>
BL	British Library
Bo.	<i>Boece</i>
Bodl.	Bodleian
CA	<i>Confessio Amantis</i>
CCR	<i>Calendar of Close Rolls</i>
CPR	<i>Calendar of Patent Rolls</i>
CT	<i>The Canterbury Tales</i>
CUL	Cambridge University Library
EETS	Early English Text Society
os	(Original Series)
es	(Extra Series)
EHR	<i>English Historical Review</i>
ELH	<i>English Literary History</i>
IMEV	<i>The Index of Middle English Verse</i>
JEH	<i>Journal of Ecclesiastical History</i>
KnT	<i>The Knight's Tale</i>
LGW	<i>The Legend of Good Women</i>
MED	<i>Middle English Dictionary</i>
Met.	Metrum
ns	New Series
OED	<i>Oxford English Dictionary</i>
ParsT	<i>Parson's Tale</i>
PF	<i>The Parliament of Fowls</i>
PMLA	<i>Publications of the Modern Language Association of America</i>
PP	<i>Piers Plowman</i>
pr.	prosa
Prol.	Prologue
RP	<i>Rotuli Parliamentorum</i>
SHR	<i>Scottish Historical Review</i>
TC	<i>Troilus and Criseyde</i>
TL	<i>Testament of Love</i>
VC	<i>Vox Clamantis</i>
WBT	<i>The Wife of Bath's Tale</i>

# Introduction

Throughout literary history there is a tradition that has joined imprisonment and writing. Ovid, Seneca, St Paul, Boethius, St Perpetua, even Marco Polo, turned to written expression during incarceration or exile.<sup>1</sup> In English literature, however, it is not until the sixteenth century that literary composition and incarceration are traditionally understood as enriching one another, in the works of authors such as Sir Thomas Wyatt, Henry Howard Earl of Surrey, and Sir Thomas More, all famously imprisoned within the Tower of London.<sup>2</sup> Yet, in the preceding centuries, several texts connect writing and imprisonment. These are: Thomas Usk's *Testament of Love*, James I of Scotland's *The Kingis Quair*, William Thorpe's *Testimony*, Richard Wyche's *Trial*, Charles d'Orléans's *English Book*, George Ashby's *A Prisoner's Reflections*, and Sir Thomas Malory's *Le Morte Darthur*. Moreover, each shares a particular

<sup>1</sup> Ovid was exiled to Tomi on the Black Sea by Augustus in AD 8. Seneca was banished to Corsica in AD 41. Both writers turned to the pen in order to aid their situations (Boardman, Griffin, and Murray 1986: 610–15, 663–4). St Paul wrote several epistles—Philippians, Philemon, Colossians, Ephesians, known as the 'Captivity Epistles'—when imprisoned at Rome awaiting trial for accusations of teaching transgression of the law (Cross and Livingstone 1997: 1234–8; Meeks 1972: 94, 102, 120–8). Boethius was imprisoned at Pavia at the will of King Theoderic following Boethius's defence of the Roman senator Albinus, who in AD 523–4 was accused of treason; in particular, he was accused by Cyprian of having written insultingly of Theoderic to officials in the entourage of Emperor Justin. Theoderic interpreted Boethius's defence of Albinus as proof that Boethius and the senate were parties to a conspiracy (Walsh 1999: pp. xvi–xx). Whilst in exile Boethius wrote *The Consolation of Philosophy*. St Perpetua, arrested in Carthage in AD 203 for refusing to perform a compulsory Roman sacrifice in honour of the Emperor, kept a prison diary whilst in captivity, a hagiographical narrative sequence of the events of her ordeal (Dronke 1984: 1–17; Petroff 1986: 70–7). Marco Polo—who on his return to Venice was imprisoned by the Genoese following a skirmish at sea—wrote the book of his travels in prison in 1295 with the help of his fellow prisoner Rustichello (Larner 1999: 46–58).

<sup>2</sup> On More see Greenblatt (1980: 25–6, 45–6, 70–3), and C. Burrow (1999: 806). On Wyatt see *ibid.* 811 and Greenblatt (1980: 115–56). On Surrey see C. Burrow (1999: 815–20).

form of combining writing and imprisonment: the autobiographical representation of the figure of the writer in prison.

The imprisonment each suffered and the texts each produced differ a good deal. Imprisonment in the later Middle Ages was not a singular experience; its harshness, and thereby the potential for written expression, depended greatly upon the status of the prisoner and the perceived political danger posed. Usk was a member of the lower bourgeoisie accused of treason; Wyche and Thorpe were accused heretics; while Ashby was a high-ranking civil servant imprisoned either for debt or for his Lancastrian sympathies, or both, the former possibly arising from the latter at a time when the Yorkists held power. Similarly, James I, d'Orléans, and Malory were, respectively, a Scottish king, a French nobleman, and an English knight. Wyche and Thorpe, as ecclesiastical prisoners, were incarcerated in bishops' prisons—archbishops, bishops, and other prelates with an episcopal jurisdiction kept their own prisons, not only for clerks, but also for laymen suspected of committing ecclesiastical offences (Babington 1971: 4; E. M. Peters 1995: 29). Usk, James I, d'Orléans, and Malory were imprisoned for a time in the Tower. Malory was also sent to Newgate prison, and Ashby was confined within the Fleet. James I and d'Orléans—as 'hostages' of high social status—were also held under house-arrest in various castles 'courtesy' of the English nobility, or even as a 'guest' of the king himself. Equally, the duration of incarceration of each varies from several months to twenty-five years.

Those held in comfort were permitted the freedom to pursue the pastimes and occupations befitting their rank, yet in some senses the 'freedom' permitted the aristocratic prisoner was not much greater than that experienced by those incarcerated in prisons, such as Newgate, and notably the Fleet, where 'wandering' became prevalent.<sup>3</sup> Those incarcerated in the Tower were more confined—it was

<sup>3</sup> From the late fourteenth century the Fleet was a fairly comfortable prison for those who could afford to pay. Accompanied by a baston, prisoners could enjoy the privilege of 'going about town', and by the fifteenth century the receiving of visitors was freely permitted, and the regulations were not overly restrictive. Those imprisoned for debt were not considered common felons; moreover, they were often of good standing in society and could 'make terms' with their gaolers. Prisoners of higher social standing were also permitted to hear Mass in neighbouring churches, and 'wandering' became prevalent for both felons and debtors (Pugh 1968: 118, 333, 336, 241–3; Babington 1971: 7, 14; R.L. Brown 1996: 4–5).

considered the most secure of prisons, garrisoned rather than kept by gaolers, and state prisoners were provided with personal guards.<sup>4</sup>

While actual physical restraint and isolation may not have been experienced by each of these authors continuously or even at all, being held at the will of others implies a shared experience of alienation: the prisoner is objected to, subject to, and opposed by others who may decide his fate. Despite, therefore, the varying forms of imprisonment suffered by each author, the differing reasons for their incarceration and, therefore, also their differing opponents and captors, there is a common denominator in their experience.

The texts of each also vary generically—from philosophical treatise, to Chaucerian poem, to heretical testimony—and also in each the apparent autobiography and presented prison situation is, in varying degrees, fictionalized. Despite this, however, the texts share much. Notably, they share a sustained concern with the careful inscription of an incarcerated narrator-author, an evident petitionary element, and the tendering of an identity that is highly persuasive to its prospective audience, often employing the situation of imprisonment—its alleged wrongfulness and the author's virtues in enduring it—in the service of such persuasion.

The individual motivation for and mode of such 'self' inscription is the central topic of the following study. The chapters here do not, therefore, primarily focus upon the nature of each author's actual imprisonment and the historical accuracy of its literary representation, nor do they evaluate the literary portrayal of incarceration, or the degree to which the manner of inscribing the topic of confinement lends itself to literary modes of analysis of an explicitly formal kind. Rather, the following chapters examine how each author's predicament of persecution and imprisonment precipitates and even prescribes the political nature of his literary self-portrayal. The circumstances of his imprisonment, the nature of his opponents or captors, and the intended readership of his text—whether this constitutes a faction of sympathizers or his captors themselves—dictate the nature of his self-inscription. He may inscribe himself as contrite and changed by his incarceration, or as thoroughly intransigent.

The discussion, therefore, focuses on the impact of persecution and incarceration upon the mode of autobiographical representa-

<sup>4</sup> See E. M. Peters (1995: 35); Pugh (1968: 176–86, 322–34); Babington (1971: 5 ff., 24); R. L. Brown (1996: p. viii); D. Wilson (1978: 10–11, 28, 38–9, 45–6).

tion, and in each case the underlying political motivation. Or to put it simply, the actual upon the fictional, and what is at stake—the possibility of a pardon, or of liberty, or of becoming regarded by his readership as a ‘martyr-hero’ for his beliefs. The political motivation in each case differs, therefore, ranging from the political in the broad sense of the word—such as the author’s self-serving, his desire to appease and appeal to his opponents and captors in order to win pardon and patronage—to the political in the specific sense of the word: to oppose further those captors and appeal to and rally a faction of readers with shared illicit beliefs. In different ways, each of the texts attempts to overturn the impotency of the author’s imprisonment—to turn it to advantage in portraying the author as ‘purified’ by the experience of incarceration, possibly to woo his opponents, or as immune to the experience to oppose them further. As such, for the following discussion, the compelling pressures of the political largely obviate formal and generic considerations.

As I discuss, Usk, James I, Ashby, Wyche, and Thorpe present an incarcerated identity that is self-justifying and self-promoting with the political design of persuading their respective intended readerships—whether this is envisaged as coterie, patron, subject, heretical sect, or opponent—to sympathize, to concede authority, to champion their cause, and even to act. Only in Orléans’s *English Book* does this relationship seem to be lacking. In the remaining texts, including Malory’s *Le Morte Darthur*, it is possible to discern a political interrelationship between imprisonment and presented identity. This symbiotic interrelationship of prison and identity, as opposed to a primary focus upon the dominance of one over the other, forms the central exploration of the following chapters.

There is an inherent credibility in writing from prison, elicited by the examples of honoured men, such as St Paul and Boethius, and the authorial identity each presents in what may be termed their prison writings—St Paul’s *Captivity Epistles* and Boethius’s *The Consolation of Philosophy*—both of which were widely known at this time. Moreover, it is likely that a medieval audience perceived imprisonment as a situation of such suffering that it evoked not simply penitence, but also petitionary confession and truth-telling, particularly given the content of contemporary legal petitions and complaints from prison. The early fifteenth-century petition of Cecily Tikell from Newgate prison, for example, beseeches her readers for help and the ‘eacynge of myn Importable payne of longe enprisonone-

ment [. . .] I praye 3ou þat 3e wolde labor and trauaile for me to I my3te Be brou3te In to þe kingesbenche and so I meinprised to go at large' (Fisher, Richardson, and Fisher 1984: 197–8). Similarly, the 1414 petition of Thomas Paunfeld of Cambridgeshire laments that he has previously pursued 'diuerse bills' before Henry IV's Parliament at Westminster in which he hoped 'to haue proued by lawe by fore the Kyng [. . .] that the processe of [his] outelawerye was vnlawefully made'. Paunfeld writes his lengthy petition to parliament from the Fleet prison, pleading to be 'remedied of the wrongs' that he has suffered (ibid. 198–204).

The mode of such documents would certainly license if not elicit the petitionary register displayed in the texts here discussed. The following chapters examine, therefore, how in addition to the traditional petitionary register, the credibility of writing from prison is an aspect assumed and exploited in the portrayal of a persuasive autobiographical identity.

Before such questions can be explored, however, it is necessary to ascertain that the first-person narrator of each text may be said to represent the author's textual identity. Narratological theory differentiates between the narrator (who speaks in the narrative), the implied or textual author (who writes), and the real, historical author (who is).<sup>5</sup> Indeed, as if anticipating such theories, authors such as Chaucer and Gower<sup>6</sup> playfully widened the potential fictional spaces between these elements by presenting the 'I' voice ironically yet also as one 'Chaucer' or 'Gower', manipulating the dissociation between author and narrator, and creating what may be termed an 'area of non-identity between the *auctor* and narrator as a site of fiction' (Weimann 1994: 83, 90). Given such well-known precedents and the sophistication of such playful fictional posturing, it is important to ascertain that such games are not at work in the texts studied here, so that without reservation, the interrelationship between the author's actual predicament and his petitionary textual identity may be unravelled. In order to proceed, therefore, in section

<sup>5</sup> Barthes (1996: 46). Booth (1983: 73) first coined the term 'implied-author' to differentiate between the author, or the writing self, that the text contains and of whom the text appears the creative work, and the author who is a historic individual whose real or private self cannot be textually contained or known from readings of his work.

<sup>6</sup> On Chaucer's ironic 'self' see: Watts (1970: 235–6); Shoaf (1983: 105); Lawton (1985: 10, 15, 47, 74–5); Kimmelman (1996: 173, 196). On Gower's, see: Farnham (1974: 172); Olsen (1990: 7); Zeeman (1991: 233).



I of each chapter, I discuss how the narrator and author are conflated, so that the texts may be said to present an autobiographical identity.

Autobiographical texts have been defined as those that *ask* to be read as autobiographical, as representative of the author himself.<sup>7</sup> I emphasize here that they ask to be read as autobiographical, rather than that they *are* autobiographical, because even if the authorial identity is portrayed without obvious irony, humour, or fiction, whether the author's presented self is a sincere mirror-image can never be known or proved, as recent theory on modern autobiography has demonstrated.<sup>8</sup> All that can be said with any certainty is that autobiographical texts are those that ask to be read as such; they require readers to suspend their disbelief and accept that the proffered narrator-author is as sincere and accurately portrayed as appears the case.

Yet in referring to late-medieval texts as autobiographical, I do not imply the notion of modern autobiography, of post-romantic psychological exploration, or of a sustained life-history. Instead I mean, as Laurence de Looze (1997: 27) argues, a genre that implies a *perception* (or *ascription* or even *reinscription*) of nominal identity between the author and the 'I' of the narrative, and invites a reading of a first-person narrative as 'sincere'—that is, as not intentionally fictive. This does not necessarily mean that an autobiography is 'sincere' or 'true',<sup>9</sup> simply that certain elements in the text invite the reader to opt for a theory of simple mimesis and, therefore, to read in a 'naïve' fashion.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>7</sup> See de Looze (1997: pp. x, 27), and his citing the concept of an 'autobiographical pact' between author and reader, set forth by Philippe Lejeune in *Le Pacte autobiographique*.

<sup>8</sup> See de Man (1979: 921 ff.); Sprinker (1980: 333); Eakin (1985: 3–27, 181–2); Carr (1986: 75–8); Evans (1998: 1–2, 26–51, 130–43).

<sup>9</sup> Rather than anecdotally true, I mean, as Kay (1990: 16) writes, 'self-representation in which discursive generality is tempered by a sense of historical specificity', or the recording of 'a particular coincidence of the intertextual with the historical' (1990: 1). However, autobiography is always in varying degrees subject to fictionality, as objective truth or fact is subordinate to the author's subjective perception. Events are inadvertently and/or deliberately fictionalized or subjectively (mis)understood, and objectivity remains elusive (de Man 1979: 921 ff.; Sprinker 1980: 333; Eakin 1985: 3–27, 181–2; Carr 1986: 75–8; Evans 1998: 1–2, 26–51, 130–43).

<sup>10</sup> De Looze (1997: 27). The genre of autobiography is, therefore, not only created by the text's 'invitation', but also by the reader's choice of whether to read as fact or fiction, as sincere or as guise—essentially, impositions of genre are inseparable from reader-response (ibid. 16–19).

An autobiographical text is one that is proffered as a consequence of the events and 'self' it describes. Yet, as critics such as Paul de Man (1979: 920) and more recently, Burt Kimmelman (1996: 5–6) have shown, in fact the text develops into producing and determining the preceding life of the author. Put simply, in reading an autobiographical text, the reader believes that the author's character and life determine what he writes, when actually, the text may be a means for the author to delineate a favourable character for himself, apprehending and exploiting the reader's belief. Given the construction in these prison texts of an autobiographical identity (a stable narrator as a literary self-projection as opposed to a playful literary device), the following chapters argue that the texts fashion a politically favourable persona, as a product of the author's predicament.

In a much-cited essay, Paul Zumthor has argued that it is doubtful that medieval autobiographies in the sense that we as modern readers understand the term ever existed. Zumthor (1973: 29) argues that while autobiography may be said to consist of 'an *I* and a narrative presented as non-fictive' this is problematic for medieval texts because the 'I'—'simultaneously the enunciator and the subject of enunciation'—is not 'personal' at this time in the way that post-Romantic modern first-person narrators are. While this may be so, the 'I' is more complex and possesses a more varied form of expression and reception than Zumthor permits, for there are a number of possible readings of the first person at this time. As Laurence de Looze (1997: 26–30) discusses, in addition to autobiography, a text may be read as 'pseudo-autobiography', 'autobiographical fiction', and 'autobiographical pseudo-fiction'. Reading as 'pseudo-autobiography' de Looze argues—as noted above with respect to Chaucer and Gower—is elicited through an author's consciously stretching the gap between poet and narrator, even though both share the same name, and allegedly the same identity. It is constituted through humour at the narrator's expense, indicating the author's censorship of his alleged textual identity. The text, therefore, refuses a reading as subjective 'truth', as positing a stable 'I' voice, representative of the author.

'Autobiographical fiction' is close to autobiography as regards the diegetic world of the 'I' narrator, yet the narrative is read as fictional. As de Looze (1997: 26–9) writes, the correspondence between Abelard and Héloïse may be read in this way if, as some literary-historians have suggested, the letters were not in fact composed by

Abelard and Héloïse, but by a third person. A disjunction between author and first-person narrator(s) is then introduced and the work becomes a form of epistolary novel. Reading a text as ‘autobiographical pseudo-fiction’ occurs in reading a text as a *roman à clef*, in refusing to enter the fictional world and remapping the text as autobiography, a form of reading popular amongst nineteenth-century critics (de Looze 1997: 30). Notable examples of this are the late nineteenth-century hypothetical biographies drawn from readings of *Pearl* (e.g. Brink 1883: 348; Gollancz 1891: pp. xlvii–xlviii).

In addition to de Looze’s taxonomies, I would add that the ‘I’ may also be read as representing the minstrel/romance ‘I-voice’, or as an allegorical first-person. The former conforms to Zumthor’s understanding of a non-personal, non-autobiographical ‘I-sign’ in medieval literature. Here the first-person narrator’s interventions ‘represent to us the projection into the text of a situation. Generally transmitted from mouth to ear (by a singer, a reciter or a public reader), the medieval poetic work possesses an enunciator who is concrete, visually perceptible . . . but who theoretically changes at every performance’ (Zumthor 1973: 32). Furthermore, the minstrel-narrator need not be physically present to enable such a reading, for many ‘minstrel romances’ were read privately, as the rich presentation of manuscripts such as Auchinleck and BL Egerton 2862, containing such works, suggests.<sup>11</sup> As such the minstrel’s performance becomes imaginatively reconstituted by the reader.

Examples of allegorical first-person texts may be found in some late-medieval ‘I’-voiced penitential religious lyrics, where the ‘I’ is anonymous, unallocated, and uncontextualized; it seems at once highly personal and emotionally expressive, and yet is also generalized, facelessly representative of Everyman, and may be assumed or ‘inhabited’ by the reader. (I do not include here lyrics where the speaker is or evolves into figures such as Mary or Jesus.) Such lyrics, for example, ‘The Vanity of Life’, in BL MS Harley 2316, fo. 25a (C. Brown 1924: 68) appear acutely personal, particularly in lamentation over past sin, fear of death, and in their *contemptus*

<sup>11</sup> See: A. Taylor (1992: 38–62); Mehl (1968: 7); Greene (1977: p. cxxxv); Green (1980: 105); Fewster (1987: 22–8); Coleman (1996: pp. xi–xii, 1–74). As early as the 1330s, in addition to the aural experience of literature, people *read* works *written* in the minstrel style. J. A. Burrow (1971: 13–14) has highlighted that some works incorporating minstrel elements must have been produced by clerks and literary men; written for both eye and ear, ‘consumption’ was varied—silent or aloud, solitary or public.

*mundi* philosophy, but this is a device for use in meditation, permitting the reader to align himself or herself with the speaker. Neither authorship nor any particular individuality of the narrator is important, which perhaps explains why so many are anonymous (Woolf 1968: 5–13, 377–9).

Furthermore, medieval texts with first-person narrators exist that bridge categories in the readings they precipitate; *Pearl* may be read as autobiographical pseudo-fiction (as noted above), as pseudo-autobiographical dream-vision (Spearing 1997: 48–50), and yet also as presenting an allegorical first-person narration.<sup>12</sup>

The above discussion is not exhaustive, but it should leave no doubt as to the complex nature of the ‘I’ of late-medieval literature. The aim of this study, however, is not to analyse the differing kinds of ‘I’-voiced narratives or to present a discussion on late-medieval autobiography *per se*, though it may contribute to the understanding of this. Rather, having established in the following chapters that the texts possess a narrator that is to be understood as representative of the author himself (the exception here is d’Orléans’s *English Book*, which, as I argue in Ch. 3, is a pseudo-autobiography), I then examine how the author’s self-presentation is shaped to impact upon his confinement and persecution.

In texts at this time, the ‘I’ presented without irony, but in a stable fashion, is usually exemplary, representative, and pedagogic. Yet while the texts studied here contain these aspects, a concern with the personal as opposed to only the exemplary, with the individual as opposed to merely the representational, and with the political as opposed to simply the pedagogic appears to dominate. This is augmented by the fact that many ‘I’-voiced exemplary and pedagogic texts remain anonymous, such as *Pearl* or the religious lyrics, whereas here the authors incorporate the particular details of their history, and moreover, nearly all the texts in question incorporate autocitation, sometimes repeatedly. Such self-particularization extends beyond the bounds of mere authorship and appropriation, or even of simply attempting to authenticate the moral value of the experience presented; as such, I argue that rather it serves the author’s situation.

Autocitation (the authorial naming of oneself) and its motivation

<sup>12</sup> As Prior (1994: 21) writes, *Pearl* is at once ‘most personal’ and ‘most conventional’, and ‘insists on an allegorical, symbolic or anagogical understanding’ in its encouragement of readers to ‘interpret the inner meaning of their experience’. See also P. Martin (1997: 316) and Watson (1997: 306).

in late-medieval literature is commonly understood as a 'kind of naming, which suggests that a poet is writing about either or both a real or fictional self . . . a poetic act that plays a role in asserting individual poetic authority through names' (Kimmelman 1996: 41). Autocitation is also perceived as a means by which medieval authors write themselves into their texts, motivated by the hope of winning patronage or 're-entry' to an offended readership. Kathryn Kerby-Fulton has defined the manifestation of a late-medieval authorial self-consciousness which attempts 'to establish, protect, or market the author'. The criteria she determines are: revelation, direct or otherwise, of authorial identity; an author's presentation of data from his '*curriculum vitae*' which might 'serve to reaffirm his reputation, or attract new patronage'; concern regarding giving offence to readers; the author's 'presence' within the text; the use of elements from the (originally monastic) tradition of *apologia*; and 'overt literary mendicancy' (Kerby-Fulton 1997: 79; see also J. A. Burrow 1984: 161–76 on petitionary literature and patronage). As such, an author's literary and social status could become elevated because of the text he had composed, complementing such pragmatic concerns. As Kimmelman (1996: 5–6) notes, 'the text made the author, not the other way around'.

Authorial naming, therefore, is of particular and unique importance in the later Middle Ages when compared to concepts of modern authorship, especially given that few medieval manuscripts have title pages or *explicit*s naming the author. An author, therefore, could name himself within the text to circumvent anonymity. Michel Foucault's assessment of authorship with respect to grammar, therefore, does not apply to medieval texts and their authorship. Foucault (1977: 123) writes: 'an author's name is not simply an element of speech (as a subject, a complement or an element that could be replaced by a pronoun or other parts of speech)'. He thereby implies that the author presents himself, or is content to be read, as residing beyond the language of the text, and distinguishes between the 'proper name' and 'the name of the author'. He writes that the 'proper name' moves 'from the interior of a discourse to the real person outside who produced it', while the 'name of the author' remains 'at the contours of texts—separating one from the other, defining their form and characterising their mode of existence' (ibid.). Yet such a distinction is inaccurate for medieval literature, for in contrast to modern authorship, during the Middle Ages the

proper noun, in 'its capacity to signify a text's author directly . . . served a historical function while, at the same time, it contributed to the author's fictional characterisation' (Kimmelman 1996: 10). Similarly, the 'authorial name . . . alludes to an exteriority without ever relinquishing its fundamental textual determination' (Hult 1986: 63).

In the texts discussed, the 'I' is frequently named, elaborated upon with biographical detail, and proffered as an individualized subject. For with the exception of the *Quair* (in which other specific means of clear identification are proffered), each author is named, in some instances repeatedly. I argue that the author's need to incorporate not only his imprisoned status, but also his specific identity when penning a text that is ostensibly presented as pedagogical, suggests that the motivation for writing is predominantly political and utilitarian rather than pedagogical.

The medieval or pre-modern author usually invokes 'the self' not as a final autonomous concern, but to illustrate wider issues (Strohm 1998: 143). As John Burrow has argued, a principal difference between modern and medieval autobiography is to be sought in authorial purpose, and he notes that, functionally considered, texts such as St Augustine's *Confessions*, and the *Monodiae* of Guibert of Nogent are confessions, while Peter Abelard's *Historia Calamitatum* is a consolation (J. A. Burrow 1982: 402). Given each author's situation when writing, the opposite appears true for these texts: universal exemplary concerns are less important than establishing the individuality and reputation of the author, and therefore, a political autobiographical representation overrides the universally didactic as a functional consideration—pedagogical considerations do not form an end in themselves, but also serve the depiction of the author.

On one level, the first-person persona of the *Testament*, the *Quair*, and the *Reflections* represents the general suffering and fate of Everyman. Furthermore, the recounting of imprisonment, the *contemptus mundi* philosophy, and the vicissitudes suffered and overcome by the first-person narrators of these three texts ostensibly reflect the concerns of Boethius's *Consolation*. Yet in the response to and reiteration of Boethian philosophy, the movement in the *Testament* and the *Quair* from the particular to the universal—a movement reflecting the exemplification of Boethius's *Consolation*—is not sustained. Both texts retain and return to an interest in the

worldly and particular situation of their authors. Similarly, in Ashby's *Reflections*, the suppression of the individualized in the poem's progression is not the final word, rather the text is concerned with returning to the author's textual identity. Similar aspects concerned with the relationship between the generalized and the individually specific are examined in relation to Thorpe's *Testimony* and Wyche's *Trial*, in particular the 'essentializing' trait of each (von Nolcken 1997: 128)—the presentation of individualized experience as 'typological'—while both texts are concurrently highly personalized. The discussion also examines the political motivation behind the continual emphasizing of the personal within the universal in these texts.

The author's textual identity is frequently constructed through comparison to literary, historical, biblical, and hagiographical exemplars, particularly those who have similarly suffered persecution and imprisonment. While in so doing the author's literary identity appears to claim an acceptable sameness and representativeness, I argue that the exemplary precedents are not simply introduced for pedagogical reasons, but rather, implicit comparisons between historical-literary precedents and an author's textual identity are introduced to serve the favourable reception of the author. In particular, through the allusion to biblical and hagiographic narratives, particularly those of incarceration and persecution, Wyche and Thorpe can present themselves as hagiographic or Christlike individuals, claiming an authority and righteousness that is politically advantageous in its undermining of the authority of the Church, and in the claim it stakes for Wyche and Thorpe as models to be championed and even emulated by fellow Lollard readers. Similarly, Usk, James I, and Ashby, through allusion to the *Consolation*, present themselves as Boethian figures, redeploying for political reasons the honourable reputation of Boethius to create a self-presentation intended to be attractive to their respective readerships: royal faction and coterie, the Scottish court, and patron protector.

In order to explore the latter possibility, it is necessary here to preempt such discussion with an examination of the late-medieval reception of the Boethian persona of the *Consolation*, and how Boethius came to be seen as a hagiographic figure. The *Consolation* was one of the seminal texts of the later Middle Ages. More than a hundred manuscripts survive in Britain and Ireland of the Latin alone, testifying to the inordinate popularity of the work (Gibson,

Smith and Ziegler 1995: 22–3). Throughout the period, the increasing focus upon the author himself, and the corresponding intensification of the significance of authorial moral worth, elicited the importance of Boethius as an exemplary individual.<sup>13</sup> Furthermore, Boethius's *Consolation* formed an evolving tradition rather than a fixed text, largely precipitated by the intensely personal, moral response that the text evoked in its readers; it was the focus of continual revision, translation and explication throughout the medieval period (Machan 1989: 155). Its Latin commentary-tradition dates from the early ninth century to the late fifteenth, and expands upon the biographical aspect of the text. The commentary tradition was influenced by the assorted *vitae* of Boethius that began to circulate early in the Middle Ages, many of which are found in the extant manuscripts of the *Consolation* (Gibson, Smith and Ziegler 1995: 12–15, 22–3 provide a succinct overview), and which became incorporated into vernacular translations. Of note in this respect is King Alfred's Old English translation, dated c. 890 (ibid. 18), which remained known into the fourteenth century—Nicholas Trevet claims to have known Alfred's translation (Donaghey 1987: 17). A selection of the various *vitae* of Boethius have been printed by Rudolph Peiper; his *vita* VI, for example, mentions Pavia (Papua) as the place of Boethius's burial, but moreover, it refers to his sainthood: 'Boetius autem honorifice tumulatus est papie in cripta ecclesie. et uocatur sanctus seuerinus. a prouintialibus . . .' ('Boethius was honourably buried in the crypt of the church of Pavia, and is called Saint Severinus by the provincials . . .') (Peiper 1871: p. xxxv. *In libro Rehdigeriano* S IV 3a. 48 fo. 32<sup>v</sup>, *margini adita* m.s.XIII).

The medieval view of Boethius was one that iterated his humanity, his Christianity, his 'martyrdom', and his sainthood. To King Alfred—who prefaced his famous Old English rendering of the *Consolation* with a brief account of Boethius's life—Boethius was a martyr 'who sought to restore the country to an orthodox ruler,

<sup>13</sup> In the scholastic-commentary tradition, the growing importance placed upon the author as the 'efficient cause' equalled an upsurge of interest in, and emphasis upon, the life of the *auctor* and his moral standing (Minnis 1988: 94, 103, 112, 143). With the rise in interest in Boethius as an individual, commentators laboriously expounded each element of the title *Anicii Malii Severini Boetii ex magno officio viri clarissimi et illustris exconsulum ordine atque patricio liber philosophicae consolationis primus incipit. Severinus*, for example, was said to refer to the severity of Boethius's judgments, while *Boethius* was explicated as from a Greek word that may be interpreted as 'the helper and consoler of many' (ibid. 20).



while Theodoric was the tyrant working manifold evils against martyrdom' (Patch 1935: 13). The human quality of the *Consolation* was accountable for much of its appeal to medieval Europe; Boethius became 'medievalized', both in his portrayal in the prefaces to the translations or commentaries, and through the biographical story that develops in the work—as a Christian martyr, as hero rather than victim (Kaylor 1983: 125). John Walton's *De Consolatione Philosophiae* augments such an interpretation:

This kyng of Rome þan Theodorik  
 Was full of malice and of cursidnesse,  
 And eek for cause he was an heretyk  
 Þe Christen peple gan he sore oppresse.  
 Boecius with his besynesse  
 Wipstode hym evire, sparynge none offence,  
 And hym presente ful often tyme expresse  
 Reuersed [h]is vnlawefull iuggements. (Science 1927: 7)

The early recognition of the story of Boethius as legend is demonstrated by the first known document in Provençal (c.1000), which is the earliest story of Boethius in a Romance language to be found. Its content roughly parallels the *Consolation*, but its main preoccupation is with presenting a hagiographic account of Boethius's death at the hands of Theodoric (Kaylor 1983: 125–6). Later, usually French, examples of the biographical trend abound. In an anonymous Burgundian work, for example—the first translated into French and the oldest of the three known prose translations of the thirteenth century—the biographical aspect becomes encyclopedic (ibid. 129–30), while the prologue to the fourteenth-century Picard verse-translation displays a focus on Boethius's moral qualities and his life (Atkinson 1987: 36). Boethius, therefore, was viewed in the Middle Ages as a Christian saint, a sainthood which seems indirectly affirmed when Chaucer in the *Retraction* writes: 'But of the translation of Boece de Consolacione, and othere bookes of legendes of seints, and omelies, and moralitee, and devocioun that thanke I oure Lord Jhesu Crist and his blisful Mooder, and alle the seintes of hevene' (Benson and Robinson 1988: 328). As Minnis and Machan (1993: 167) write: 'Boethius very much belongs in this passage devoted to the 'seintes', since he had been canonized as 'Saint Severinus'.

The commentaries of both Trevet and William of Conches show a consistent Christianizing of Boethius—Trevet's commentary, for

example, contains strikingly Augustinian reminiscences of the soul yearning for God, reaching him only if proper *contemptus mundi* is practised (Donaghey 1987: 25–9). The Christianizing aspect is displayed in an illustration within an extant medieval French translation (Bibl. Mun., Rouen, MS 3045, fo. 94), depicting the ascent of Boethius, and his being conducted to heaven by Lady Philosophy (Dwyer 1976: 28 reproduces this). The Christianizing influence is also seen in the medieval rendering of the ‘laddres’ (Benson 1988: 398) depicted on Philosophy’s robe, linking the Greek letter Pi on the bottom of her hem to the Greek letter Theta at the top, and which represent respectively practical and contemplative philosophy. Incorporating material from the glosses, Book I, Prosa I of Chaucer’s *Boece* depicts this as a: ‘Grekissch P (that signifieth the lif actif); and aboven that lettre, in the heieste bordure, a Grekissch T (that signifieth the lif contemplatif)’ (ibid.). In the reworking of Book I of Chaucer’s *Boece* in Bodl. Oxford, MS Auct. F.3.5, this Christian interpretation is greatly elaborated. The degrees of ascendance on the stairs of Philosophy’s robe are given an extended and detailed Christianized rendering:<sup>14</sup> ‘The furste degre is that he enforme his owne soule to goode lyf and honest. The secunde set to travayle be goode ensample and techynge to profite thy neybore. The thrydde w’drawe frele men with lawful blamyng fro vycyous lyf, and w’ vertuous governaunce demeene hem and stable hem in vertuous levyng’ (ibid. fo. 202<sup>r</sup>).

In the *accessus* to this version, Boethius’s importance and moral worth are referred to: ‘a boke oweth worthily to be hadde in prise, chargede and lovede aftur the worthinesse of his auctor. . .’ (ibid. 198<sup>r</sup>). The prologue witnesses the importance of the *nomen auctoris*: ‘the authour of this forsaide boke was callide by dyvers names and that for gret praisynge of hym . . . Ffurst he was callide Annycius, for he myt no3t be bowed fro ri3twisness nether by prise ne be perier. He was callide Bois that is on Engelisch an helper for he halp evere pore men in her ry3t and nede. He was callide Severyne, and that as men sais was his *propir* name’ (ibid.). It also contains a *vita auctoris*,

<sup>14</sup> As Machan (1989: 157), writes: ‘[the] conception of a text as something fluid does reach an apogee of sorts among the Boethian manuscripts’. He notes that Bodl. MS Auct. F.3.5 is ‘a revision of Book I which supplements Chaucer’s text with lengthy philosophical and cosmological clarifications and which in no way recognizes Chaucer’s “authorship”, so that the text which Chaucer transformed into something Boethius would not recognize is transformed again’.

emphasizing Boethius's virtue, describing how 'he was falsly forjugged and put in exile to papy and in harde and foul prisoun . . . oppressed with myscomfort that fortunes adversite had sent to him . . . in the foule place of his prisoun' (ibid. 198<sup>v</sup>).

Whilst many Middle English poets may not necessarily have had first-hand experience of the *Consolation*, the text's influence was pervasive and profound, particularly in its ideological and formal reverberations transmitted by such widely known works as Alanus's *De Planctu Naturae* and the *Roman de la Rose*. Michael D. Cherniss traces the 'profound, but not always obvious' influence of the *Consolation* in terms of its philosophy, structure, and form, from Alanus's text, via the *Rose*, to Gower's *Confessio Amantis*, Chaucer's dream visions, and finally to Henryson's verse. Cherniss (1987: 5) notes that several authors 'have certainly had direct contact with Boethius's great book, but others may have absorbed Boethius's influence at one or more removes from their original source'. Cherniss (1987: 16) is largely concerned with the legacy of interplay between first-person narrator and 'consoler-instructress', often including a first-person narrator's lament against Fortune, and particularly within the dream-vision genre. Other critics reveal an interest in the utilization of Boethian philosophy, whether within Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*, or within the *De Casibus* tradition of advice-to-princes literature.<sup>15</sup> However, specific focus upon a further Boethian legacy, that of the imprisoned self within a reiteration of *contemptus mundi* philosophy is notably lacking, as is any discussion of the politically advantageous aspects of such a literary redeployment.

The above-quoted reference to Boethius's suffering imprisonment 'in harde and foul prisoun' (Bodl. Oxford, MS Auct. F.3.5 fo. 198<sup>v</sup>) rather than simply exile, is worth noting. While it appears that within the *Consolation* Boethius does not explicitly refer to himself as languishing in a prison, it seems that in the medieval textual tradition, this was how his situation was understood. Several of the *vitae* specifically refer to Boethius as being placed within a prison or dungeon, notably Peiper's *vitae* I, II, and VI (Peiper 1871: pp. xxx–

<sup>15</sup> For *Troilus* see Grady (1999: 230–51), and Utz (1996: 29–32). For Boethius and the advice-to-princes tradition, particularly Lydgate, see Lawton (1987: 761–99). For the influence of Boethian philosophy upon Gower and other works of Chaucer see: Weatherbee (1991: 7–35); Thundy (1995: 91–109); Yager (1995: 77–89). Some of the medieval reverberations of Boethius's text are included in the early surveys of Patch (1927; 1935), and later in Courcelle (1967).

xxxv), which remain extant in a number of manuscripts.<sup>16</sup> Furthermore, the preface to Alfred's version states: 'cruel King Theodoric . . . commanded that Boethius be thrust into a dungeon and kept fast therein', and later mentions that 'in the prison' Boethius 'could find no comfort' (Sedgefield 1899: 2, 7). Additionally, it appears that a prison is intimated in the contemptuous reference to 'this place' in Jean de Meun's and Chaucer's vernacular translations. In Book I, Prosa IV, de Meun has: 'Ne te esmeut nient la face meismes de cest lieu? Est ce ci l'aumaire des livres que tu meismes avoies esleué tres certain siege a toy en nos mesons' (Dedeck-Héry 1952: 177). Chaucer similarly writes: 'Ne moeveth it nat the to seen the face or the manere of this place? Is this the librariye which that thou haddest chosen for a ryght certein sege to the in myn hous' (Benson and Robinson 1988: 401).

This assumption that Boethius was imprisoned is no doubt due to the text's reiteration of a figurative confinement that came to be read concomitantly as literal—indeed it may have been, it is simply that Boethius himself nowhere specifically states that he is incarcerated, but only exiled. The *Consolation* invokes a figurative incarceration in the Platonic sense of the human soul or psyche's imprisonment within the body.<sup>17</sup> As Anna Crabbe writes, the *Consolation* posits 'the situation of the unenlightened soul, imprisoned by an earthly body and material circumstances, in exile from its true home, far from light, without real freedom and at the beck and call of human tyranny . . . Freedom, for the soul of the philosopher, [Philosophy] argues, is there for the taking. Chains and imprisonment, if they exist, are self-imposed' (Crabbe 1981: 241–2).

The *Consolation's* specific fusing of its narrator's imprisonment with a philosophy concerning the nature of fortune is also witnessed occasionally in late-medieval literature. Two principal examples are the mid-fourteenth-century French *Liber Fortunae*, in which an unjustly imprisoned narrator laments his situation only to be visited

<sup>16</sup> Notably BL MS Egerton 628 (xiii 2/2), Bodl. MS Auct. F.6.5 (c.1130–40), and Bodl. MS Digby 174 (ix/xii)—*Vita* I; BL MS Harley 3095 (ix)—*Vita* I and II; and CUL MS Dd. 6.6 (xii/3)—*Vita* VI. See Gibson, Smith, and Ziegler (1995).

<sup>17</sup> In deploying the Platonic metaphor, Boethius was indebted to Neoplatonist philosophers such as Plotinus and Proclus. See Walsh (1999: pp. xxv–xxvi) for a comprehensive discussion. The image of the prison as an expression for the bondage of earthly existence is expressed in biblical and classical sources through Virgil, Macrobius, and St Paul—an expression where, within and outside the Christian tradition, the body is described as the prison of the soul (Margolis 1978: 185–6, and Göller 1990: 121–45).

and lectured by the goddess Fortuna in a dream (Cherniss 1987: 74 provides a brief discussion of this text), and the speeches of the imprisoned Arcite and Palamon in the first part of Chaucer's *Knight's Tale*. In the light of such instances, and given that within the *vitae* and the commentary tradition the biographical aspect of the *Consolation* appears to have been as important as the philosophical one, the following discussion examines how the biographical aspect was redeployed by several vernacular autobiographical texts composed from prison. The legacy of Boethius's imprisoned self and the late-medieval understanding of the *Consolation* as presenting an autobiographical account of an honourable public servant, and near-hagiographic figure, are, therefore, discussed in relation to the *Testament*, the *Quair*, and the *Reflections*. I argue that the authors of these texts invite comparisons between Boethius and their authorial identities, and that Boethius's *Consolation*, therefore, becomes an autobiographical model. Moreover, I examine each author's political motivation for introducing this model.

Each text expresses and defines the author's literary self intertextually, both in response to the readings of other persecuted and imprisoned hagiographic figures, from Job, to Christ, to St Paul, to Boethius, and also through the incorporation of discourse from and allusions to other authors—Boethius, Chaucer, and Gower. While this intertextuality may appear to undermine the primacy of each author's individualized self-presentation, my discussion analyses how the authority of each textual identity is presented not only as claimed by experience 'lived', but also by experience 'learned' or read. Several of the authors even express autobiographical experience in terms of another author's literary composition. I examine this intertextuality, and argue that there is a political motivation behind such authorial self-construction through the use of other texts, particularly those of contemporary authors such as Gower and Chaucer.

Intertextuality, or the dependence on prior discourses, has frequently been seen as overriding individualism, refuting the subject's ontological status outside discourse. This has often appeared to be the view of medieval writers, where intertextuality is so apparent. However, this is also a facet of modern autobiography: as David Carr argues, the conception of narrative, provided by pre-established roles and ongoing stories not of the author's own making, is the organizing principle not only of experiences and

actions, but of the self—whether textual or corporeal—who experiences and acts (Carr 1986: 73, 84). Autobiography, even first-person anecdote, is inescapably created within the context of pre-existing narratives and forms, and, therefore, incorporates an unavoidable fictional element to the imparting of personal, historical ‘fact’ (de Man 1979: 921ff.; Sprinker 1980: 333; and Eakin 1985: 3–4). Similarly, John Burrow (1982: 393–4) argues ‘people strike “poses” (conventional or otherwise) in life as well as in literature’, and that such ‘poses’ are ‘of no less interest to the biographer than to the critic’. Burrow discusses, for example, Thomas Hoccleve’s self-portrayal in *La Male Regle*, where the account of his wild youth appears to owe something to the traditional scheme of the seven deadly sins. Yet as Burrow argues, this is not to deny the autobiographical within the text. For the seven deadly sins were the ‘moral grid-system most commonly used by men of the period whenever they attempted to map their inner lives’, so Hoccleve would naturally have reconsidered and sorted his experiences ‘into sin-categories’ (ibid. 396).

The view that the intertextual is incompatible with the autobiographical at this time fails to distinguish between an author’s allusion to literary tradition and simplistic invocation of stereotypes, and the specific poetic reference in which an author makes transparent his subjectivity as reader and writer. As Sarah Kay (1990: 2–7) has demonstrated, the former is ‘about’ literary tradition, and the latter ‘about’ subjectivity. Furthermore, readers contemporaneous with a medieval text’s production would not have read ‘out’ the presented author, particularly given scholasticism’s effect upon medieval theories of authorship: the placing of greater importance on the life of the *auctor*.

To separate the autobiographical from the conventional in late-medieval texts is not constructive for the two are not mutually exclusive; the reason each text contains particularity as well as universality needs examination. Rather than questioning, therefore, whether each text is a truthful account of personal experience, or whether the use of literary conventions in self-depiction overrides an autobiographical reading, I focus instead (in section II of each chapter) upon why each text deliberately conjoins convention and self-presentation. I argue that such literary conventions—Pauline, Boethian, Gowerian, Chaucerian—are exploited to favour the author’s political presentation of himself, and to aid his situation.

A belief that has increasingly been refuted is that there is little or no emphasis on self-expression in medieval literature (for such refutations see Aers 1992: 177–203; Patterson 1987: 57–74; 1991: 3–13; J. A. Burrow 1982: 389–412; Pearsall 1992: 1–5), and that for a true literary expression of individualized ‘interiority’, literature has to wait until the Renaissance.<sup>18</sup> Yet, subjectivity is a concern readily witnessed in much late-medieval literature, expressed in the conflict between the individual’s desires and society’s demands. Indeed, Lee Patterson (1991: 8) describes this conflict as ‘one of the great topics for literary exploration throughout the Middle Ages’ noting that it is difficult to cite a medieval romance, particularly an Arthurian one, that does not deal with this topic. Such a conflict between the individual’s desires and society’s demands (and the self-justification and explication in an attempt to resolve it) is evident, I would argue, in authorial self-representation from the margins of society, when an author is viewed as an individual situated in tacit opposition to it, namely when in prison.

This study, therefore, augments the view that medieval society was not univocal and homogeneous, and that medieval literature, as David Aers (1992: 178; 1988: 8–17) has argued, did not propagate one sentence, which was also the message of the Bible. As Aers (1988: 9) writes, society was ‘composed of communities and classes whose economic, political and religious interactions did not dissolve distinctive social experiences, interests, languages, and norms’, and he recapitulates the extensive studies of the late-medieval growth of a market economy, merchant oligarchies, and their commodities, which resulted in ‘a social network stimulating a self-interested, highly competitive and prudential outlook’ (Aers 1992: 180). He also notes that such multifarious roles, reorganizations of opportunity, mobility, competition, and social divisions sponsored by the growth of a market economy, were likely to undermine public roles ‘prescribed by traditional moral and social theory. In these circumstances the relations between individual identity and community are likely to become problematic. This may well open out sharp splits

<sup>18</sup> See e.g. Belsey (1985: 41–2), and Barker (1984: 15, 31–41). Also, see Dollimore (1984: 155–8) who contrasts ‘the medieval conception of identity as hierarchical location’ with the fragmented subjectivity of the Renaissance. Further, Eagleton (1986: 75) has differentiated between ‘the old feudal subject’ of the Middle Ages, ‘constituted by social bonds and fidelities’ and the modern ‘individualist conception of the self’ weighed down by subjectivity’s ‘crippling burden’. See also Bloom (1999: p. xviii).

between a “private” and a “public” domain, making self-identity a necessary topic for difficult, perhaps painful reflections’ (Aers 1988: 16). Similarly, A. C. Spearing (1987: 12) has noted that with such societal changes, together with increased focus on interiority within religious writing, the ‘sense of self was doubtless sharpened and pressed towards articulation by the increasing possibility of choice among the models, roles or groups to which people might attach themselves’.

The focus upon the individualistic, the self-interested, and the political as motivation for the penning of prison texts, and the political authorial identities they contain, should add to our understanding of late-medieval subjectivity, and further refute the belief that the individual when represented in literature at this time was merely incorporated for pedagogical exemplification. Furthermore, I hope that this study will demonstrate the varying and complex forms in which the literary self could be expressed. The discussion of how each author’s textual self is elaborately constructed as both communally representative and yet also individually differentiated augments the duality perceived in many medieval texts where the ‘I’ appears to contain two concepts of selfhood.

Such duality is often represented by expressions such as ‘inner’ and ‘outer’, and has a biblical precedent in 2 Corinthians 4: 16: ‘but though our outward man is corrupted, yet the inward man is renewed day by day’, where ‘inward man’ appears to signify the soul, or the *imago Dei*.<sup>19</sup> From the twelfth century, the discovery of *homo interior*, of *seipsum*, was understood, as Carolyn Bynum (1980: 4, 15) writes, as

the discovery within oneself of human nature made in the image of God—an *imago Dei* which is the same for all human beings. [. . .] Thus, if the twelfth-century did not “discover the individual” in the modern meaning of expression of unique personality and isolation of the person from the firm group membership, it did in some sense discover [. . .] the self, the inner mystery, the inner man, the inner landscape.

<sup>19</sup> The concept of the *imago Dei* originates in Gen. 1: 26–7. The *imago Dei* is ineradicable, but has to be regained through the grace of Christ and thus the removal of sin; for all mystical theology it is important as the point in which the soul is *capax Dei* and hence can enter into union with God. The concept was pervasive throughout the Middle Ages. Augustine of Hippo’s interpretation of Gen. 1: 26–7 in *De trinitate* authorized the occidental practice of contemplative mysticism (Clark 1984: 311–31; Jager 1993: 36).



But an individual's social identity expressed in late-medieval vernacular texts suggests a concurrent self-understanding as individualized, as different from the group (the 'outward man'): the late-medieval self may be said to have been 'determined by a subjectivity, autonomy, and an individuality within but also separate from community'—the emergence of a 'secularized individual'.<sup>20</sup>

Late-medieval literary self-expression and self-conception was not, therefore, uniform. Rather, it was influenced by the dialectic between the Christian subject and the individual identity, or between notions of 'inner' and 'outer' selves, respectively perceived either in vertical relation to God or in horizontal (comparative/competitive) relation to one's fellow men. In the following chapters, therefore, I argue that it is the latter, horizontal and societal self-conception that largely motivates the creation of these texts, demonstrating that the universal or communally relevant is often tailored to enhance the author's self-representative.

Stephen Greenblatt has described an increased self-consciousness in the sixteenth century about 'the fashioning of human identity as an artful process' which, separated from the imitation of Christ, gave rise to considerable anxiety, especially as the latter could 'suggest hypocrisy or deception, an adherence to mere outward ceremony' (Greenblatt 1980: 1–3). However, these anxieties already existed in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries—Thomas Hoccleve, for example, in his *Male Regle* and *Regement of Princes*, inveighs against flattery, its pretence and deception. Furthermore, in the *Regement*, a concern with the deceptiveness of outward display is present in Hoccleve's criticism of extravagant clothing.<sup>21</sup> Given late-medieval societal anxiety over the deceptiveness of appearances, the ensuing study analyses the alleged reclaiming of reputation, virtue, or authority, by an author's textual self, demonstrating that the suffering of imprisonment reveals an emphasis upon this strategy. Greenblatt notes that one of the prerequisites of self-fashioning is the shifting perception of authority—that one man's authority may be another's alien. He writes that 'self-fashioning is achieved in relation

<sup>20</sup> Kimmelman (1996: 19, 69); Vitz (1989: 21). At the time, it was likely that the term *individual* was understood as *individuum*, *individualis*, or *singularis*—philosophical conceptualizations in the nominalism/realism controversy concerned with logic and the potential relationships between the singular and the *species* or *genus*.

<sup>21</sup> Strohm (1999: 647) notes that Hoccleve's criticism incorporates the potential of outward display 'to falsify or "counterfete" inner meaning, and [that] such self-illegitimization is linked with the possibility of treasonous usurpation'.

to something perceived as alien, strange or hostile' (ibid. 9). As seen above, the changing perceptions of authority and the fluidity of society meant that already in the fourteenth century those conditions, which Greenblatt argues were necessary to sixteenth-century self-fashioning, were already in place. Moreover, an author's imprisonment correspondingly invokes his alienation, and frequently the decision not to recognize an authority over which he feels bound to impose a greater authority through textual means. The 'prison-writer', therefore, already has the prerequisites for self-presentation and self-justification, and this is evinced by these texts.

The connection between literary self-expression and imprisonment that becomes noticeable in the late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, seems partly indebted to the *Consolation's* legacy of the Boethian figure as well as to changes in contemporary literature generally—the intensification of representations of literary subjectivity that, as A. C. Spearing (1992: 87–8) has described it, is 'not of a single and stable *self*, but of a subjectivity divided between what observes and what is observed, what is concealed and what is revealed, what is desired . . . and what is permitted'. I argue that this is thrown into relief in autobiographical texts where the author professes to be isolated, imprisoned, powerless, and persecuted—that imprisonment enhances the literary expression of the correlation of subjectivity and subjection,<sup>22</sup> as the author attempts to 'market' his character and write himself out of confinement and subjection and into favour.

The discussion in each of the ensuing chapters follows a similar path. Section I of each chapter delineates the author's imprisonment and its cause and discusses how the text invites the reader to view the 'I' voice as the author's presented autobiographical identity. This allows for section II, in which I demonstrate how this identity is constructed favourably through intertextuality and the comparison with exemplars from literature, scripture, and history. Finally, section III examines the author's reasons for such artful self-depiction, discussing the intended audience of each text and the author's political motivations; in other words, what is at stake for the author, and how his textual identity is designed to impact upon extra-textual concerns.

<sup>22</sup> As Patterson (1991: 6) points out: 'structures of domination do not merely control but in effect constitute the individual: to be subject is to be subjected'.

# I

## Thomas Usk and *The Testament of Love*

### I

London records variously mention one ‘Thomas Usk, scryvein’ (*CPR* 1381–5: 467, 470, 500; and *CCR* 1381–5: 476), and it was in this capacity that Usk entered the service of John Northampton, Mayor of London and his party in 1383, hired, as he himself said, ‘to write thair billes’ (Chambers and Daunt 1931: 23). Northampton’s party, representing the weaker political faction in the city, the non-victualling guilds, the small guilds and the ‘communs’, who were attempting to assert their rights (*ibid.* 18), had been elected in 1381 over the opposing party, led by Sir Nicholas Brembre, comprising the victualling guilds—a wealthy party of ‘merchant capitalists’ (Simpson 1993: 122) who provided financial backing for the king. Northampton’s party, however, covertly received support from John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster, and, therefore, the contention between the political factions was one that extended to the highest echelons of society, for between 1381 and 1383 the young King Richard was growing increasingly wary of his powerful uncle, and with Brembre losing office as mayor, Richard also lost the supporting strength of London (Goodman 1992: 97–101, and Saul 1997: 132–3, 241).

In 1383, as London’s mayoral elections approached, Northampton took direct measures to secure re-election, requiring Usk to turn from scribe to activist and agitator. Usk was dispatched to the Goldsmiths’ Hall to encourage support for the election of Northampton, and he later alleged that on the eve of the election, Northampton gave his sergeants orders to guard the doors of the guildhall the following day, to keep out all but Northampton’s supporters, whom Usk had especially summoned to the election himself (Chambers and Daunt 1931: 25–7). Despite these measures, however, Northampton’s opponents forced their way past his sergeants and elected Brembre mayor. Undeterred, Northampton and his

party conspired to regain power leading to insurrection and Northampton's arrest in February 1384 (Hector and Harvey 1982: 62). Usk was arrested later, between 20 July and 6 August 1384, and imprisoned in London, initially it would seem in Newgate (*ibid.* 90; *CPR* 1381-5: 500).

No doubt believing he could avoid severe reprisals, Usk decided to give evidence against Northampton, and composed his appeal, exposing the subversive activities of Northampton's party, and, though implicating himself in these activities, hoping for the king's mercy in return for what he had revealed: 'I was a ful helpere & promotour in al that euer I myght & koude, wher-for I aske grace & mercy of my lyge lord the kyng' (Chambers and Daunt 1931: 29-30).

With his appeal forming his testimony, Usk was to be chief witness for the Crown at Northampton's trial, held before the king at Reading on 18 August 1384. Northampton was sentenced to life imprisonment (*CCR* 1381-5: 478; *CPR* 1381-5: 470; Hector and Harvey 1982: 94), while Usk was returned to Brembre's custody in London, until he received a full royal pardon on 24 September (*CPR* 1381-5: 467). However, Usk appears to have suffered a further imprisonment from December 1384 to June 1385, related to his actions against Northampton.<sup>1</sup> He presently went free, however, for in late 1386/early 1387 he is recorded as in the king's service as a sergeant-at-arms.<sup>2</sup> In 1387 Usk received further royal favour when he was made under-sheriff of Middlesex,<sup>3</sup> a preferment probably allied to Richard's programme of liberal enlistment in an attempt to counteract Gloucester's authority in the wake of the 1386 Wonderful Parliament that had curtailed Richard's own (Saul 1997: 157-62, 171-2).

<sup>1</sup> Bressie (1928a: 30-1) quotes from the July 1385 Public Record Office, Issue Roll E403/598/m.6, where there is an order to reimburse Brembre for certain expenditures in connection with the arrest, six-month imprisonment, and trial of Usk. This does not seem to refer to Usk's first imprisonment, because at that point he faced charges of conspiring with Northampton, while this record refers to different charges: that Usk had gathered and made diverse articles upon John Northampton and others, which must be a reference to his appeal.

<sup>2</sup> According to Thomas Favent. See McKisack (1926: 19). See also Sharpe (1907: 316-17), in which the letter to the Privy Seal bidding Usk's appointment as under-sheriff for Middlesex refers to Usk as a sergeant-at-arms. Sergeants-at-arms were men of some standing; about ninety were described in Richard's reign and approximately sixty-five worked for the king at any one time (Given-Wilson 1986: 54).

<sup>3</sup> This is witnessed by a letter of the Privy Seal, dated 7 October from the king to the mayor, alderman, and Commons of London, thanking them for the appointment of Usk to this office (Sharpe 1907: 316-17).

Though Usk was now accepted and rewarded by the royal faction,<sup>4</sup> Fortune was not to smile on him for long; he was to enjoy his new position for a mere three months, and then in an ironic twist of fate was to find himself back in prison when the Lords Appellant made their attack on royal power, appealing the king's advisers of treason before the Merciless Parliament (Hector and Harvey 1982: 234, 244, 285, and Saul 1997: 193–4). Usk was arrested in December 1387 (CCR 1385–9: 393) on what appear trumped-up charges of treason: that he had falsely accused Northampton and his party, and had been made under-sheriff through Brembre's influence, with a view to serving false writs and thereby permitting the arrest of Gloucester and others of his party (*Rotuli Parliamentorum*, iii. 234; Hector and Harvey 1982: 258–60). On 3 March 1388 he was tried before the Merciless Parliament. His line of defence—he had acted out of loyalty to the king and had done all at the king's command (*Rotuli Parliamentorum*, iii. 240)—was, from the point of view of the Lords, tantamount to a confession of guilt and indeed, Usk's statement was simply treated as such (Strohm 1990: 89). The Lords judged that he should have been aware that the king was influenced by false advisers and Usk was, therefore, sentenced to death. He was executed at Tyburn on 4 March 1388—first drawn and hanged, and then beheaded. Contrasting with his reputation as an expedient turncoat, Usk went to his death protesting, even under the sword, that he had not wronged Northampton, but that his testimony at Reading had all been true (Hector and Harvey 1982: 314–16).

Usk penned not only his appeal against Northampton, but also a literary work, the *Testament of Love*. There is no extant medieval manuscript of the text—it survives having been wrongly attributed to Chaucer by William Thynne and, therefore, printed in Thynne's 1532 edition of Chaucer's works.<sup>5</sup> The dating of the *Testament* is uncertain, but it is clear that it was written after Usk's first imprisonment and royal pardon, as this is included (I.vi.565) and (II.iv.383). Yet Usk's final imprisonment of 1387 lasted a mere three months

<sup>4</sup> RP iii: 230: 'ad done diverse Manoires, Terres, Tenementz, Rents, Offices, & Baillifs asz divers' autres persones de lour affinite . . . Robert de Manfeld, clerck, John Blake, Thomas Uske, autres diversement'.

<sup>5</sup> Thynne (1532). The text is corrupted in places. For recent discussions of the *Testament*'s attribution to Chaucer and its repercussions, see Dane (1998: 75–93) and Prendergast (1999: 258–69). I quote from the recent edition by Shoaf (1998).

until Usk's execution—too short a time for the text's composition.<sup>6</sup> Furthermore, as the text's impetus stems from the author's loss of reputation and lack of reward following his pardon, and as Usk's royal promotions of late 1386 onwards answered these concerns, a reasonable composition date would be c.1385–6 (Strohm 1990: 97–8; Carlson 1993: 40), possibly during Usk's unconfirmed imprisonment of December 1384 to June 1385.

Usk portrays himself as incarcerated when writing, but this may be metaphorical if he was not imprisoned again in 1384–5. However, even if merely a figurative imprisonment—for in addition to his 'derke prisone' (I.i.11) he describes himself as fastened in stocks of woe, and chains forged of care and sorrow (I.i.31)—confined by his diminishing reason, malicious gossip, and remaining without preferment, Usk's 'imprisonment' is clearly linked to his predicament caused by his former involvement in politics. Whether or not he has been released from his actual prison, he is still enclosed by the negative reputation constraining his career and caused by his former actions. If his written appeal released him from literal imprisonment, then, as I argue, he pens his *Testament* in an attempt to remove these final 'bars'.

In the following discussion, therefore, I argue that Usk fashions an autobiographical identity designed to attain patronage and advancement, to restore his ruined reputation, and possibly to woo those who may elicit his release. For this Usk employs self-justification and self-vindication, but also intertextuality and literary, biblical, and historical exemplars, not primarily for the sake of the text's pedagogical arguments, but to construct a persuasive identity for himself and ensure its favourable reception.

Usk's *Testament* is a good starting point, not only because of all the texts discussed here it comes first chronologically, but because the relationship between the author's actual predicament and the persuasive identity he carves for himself in the hope to impact upon his situation is most noticeable. Furthermore, the many aspects of such a relationship which, as I discuss in my introduction, are present in varying degrees in these texts are all present in the *Testament*. These are notably a petitionary stance, a self-justifying,

<sup>6</sup> Tatlock (1907: 23) has argued that the *Testament* borrows from Chaucer's *LGW* and that, therefore, the text cannot have been written until after 1387. However, Bressie (1928b: 19–22) has demonstrated that the *Testament* does not borrow from Chaucer's *LGW*.

persuasive self-presentation, and the redeployment of intertextuality and moral exemplars, notably Boethius, to construct favourably his autobiographical identity. As such, the *Testament* is a good 'yard-stick' for the texts that follow.

The *Testament* deploys elements from a variety of genres, but Boethius's *Consolation* is the predominant source as Usk emulates the structure of the *Consolation* and largely borrows from its content—Usk knew Boethius in the original Latin, as well as Chaucer's *Boece* (Medcalf 1989: 184–5; 1997: 232; J. A. W. Bennett 1986: 348). It relates the narrative of a man unjustly 'imprisoned', visited by 'Love', who, like Boethius's Philosophy, offers consolation through reasoned argument.

'Love' represents earthly love, specifically courtly love (I.ii.197–202),<sup>7</sup> divine love (I.ii.169), and Boethian cosmic love, causing: 'al the hevenly bodyes goodly and benignely to done her course that governen us beestes here on erthe' (I.iv.387–8). She also has a political role—important for Usk's own political motives—she represents love of the common weal and has: 'worthyed kynges in the felde . . . caused worthy folke to voyde vyce and shame . . . [and] hath holde cyties and realmes in prosperyté' (I.ii.179–81). She is to console the narrator and show him how he can best serve the object of his love: Margarite.

As both a person and a pearl, Margarite is a symbol that embodies several meanings corresponding to those embodied by 'Love'. As a pearl, she forms the object of the narrator's religious and secular devotion, a priceless jewel with associations of courtly veneration, perfection, and the spiritual worth inherent in the biblical pearl-of-great-price tradition (compare Matt. 13: 45–6 with *TL* I.iii.297–9). Yet also, as a person, Margarite permits the narrator to employ the language of courtly love in conveying his other forms of devotion. A developing figure, therefore, the Margarite-pearl's meanings are conveyed in a paratactic accumulative pattern of association rather than via a sequential pattern (Siennicki 1985: 220; Reiss 1980: 272), demonstrated by the closing exegesis, where, as 'a perle' and 'a

<sup>7</sup> By the term 'courtly love' I refer to the complex world of romantic sentiment and doctrine that prevails in much medieval literature, which seems to have inherited many new characteristics from Troubadour poetry, and the subsequent 'doctrine' developed in northern France by Chrétien de Troyes and codified by Andreas Capellanus in his *De Arte Honeste Amandi*. See Boase (1977: 1, 5–26), and also Frappier (1972: 145–93).

woman', she betokens 'grace, lernyng, or wisdom of God, or els holy church' (III.ix.1123-4).

The fluidity of the pearl as a symbol and object of devotion is also part of Usk's vacillating mode, as he moves freely between the different forms of love, portraying himself as a faithful servant of each. He also moves almost imperceptibly between the exemplary, the tropological, and his personal situation. When the latter comes to the fore, as it so frequently does, the pearl assumes the shape of political devotion to which Usk can portray himself—in the language of both courtly and spiritual love—as an unwavering servant. This, I argue, is the nexus of the text and Usk's motivation in penning it: Usk promises his devotion to the pearl and whoever the pearl represents in the hope that his situation will improve.

The text invites a mimetic reading of the events affecting the protagonist as nominally those of the author, as the misfortunes for which 'Love' offers consolation are delineated by a first-person narrator whose experiences are sufficiently close to Usk's own to be termed autobiographical. Usk relates his political past and his official pardon, and complains that despite this his fortune has worsened: he is now the subject of malicious gossip as his actions against his former allies have brought him into disrepute, and for this he suffers imprisonment.

The creation of an autobiographical identity begins in the prologue where Usk identifies himself as writer with his narrator. This conflation is also invited by his concern not simply with the reception of the text, but with the reception of himself as a sincere individual. This precipitates a cautious, deferential self-portrayal beginning with Usk's petitionary and apologetic self-presentation in the prologue as without artifice, and as more earnest than other writers. Equally, the text's closing desire for a 'good reder' (III.ix.1114) further demonstrates a concern with 'reception', as does the petitionary acrostic:<sup>8</sup> 'MARGARETE OF VIRTW, HAVE MERCI ON THIN vsk'. The acrostic suggests more than merely an authorial signature, but rather relates to the author and his situation, given that the Margarite-pearl also represents a person to whom Usk portrays himself as a devoted servant. The acrostic and the text's repeated

<sup>8</sup> The acrostic was first discovered by Henry Bradley and Skeat—published by Skeat (1893: 222-3). See also Skeat (1897: pp. xix-xx), and the modifications made by Bressie (1928b: 28) and Jellech (1970: 12-14) to Skeat's ordering of chapters v and vi of Book III. See also Shoaf (1998: 10, 20-5), and Middleton (1998: 70, 72).



petitionary elements (such as I.i.88–100 and I.ii.200–2) reveal that the *Testament* operates as a personal ‘appeal’ designed to move readers and/or a specific reader: whoever the Margarite-pearl represents.

The incorporation of a variety of genres: complaint, petition, *apologia*, *consolatio*, serve an autobiographical function that augments this ‘appeal’: they permit Usk to present himself in a variety of guises from the wrongfully imprisoned man (I.i-iii), to the courtly and political apologist (I.iii and I.vi), and the ever-loyal servant (I.ii). As I argue below, Usk manipulates these diverse elements, together with literary allusion, to fashion an identity intended to answer the exigencies of his situation, via self-justification and a positive self-presentation.

The text contains, therefore, a number of characteristics that invite an autobiographical reading of the ‘I’ and that meet Kathryn Kerby-Fulton’s (1997: 79) criteria for evidence of a late-medieval author’s attempt to protect and market himself: revelation, direct or otherwise, of authorial identity—in the acrostic and possibly in autocitation now effaced which I discuss below; depiction of details from his ‘curriculum vitae’ which reaffirms his reputation, or might attract new patronage; concern not to offend readers; the use of elements from the tradition of *apologia*; and finally, ‘overt literary mendicancy’.

## II

Usk was writing at a time when the integration of clerks, lawyers, and merchants provided the social context of much of London’s literature, which was largely concerned, partly as a result of this context, with the promotion of the ‘common weal’ (M. J. Bennett 1992: 7). Anne Middleton (1978: 96) calls this ideal so prevalent in texts at this time, ‘common love’, and she describes how it contrasts with the singular passion of courtly love and finds its ultimate expression, although developed in his earlier texts, in John Gower’s long devotion as a moral poet to civic virtue and social accord: the *Confessio Amantis*. The *Testament* is also informed by this literary vogue, for, as I shall argue, Usk similarly imbues an ideal of love with social obligation and political meaning, but in doing so his literary efforts are more privately motivated, despite the employment of such a public theme.

The *Testament*, however, cannot be directly indebted to the *Confessio Amantis*, as the latter post-dates it. If any connection, therefore, between Gower and Usk is conceded it is usually in the other direction—that Gower knew the *Testament*, but that his amused or disdainful reaction led him to urge Chaucer to get on with making his own ‘testament of love’.<sup>9</sup> These words of Gower’s, therefore, have long been viewed as a possible satirical reference to Usk’s alignment of himself in the *Testament* with Chaucer as a fellow servant of love (III.iv.559–73), an alignment that may not have been to Chaucer’s liking. This fits well with recent discussions about the insular nature of London’s literary scene at this time, which existed as reading circles or coteries, embracing clerks, lawyers, merchants, civil servants, and scribes.<sup>10</sup>

It is my view that Usk knew and consciously alludes to Gower’s Latin text, the *Vox Clamantis* (Summers 1999: 55–62) and such an insular literary scene certainly makes it possible. The importance of this connection is that it throws light on the way in which the *Testament* should be read, its political nature, and its intended audience, and suggests that through London’s close-knit literary environment, Usk hoped to overturn his situation and advance his career.

Usk’s personal history of political misguidedness and correction is first told obliquely in the allegorical ‘shyppe of traveyle’ episode (I.iii.258 ff.). Usk narrates how ‘thynkyng alone’ (I.iii.268–9) he walked out one winter in a wood reminiscent of Dante’s *selva oscura*, when suddenly he was frightened by ‘great beestes . . . and heerdes gone to wylde’ (I.iii.269–70). He is so alarmed that nearing a ‘see banke’ (I.iii.270–1) he cries out to a passing ship. He is helped on board the ship—which he names the ‘shyppe of traveyle’ (I.iii.277)—by several allegorical figures: ‘Syght was the first, Lust was a nother, Thought was the thirde, and Wyl eke was there a

<sup>9</sup> See the closing lines of the first version of CA (c.1386–90), VIII.2955. See Fisher (1965: 62); J. A. W. Bennett (1968: 172); Carlson (1993: 31). This view is first hinted at by Skeat (1897: p. xxviii). However, Skeat preferred to see the phrase as a sparring remark about Chaucer’s unfinished LGW. All quotations from Gower’s works will be taken from Macaulay (1901). All translations of the VC will be taken from Stockton (1962).

<sup>10</sup> Lerer (1993); Kerby-Fulton and Justice (1997: 59–83) discuss Usk’s coterie membership and participation. They also highlight how within this literary community, Chaucer and Gower ‘advertise their close literary relations with each other, and with a shared audience, in the commendation of their works to each other’ (61).

mayster' (I.iii.275–6). The ship enters a storm and the rising sea threatens, but eventually he is driven to an island's safety, where Love waits on the shore; on the island he discovers the Margarite-pearl, and there he remains to avow his service to the Margarite. To explicate: the beasts turned wild and the treacherous waves signify Usk's former associates, Northampton and his party; the ship of travail represents the difficulties that beset him during the judicial process of his appeal, while his attaining refuge and pledging service suggest his new allegiance to the royalist party (Strohm 1990: 102).

While the oblique autobiographical nature of this episode is in keeping with other moments of the text, the atypical allegorical narrative is conspicuous; this appears to hint at a specific influence. Previously, the influence behind this section was thought to be the C-Text of Langland's *Piers Plowman*, and indeed the possibility that Usk is indebted to Langland's C-Text at junctures has been reconsidered.<sup>11</sup> Skeat (1897: 456) originally compared this episode to Langland's parable of the 'wagyng of the bote' (PP X.34), and more recently Kathryn Kerby-Fulton and Steven Justice have discussed its 'striking Langlandian' character, suggesting Usk's aural experience of the C-Text as its source (Kerby-Fulton and Justice 1997: 75—citing in particular PP Prol. 1–5; PP V.7–11; PP XI.174–8).

Yet Usk's miniature allegory appears to share greater similarity with Book I of the *Vox Clamantis*, as the episode of the 'shyppe of traveyle' seems a version in miniature of Gower's opening 'visio',<sup>12</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Skeat (1897: 451–84) set the trend followed by Devlin (1928) and Donaldson (1966: 18–19), but refuted by Godden (1990: 171–2), Justice (1994: 231); Bowers (1999: 65–96). Kane (1988: 175–200) and Hanna (1993: 14–17) make no mention of the *Testament* in their dating of the C-text. Recently Hanna and Justice have revised their views (see Hanna 1996a: 237; Kerby-Fulton and Justice 1997: 74). Skeat notes points of comparison such as TL I.iii.348 with PP XX.211, and TL I.v.496–7 with PP VI.23–5. Kerby-Fulton and Justice suggest parallels between Usk's 'wexing tree' PP III.v–vii and Langland's 'tree of charity', PP XVIII.4–14 (Kerby-Fulton and Justice 1997: 74; Kerby-Fulton 1997: 67–143). However, it is likely that the influence of Anselm's *De concordia* was greater for this section (L. Lewis 1995: 429–33 and Shoaf 1998: 14–17). References to PP are from Pearsall (1994).

<sup>12</sup> Book II originally opened the text, with Gower adding what is now Book I shortly after the Peasants' Revolt. See Macaulay (1901: pp. xxx–xxxiv); Peck (1980: p. xxxi); Fisher (1965: 102, 108), who date this added opening section as c.1383–6. In discussing the layers of amendment to five of the earliest Gower manuscripts that all contain the 'visio'—Hunterian Library, Glasgow, MS T. 2. 17 (59); All Souls College, Oxford, MS 98; BL Cotton MS Tiberius A. iv; BL MS Harley 6291; and Bodl. MS Fairfax 3—Parkes (1995: 82, 86) notes Macaulay's and Fisher's dating and appears to agree with Macaulay's date of c.1383 as an earliest date.

which consists of an allegory condemning the 1381 Peasants' Revolt, portraying it as a highly vicious inversion of the natural order. Gower's narrator reports that in a dream he saw throngs of rabble transformed into domestic beasts, which then became as barbarous as wild beasts, rampaging and damaging the city of London (VC Prol. headtitle). In comparison Usk, now repentant for his previous political imbroglia, narrates this in similar terms, depicting the feuding led by Northampton and his London followers as 'great beestes . . . and heerdes gone to wyld' and that 'nothyng is werse than the beestes that shulden ben tame, if they catche her wyldenesse, and gynne ayen waxe ramage [*wild*]' (I.iii.269–73). Usk's description of his unwisely leaving the comfort of his home to find himself 'by woodes that large stretes werne in, by smale pathes that swyne and hogges hadden made . . . I walked thynkyng alone a wonder great whyle' (I.iii.267–9) also mirrors the narrative of the 'visio'. For Gower similarly tells of leaving home and becoming a stranger in wild woodlands<sup>13</sup> and describes the rampaging swine he sees as he walks alone, which having broken loose, have every road open to them—'set eis omne licebat iter' (VC I.iv.318).

Like Usk (I.iii.270–5), Gower's rescue is by ship: 'Haud procul aspexi nauem, properansque cucurri, | Sors mea si forte tucior esset ibi' (VC I.xvii.1599–600). ('I caught sight of a ship not far off, and I ran hurriedly to see whether my lot might be safer on it,' Stockton 1962: 84.) Boarding the ship, he too is swept into a storm. Both authors describe the stormy sea in terms of human treachery: Usk narrates: 'the wawes semeden as they kyste togyder, but often under colour of kyssynge is mokel olde hate prively closed and kepte' (I.iii.278–80); Gower writes: 'Sic simul insidiis hominum pelagique laboro' (VC I.xx.1995). ('I struggled with the treacheries of men and sea at the same time,' Stockton 1962: 92.) Both Usk (TL I.iii.292) and Gower (VC I.xviii.1774) refer to the ship as 'my ship' ('naue mea'), and connect it clearly with their confused mental states. Gower writes: 'de nauī visa in sompnis, id est de mente sua adhuc turbata', (VC I.xx. headtitle) ('. . . of the ship he still saw in his sleep. That is, he speaks of his confusion of mind', Stockton 1962: 91), while Usk, having reached safety, his peace of mind restored by Love, states that 'in a lytel tyme my shyppe was out of mynde' (I.iii.291–2).

<sup>13</sup> 'Tuncque domum propriam linquens aliena per arua | Transcurri, que feris saltibus hospes eram' (VC I.xvi.1381–2). ('Then abandoning my home, I ran away across alien fields and became a stranger in the wild woodlands,' Stockton 1962: 80.)

Similarly, both Usk and Gower describe being 'driven' by the sea to an island (VC I.xx.1941-52 and TL I.iii.284). In summary, both texts present a narrator who foolishly leaves home to become lost in a forest; witnesses the rampages of domestic animals, like swine, who have turned wild; is rescued by ship, but then is subject to a treacherous storm; and is finally driven to an island. It seems, therefore, that Usk has appropriated Gower's allegory to narrate the riotous results of Northampton's actions and the exigencies of his pursuant litigation against Northampton. It is possible he was inspired by Gower's allusion to the unlikely success of a lawsuit in rough seas:

Causaque sic causas debet habere suas.  
 Quid mare conferret, altis dum fluctuat vndis,  
 Sit nisi naus ei quam vehit vnda fluens?  
 Set quid fert naus nisi nauta regens sit in illa?  
 Quid valet aut nauta, si sibi remus abest?  
 Quid mare, quid naus, quid nauta, vel est sibi remus,  
 Sit nisi portus aquis ventus et aptus eis? (VC VI.vii.474-80)

a lawsuit ought to have its own justifications. What will the sea bring as it swells with lofty waves, unless it have a ship which the rolling billow carries? But what will the ship bring, unless there be a guiding sailor in it? Or what good is the sailor, if he has no oar? What good is the sea, the ship, or the sailor, even if he has an oar, unless they have a port and suitable wind for the water? (Stockton 1962: 230)

Usk's allusions to the *Vox Clamantis* elucidate the *Testament's* political affinity and nationalist and royalist emphasis. In both texts the island appears to be Britain, but unlike Gower's polemical 'distopian' depiction, in Usk's description the island is paradisaal. The Margarite he finds on this island is described as 'the moste precious and best that ever to forne came in my syght' (I.iii.294-5), and according with this praise, and with the statement that Margarite is a jewel who makes fair all the realm (I.iii.335), he later states that the best Margarite-pearls are found on the shores of the 'more Britayne' (III.i.33). It is perhaps possible that Gower and Usk invoke a contemporary equation of England with Britain as an island. This is a view captured several years later within the Wilton Diptych (c.mid-1390s), and is possibly recollected by Shakespeare in John of Gaunt's description of England in *Richard II*, II. i: 'this little world, | This precious stone set in the silver sea'. Gordon and Barron (1993: 13) point out that Gaunt's words possibly recall the tiny map of a green

island set in a sea of silver leaf on which there is a little boat in full sail with masts, depicted in the orb at the top of the banner on the right-hand panel of the Wilton Diptych.<sup>14</sup> If England was often equated at the time with the island of Britain, then Usk's idealized reference to the island possibly assumes a nationalistic emphasis.

The *Vox Clamantis* was originally a pro-Ricardian text, for at this time (1385–7) it was unrevised, and Gower's original praise and hopes of Richard II were still extant. Indeed, Richard may even have known Gower's text (Eberle 1999: 243–4 discusses elements deliberately included to find favour with Richard). Usk, therefore, appropriates the discourse of censure from a text clear in its political stance and affiliations, in order to present the actions of Northampton's party against the royalist party as dangerously subversive and unnatural. Furthermore, any of Usk's readers who had also read the *Vox Clamantis* and seen a connection between Usk's text and Gower's, would also recall Gower's condemnation of Northampton's activities as London's mayor:

Hic loquitur de ciue illo maliuolo et impetuoso, qui maioris ministerium sibi adoptans in conciues suam accendit maliciam, quo magis sanum ciuitatis regimen sua importunitate perturbat et extinguit. (VC V.xv. headtitle)

Here he speaks of the rash and ill-willed citizen who, in choosing the office of mayor for himself, kindles malice among his fellow citizens. Hence, through his incompetence he disturbs and destroys the city's sound government. (Stockton 1962: 215)<sup>15</sup>

By alluding, therefore, to Gower's text, I would argue that Usk wished to be seen as equally condemnatory of Northampton, and

<sup>14</sup> See Gordon and Barron (1993: 57) for an infra-red reflectogram of the orb (fig. 18) and plate 21 for a colour plate of the detail. Gordon and Barron (1993: 57–8) write: 'It may be that in the Wilton Diptych the tiny map is a symbol of the island of Britain and that Richard is offering England to the Virgin as her dowry. His hands are empty, for he had presumably presented the banner to the Virgin, who holds her Son. The Christ child has apparently taken it and passed it to an attendant angel. The Child is now about to bless Richard who will then receive back the banner in a reciprocal gesture of feudal exchange. The boy king is to rule England under the protection and with the blessing, of the Virgin.' The altar-piece is dated between 1395 and 1399 (Scheifele 1999: 265–6).

<sup>15</sup> The mayor referred to here could feasibly be either Nicholas Brembre or John Northampton. In the *Cronica tripartita* (I.154–9), Gower bitterly attacks Brembre, but this refers to events (c.1388) that occurred after those that appear to have precipitated Gower's invective in the VC. The events of the latter appear to have occurred c.1382, and not later. Furthermore, references to the mayor's low beginnings (845–60) fit well with Northampton's, but not with Brembre's circumstances (Stockton 1962: 437).

wished also to emphasize a shared political conservatism with Gower and a condemnation of mob-rule. By aligning himself with Gower's royalist sympathies and political preference, he hoped to express just where his allegiance was now placed. Kerby-Fulton and Justice (1997: 74–6) have discussed Usk's coterie membership and participation, and have argued that his alluding as early as the mid-1380s to the recent works of Chaucer demonstrates the prompt access Londoners in the legal clerical community had to such works and 'how eagerly and how personally' they read them (Kerby-Fulton 1997: 116). It would seem that in redeploying elements from a well-known and 'politically acceptable' author such as Gower, Usk created a work devised to appeal to Brembre's royalist party and those affiliated, in order that it might be circulated amongst the appropriate coterie readership, and that in doing so, he hoped to improve his situation.

Such politicized intertextuality is most notable in the usage of Boethius's *Consolation*. Usk imitates the situation and structure of the *Consolation*, consciously implying affinities between Boethius and himself, as wronged but worthy men. The *Consolation* is a well-chosen model for Usk's self-presentation: Boethius also drew upon a diversity of sources and genres from Greek and Roman philosophy and Latin poetry, and the text resists precise generic definition: it is not strictly a *consolatio*, for the victim rather than the bereaved is consoled;<sup>16</sup> it shares with *satura* its juxtaposed verse and prose; it is a theological treatise yet is not specifically Christian; and it could be classed as both apocalypse and as philosophical dialogue, yet not having every element of either. Boethius draws on these various authorities with an ease and creativity that make it difficult to decide exactly his source at various moments, and which suggest he was working without a library and from memory; if so, the *Consolation* really was the product of his extreme circumstances (Crabbe 1981: 238–40).

Like the *Consolation*, therefore, the *Testament* is also the creation of the author's political predicament and as such it shares with the *Consolation* its multi-generic nature. Furthermore, as a model, the *Consolation*'s opening autobiographical recapitulation permits Usk to detail his own misfortunes. He describes how in youth he was lured by 'certayn conjuracions [*conspiracies*] and other great maters

<sup>16</sup> Earning, therefore, Courcelle's famous description as 'a consolation for life' (quoted in Crabbe 1981: 238).

of ruling of cytezens' (I.vi.545–6) and that these things were 'so paynted' (I.vi.547) that at first he thought them 'noble and glorious to al the people' (I.vi.548), yet realized later their 'malyce and yvel meanyege, withouten any good awaylyng to any people, and of tyrannye purposed' (I.vi.555–6). He was by then imprisoned, yet saw that 'peace myght ben endused to enden al the firste rancours' (I.vi.565–6) if he 'openly confesse[d]' (I.vi.565) the treachery of Northampton and his party, how they stirred the people to unrest (I.vi.594–5) and how Northampton attempted to procure a re-election following his loss of office (I.vi.614–16). Usk says he told of their activities 'onely for trouthe of my sacrament in my leigeaunce by whiche I was charged on my kynges behalfe' (I.vi.627–8) and to help the 'comune helpe to ben saved—whiche thyng to kepe above al thynges I am holde to mayntayne' (I.vi.568–9). He, therefore, creates further affinities between himself and Boethius, as men who were impelled to office purely by a general desire for the common good (*Bo.* I. pr. iv), thereby not only justifying his actions, but also depicting himself as moral, loyal, and selfless, and worthy of comparison to Boethius, a figure who, as seen in the Introduction above, enjoyed a hagiographic status at this time.

Usk does not, however, slavishly copy the *Consolation* despite the reiteration of much of its content;<sup>17</sup> rather, many of the *Testament's* departures from Boethius's *Consolation* are related to Usk's self-characterization. Usk abandons the alternating verse and prose of Menippean satire for dialogue alone, placing a greater focus on his self-persona than exists with the Boethian figure—Love has less of the stage than Philosophy and unlike Boethius, Usk has several chapters which are solely his, such as the 'prologues' to Books II and III, and additionally the concluding chapters, where Love is simply absorbed by Usk (Siennicki 1985: 116–17). Moreover, there is no abnegation of individuality in Usk's absorption of Love, a transformation that differs starkly from Boethius's, who simply stops speaking and allows Philosophy to conclude.

It would seem that the primary attractions of the *Consolation* as a model were not just its method of creation—its conflating a variety of sources and authorities in response to a personal political predicament—but also its autobiographical element, which could be expanded to place greater focus on the author-narrator. In the

<sup>17</sup> For a detailed comparison of the linguistic and philosophical correspondences between both texts, see Siennicki (1985: 100–12 and App. A).



*Consolation* we are given details of Boethius's personal life, of his family and his fine library, whereas in the *Testament* all personal detail relates solely to Usk's political vicissitudes, suggesting a political focus and intended audience. Boethius's bitter recount of his life is meant to demonstrate his deluded state prior to Philosophy's medicine, and not to have any other interest for his readers (Crabbe 1981: 257). In contrast, Usk's autobiographical details appear important in their own right, particularly given the repeated return to the author's situation, his reputation, and his relationship to the Margarite-pearl, not just within Book I, but also throughout Books II and III. Certain Boethian concepts, for example, relate in the *Testament* more specifically to London's political scene, notably Usk replaces Philosophy's 'folk' in *Bo.* III. prol. iv with Love's 'mayre of your cytie' (II.vi.595).

Unlike the autobiographical details of Boethius's text, Usk's appear intended to persuade readers to his cause, as he portrays himself, via Love's affirmation, as morally correct in his allegiance to politics, but misguided in his original choice of affiliation, which should have been with the royal party: 'whan thou were arested and fyrste tyme enprisoned, thou were loth to chaunge thy way, for in thy hert thou wendest to have ben there thou shuldest . . . I had routhe to sene thee myscaried . . . I made thou haddest grace of thy kynge, in foryevenesse of mykel misdede' (II.iv.370–83).

He states he entered politics out of a concern for 'commen profyite in comynaltie' (I.vi.53)<sup>18</sup> and swears he was directed by his commitment to the common good and peace of the city, even if this meant acting against his former friends (I.vi.567–70). Self-justification, therefore, becomes central at junctures and the creation of Love as an apparently objective, detached, and apolitical figure akin to Philosophy is not always sustained;<sup>19</sup> instead she vindicates Usk's actions against Northampton (I.vii.734–5, 660–86). She fulfils a role as witness of the truth against anyone who 'wol the contrary susteyne' (I.ii.227), and not only justifies and defends Usk's textual identity, but also his writing of the book (I.ii.233–4). In creating his

<sup>18</sup> The *MED* provides several glosses for 'cominaltee'; the word can mean the people of a country, a city, or a commonwealth, and also a community or the populace. It is likely that Usk's use of the word incorporates all these meanings to imply his intentions to work for the good of all.

<sup>19</sup> While Love represents a concept and an aspect of Usk's psyche, she is to an extent characterized, particularly in Book II, for example, in her lament (II.ii), and her discussion of the beguiling of women by men (II.iii).

figure Love, Usk adroitly exploits the omniscience and credibility of Boethius's precedent Philosophy; Love has a life of her own on a par with Philosophy and it is easy to forget that her judgement and words are Usk's own.

Corresponding with the self-justifying autobiographical detail, Usk's ostensible interest in Boethian *contemptus mundi* philosophy—such as the *Testament's* exposure of the falseness of riches, dignity, power, and renown, borrowed from the *Consolation* (*Bo.* II. pr. v–viii)—is not always sustained. For rather than transcending the capriciousness of Fortune, Usk reveals a desire for earthly felicity that runs counter to the concurrent reiteration of Boethian ideals. In the *Testament*, hope forms a leitmotiv, yet in Boethian philosophy immunity to Fortune's whims lies in abandoning all hope (*Bo.* I. met. iv, vii). Usk cannot do so, for his hope of attaining the pearl is identified on one level with the achievement of his political hopes, and Love repeatedly and variously tells him to 'Hope wel and serve wel' (II.ix.914). Love at times seems closer to Chaucer's Pandarus than to Boethius's Philosophy—in an inversion of Boethian philosophy, Love proposes the vacillations of Fortune as the basis for hope that Usk's fortune will change for the better (*TC* I.845–7). For while the *Consolation* attests via natural imagery to an overall design behind life's mutability, conveying a movement from the temporal to the eternal (see e.g. *Bo.* I. met. v; IV met. vi; II. pr. ii; II. met. iii; IV. met. v), the *Testament*, in contrast, does not submit to this universal scheme witnessed in the changes of nature, but uses it to suggest that a change of luck will follow (II.ix.903–14).

The stairs depicted on Philosophy's robe, linking the Greek letter Pi on the bottom of her hem to the Greek letter Theta at the top, represent respectively practical and contemplative philosophy. The motif of ascent is mirrored in the progression of the *Consolation*, from the politics of the material world to the pursuit of knowledge and enlightenment as Boethius arrives at a renunciation of all but philosophical matters (Crabbe 1981: 243). Usk outwardly mirrors this ascent in the structure of his text, from 'deviacion' to 'grace' to 'joy', as he names each of the three books (III.i.3–24), yet room is still given to the worldly and material throughout and to the end, particularly in Usk's concern over the fate of his text (III.viii–ix). This earthly bias is exemplified in Love's worldly advice on obtaining reward—to imitate: 'lyons in the felde and lambes in chambre; egles at assaute and maydens in halle, foxes in counsayle . . . wolves in the

felde . . . by these wayes shul men ben avaunced' (I.v.499–502). The word 'avaunced' applies specifically to this world, for Love cites examples of those who have lived by such 'rules', and their pursuant fortune, such as David, who 'from kepyng of shepe was drawn up into the order of kyngly governaunce' (I.v.502–5).

Despite the Boethian stance, therefore, Usk wishes to progress up the social hierarchy as much as the spiritual one, hence his attraction to exemplars from legend and history who have done so through the 'deserte of a mans own selfe' (II.ii.178–9) and regardless of lineage, such as Sir Perdicas, King Alexander's appointed heir to Greece whose mother was merely a dancer (II.ii.179–82).<sup>20</sup>

The *Testament* also reveals an un-Boethian concern with the correlation between how one appears and what one will achieve, revealing the gap between one's 'real' self and the self one fashions for the world. Love advises: 'lette thy porte [*demeanour*] ben lowe in every wightes presence, and redy in thyne herte to maynteyne that thou hast begonne, and a lytel thee fayne [*feign*] with mekenesse in wordes; and thus with sleight shalt thou surmount and dequace [*suppress*] the yvel in their hertes' (I.v.465–8). The dichotomy between seeming and actuality is a concern throughout the text. Despite Love's advice to Usk to *act* as a virtuous man, she also warns against the deceit of 'honyed wordes' (II.xiv.1365), and cautions that 'under colour of fayre speche many vices may be hyd and conseled' (II.iii.236–7). Usk, however, is careful to have Love emphasize that she knows well his heart and that he is not one of these deceivers (II.iii.289–90).

Indeed, the text reveals a persistent preoccupation with the worldly situation of its author, differing from the *Consolation* where autobiographical detail is concentrated at the beginning, and ultimately subordinate to the construction of a philosophical argument. Usk often collapses metaphorical, allegorical, and 'general' constructs and returns the text to the autobiographical level, most noticeably in the allegory of the 'shyppe of traveyle'. This small allegory not only serves to show the saving grace of love for anyone's 'ship of self' providing that 'Thought', 'Wyl', and 'travayle' accord,

<sup>20</sup> See also II.viii.786–7. Chaucer introduces similar questions concerning the true nature of nobility in the *WBT* and in his poem *Gentillesse*; the practical conclusion of this concept is the accessibility of high office for those of low birth—an important subject for Chaucer and his friends and one he must have been alive to when penning these texts (Pearsall 1992: 150).

but, as seen above, primarily narrates Usk's misguided political affiliation and correction. Usk portrays himself as drawing upon his individual experiences and Gower's contemporary text to illustrate universal themes, yet in reality the primary meaning concerns his personal situation.

Love's words also often demonstrate this movement towards Usk's individual concerns, for example: 'Wenest there be any thyng in this erthe stable? Is nat thy first arest passed that brought thee in mortal sorowe?' (II.x.1022-3)—moving almost within one sentence from questions of general stability to Usk's own. The penultimate chapter returns conclusively to Usk's individual predicament and his final reflections. Usk recapitulates what he has learned, especially by 'fayned love'<sup>21</sup> and this is given a political meaning: 'fayned love bothe realmes and cyties hath governed a great throwe' (III.viii.919-20). The text then sharply returns to Usk's own political past, as Usk laments how 'somtyme with fayned love foule I was begyled' (III.viii.922-3).

The differing ways in which Usk and Boethius imbue their imprisonment with a metaphorical meaning also reveal that the personal and particular are uppermost in the *Testament*. Usk's imprisonment becomes symbolic of his loss of good fortune, and the slander and ruined reputation he is 'bound' by, focusing upon Usk as an individual, and only secondarily acquiring an additional allegorical facet expressive of Everyman. Although the imprisonment possesses a Platonic intimation of the prison-house of ignorance from which education and grace may liberate one, there is only a muted invitation for the reader of the *Testament* to understand his/her experience in these terms. Rather, bondage and suffering principally delineate Usk's *own* situation as the reader looks on; the assumption is that the reader will sympathize but not empathize. This is augmented by Usk's petitionary stance, his desire to persuade the reader of the unjustness of his plight and the merit of his cause, so that, by definition, the reader does not appear to occupy a similar situation of constraint or suffering. In the *Consolation*, however, the topos assumes a broader meaning as the predominance of the persona and his personal experience lessens in favour of a wider view of the human reaction to suffering and loss of fortune, and the

<sup>21</sup> Usk borrows the phrase 'fayned love' from *TCV*.1848. He appears, however, to have misread or changed Chaucer's meaning: when speaking of 'feynede loves' Chaucer appears to be talking of all earthly loves.

Platonic idea of the bondage of attachment to earthly possessions and worldly desires.<sup>22</sup> In contrast, the autobiographical in the *Testament* assumes precedence over the didactic and representational.

To augment the self-justification that Usk displays in narrating his past actions and that is created also by the construction of Love as a vindicating witness, Usk invokes the Aristotelian concept of final causality in relation to his personal predicament.<sup>23</sup> He includes it first to validate and ennoble the *Testament* itself: 'Aristotle supposeth that the actes of every thyng ben in a maner his fynal cause' and this is 'noblerer, or els even as noble, as thilke thing that is finally to thilke ende' (II.i.79–81). As such, Usk states of his motivation for writing the text: 'wherfore . . . the cause with whiche I am stered and for whom I ought it done, noble forsothe ben bothe' (II.i.83–4). His words here are, therefore, an oblique, flattering reference to whoever the Margarite-pearl represents.

Subsequently, the Aristotelian concept is invoked to justify Usk's switch of political alliance—while this shift might have seemed ignoble, it is overridden by the more noble final cause of these actions: to serve love with a clear conscience. Aristotelian causality is invoked, for example, in detailed discussions of correct good service and of political figures from the past. Love states good service comprises reasonable actions to the pleasure and profit of one's sovereign (III.ii.163–4), and cites examples of political figures, such as Paulyn of Rome, Julius Caesar, and Perdicas, whose political actions, like Usk's own, appeared pernicious but were ultimately good (III.ii.144–55). Love then states, 'Certes, it suffiseth nat alone to do good, but goodly withal folowe . . . Aristotel determyneth that ende and good ben one and convertible in understanding, and he that in wyl doth away good, and he that loketh nat to th'ende, loketh nat

<sup>22</sup> See Walsh (1999: pp. xxv–xxvi), and also Crabbe (1981: 241–2) for discussion of the repeated images of the soul bound by material circumstances, particularly in terms of exile from light and from its true home.

<sup>23</sup> Usk appears to have drawn this concept from either the *Physics* or the *Posterior Analytics*; both were well known at the time, particularly as set 'university texts'. Additionally, Robert Grosseteste wrote a commentary on the latter in the thirteenth century. (Luscombe 1997: 62–76, 80–8; and Ross 1995: 70–4.) However, in his Prologue where he is concerned with 'natural causes', Usk refers to Aristotle's *de Animalibus* (*De Anima*) which is partly concerned with teleology; ultimately, which source exactly Usk draws from remains unanswered. Minnis (1988: 163–4) discusses Usk's use of Aristotelian prologues and *causae* though not Usk's political usage of this concept.

to good' (III.ii.191-6). Following, as it does, a discussion of political service, the meaning is that one cannot blindly do good without looking to the consequences, and that sometimes the final end necessitates actions that seem far from altruistic, such as Usk's own political switch.

Usk uses exemplary figures to present his actions as according with the 'law of kynde' (III.ii.153). For just as Boethius refers to other authors, such as Cicero and Seneca because of a resemblance in biography (Crabbe 1981: 242), so Usk alludes to other altruistic turncoats (III.ii.144-52) and, in introducing his own history of switching allegiance (I.vi.544 ff.), specifically invokes 'the Romayne Zedeoreys', who turned from the Romans to be with Hannibal 'ayenst his kynde nacion' (I.vi.541-2) but afterwards turned back again. Throughout, Usk's political actions are presented as similarly true to the 'law of kynde' and suggest he also deserves to be 'rewarded' (III.ii.154). Usk appears ostensibly to display a typological interest here, yet the invocation of such exemplars does not demonstrate the applicability of his experience to Everyman, but instead explicates and justifies his own actions. Again, Usk's depiction as an individual appears to take precedence over the exemplary.

The text's treatment of love also reveals this, allowing Usk to portray himself as a devoted political servant. The *Testament* delineates three different forms of love—the spiritual, the personal, and the political—and unites them in a single ideology of virtuous service in love.<sup>24</sup> When Love first appears to Usk, for example, he expresses his ravished feelings in a way that not only incorporates the earthly and the divine, but also brings the personal and the public together. The awe Usk feels at Love's initial presence is likened to the fear of angels towards 'our savyour in heven' (I.ii.108) which is not 'ferdnes of drede' (I.ii.109-10) but 'affection of wonderfulness and by servyce of obedyence' (I.ii.110-11). Coexisting with this divine analogy is an earthly comparison: 'if a man be in his soveraignes presence, a maner of ferdenesse crepeth in his herte not of harme but of goodly

<sup>24</sup> This brings to mind Chaucer's *PF*, where questions concerning 'common profyt' (*PF* 47) and love, in its social, progenitive and heavenly aspects, are resolved in the dream of a harmonious social hierarchy of birds, ruled over by the goddess Nature, where every bird, concerning personal love, takes 'his owne place' (*PF* 320). Prior to the *PF*'s closing resolution, however, disquiet concerning contemporary alterations in vassalage and service appear 'refracted' through the metaphorical language of love, as concepts of allegiance and service appear implicit, insulated within the discourse of love (Strohm 1989: 93).

subjection' (I.ii.106–7), which joins the spiritual to the political or worldly; Usk then equates this with the private inner state of the lover: 'suche ferde also han these lovers in presence of their loves and subjectes aforne their soveraynes' (I.ii.111–12).

The conflation of spiritual and courtly love with political devotion is important because it permits Usk's self-portrayal as a loyal servant of the 'common weal', concerned by corruption and abuse of power: 'profitable administration in commynalties of realmes and cytes, by evenhed [*equality*] profitably to raigne nat by singuler avauntage, ne by privé envy, ne by soleyn purpose in covetise of worship or of goodes' but 'by love, philosophy, and lawe, and yet love toforne al other' (III.i.65–8). Usk writes that political and social peace are a mirror of divine harmony, for Christ 'made not peace alone betwene hevenly and erthly bodyes, but also amonge us on erthe so He peace conformed, that in one heed of love one body we shulde perfourme' (I.vi.587–9)—seemingly a reference to the 'body politic'.<sup>25</sup>

Usk, therefore, portrays himself as a faithful servant of all loves; he wishes to appear a faithful lover, loyal political servant, and good Christian, and as the recipient of such varying forms of service the Margarite-pearl transforms accordingly into Usk's earthly beloved, or into the object of his secular allegiance or spiritual devotion. Usk's deployment of exemplars from legend and history carries forward the concept of political service and shows how inseparable for Usk are the twin concerns of service in politics and service in love. There are three references to Caesar, for example, the first concerning his relationship with Love (I.ii.167–8), the second with regard to his alleged rise from obscure origins (I.v.504–5) and the third concerned with rewards attained by those involved in political conspiracies (III.ii.148–50). Similarly, Paris is referred to as a recipient of Love's aid (I.ii.165–6), and also as part of the political exemplum of Hector who erroneously allowed him to go to Greece (I.viii.784–7). The accumulation of historical and biblical exempla illustrates powerful men who were lovers, traitors, and conspirators, and each in their turn are invoked to exemplify, even justify, Usk's personal situation. There is no sustained analysis of such exempla, and the same

<sup>25</sup> The 'body politic' was the organic analogy where the common weal is represented by the organism of the human body, frequently witnessed in medieval political writings, the most extensive use of which is found in a twelfth-century work: John of Salisbury's *Policraticus* (Bk. I, ch. v)—completed in 1159 and dedicated to Thomas à Becket.

exemplary figure invoked negatively at one juncture is subsequently invoked in a positive comparison to Usk in self-justification (Siennicki 1985: 69–77 gives a detailed discussion of Usk's use of exempla, particularly this unfixed aspect).

In conflating correct service in love and politics, Usk draws upon the parallelism of erotic and moral codes, that 'the virtues of the good lover were indistinguishable from those of a good man' (C. S. Lewis 1936: 199). He advertises to his desired readers his potential as a loyal political servant indirectly via his portrayal as a faithful courtly lover; he politicizes courtly love, exploiting its metaphorical feudalism and re-employing a sociopolitical meaning. At junctures it appears that the 'language' of erotic love and that of factional affiliation become consciously fused. The conventional dramatis personae of courtly love literature, such as the confidant, the slanderer, and the pseudonym or *senhal* to conceal the identity of the lady addressed (Boase 1977: 63), are used by Usk to merge the personal and the political. The slanderers are real slanderers of his personal and political integrity, and the real identity of his lady, Margarite, is obscured possibly because she represents a political personage. False rumour is traditionally the concern of the courtly lover, but here more is at stake than unrequited love; Usk's political future hangs in the balance. He says 'Sir Daunger' has 'laced' him 'in stockes' (I.iii.341), and, whilst *Daunger* from *The Romance of the Rose* expressly comes to mind, given the political context, 'daunger' in the sense of power or control may also be suggested. Indeed the *MED* gives the first meaning of 'daunger' as domination, power, or control as exercised by a ruler, lord, or adversary.

Similarly, Usk also refers to Love's 'lyvery' (II.xiv.1364), metaphorically denoting those that are true to her, and Love creates Usk as one of her 'privy famyliers' (II.iii.292–4). While this evokes thoughts of courtly medieval games, such as the May Day service of the flower and the leaf, it also suggests the idea of a retinue, a common phenomenon of noble households in the late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, where members wore livery as a badge or sign of their affiliation (Galloway 1997: 298). It also conjures up the economically and politically powerful guilds who also wore liveries at this time, which, given his political past, Usk would certainly have been aware of.

Love's livery and the allied concept of allegiance is introduced in contrast to 'fayned love', as Usk uses erotic seduction and betrayal in



order to explain his past political involvement (Hanrahan 1998: 1–15). He depicts himself as victim of erotic betrayal, while he has been an unchanging servant in love (II.iv.381–2), even though he erroneously served the cause that brought about his suffering. He claims: ‘fayned I never to love otherwyse than was in myn herte . . . I have not . . . with the wethercocke waved’ (I.ii.216–21), and as Hayton (1999: 28) writes this profession ‘comes immediately after he has enumerated the troubles his allegiance to Northampton brought him. There is little room for the reader to interpret Usk’s honest service to Love as anything other than proof of his loyalty to “the comune wele” and London.’ Usk also asserts that even his service to the Northampton faction was good: ‘whyle I admynystred the offyce of commen doyng, as in rulyng of the stablysshmentes amonges the people I defouled never my consyence for no maner dede, but ever . . . the maters were drawn to their right endes’ (I.viii.799–802). Equally, however, he maintains that his betrayal of Northampton was in accordance with Love’s wishes, for he did this ‘onely for trouthe’ (I.vi.627) and because Love and reason made his heart ‘tourne’ (I.ii.222). He portrays himself as undergoing a ‘sea change’; just as Boethius learns through his misfortune, so Usk learns to be a better servant in love through his adversity, because his suffering was ordained by Love herself (I.v.430–2). Even though he has turned against his former party, he portrays himself as having overridden this by his constancy in service to Love, thereby not only justifying his past but marketing his loyalty to his readers in order, I would argue, to win liberation and patronage.

Yet while so marketing himself as a loyal servant, by redeploying the ideals of selfless love Usk also paints himself as a man who asks no reward but the grace to serve. It was customary from the thirteenth century onwards for love poets to disclaim the right to any reward (Boase 1977: 74); the Troubadour, Guiraut Riquier, wrote ‘I deem myself richly rewarded by the inspiration I owe to the love I bear my lady, and I ask no love in return’ (Briffault 1965: 151–2). Furthermore, in the courtly love tradition, if union with the beloved could not occur on a personal level because the beloved was ‘superior’ and in a position to impose obligations, ideally the fulfilment of these obligations replaced the personal union and produced the joy usually ensuing (Boase 1977: 83). The *Testament* similarly disregards the pursuit of satisfaction: Love asserts ‘every ydeot’ desires to pluck ‘the rose of maydenhede’ (I.ix.903–5), or

seeks 'thynges that stretchen into shame' (III.vii.838), and Usk portrays himself as equally without desire for reward or satisfaction.

To augment this, he draws upon Anselm's explication of Christian grace and free will. While the ostensible concern appears religious and eschatological, he appropriates Anselm's arguments to explicate the role of the individual's will or purpose within civic or public service.<sup>26</sup> Through incorporation of Anselm's discussion Usk portrays himself as learning that the opportunity to *serve* love is his grace or reward, and as this opportunity has been given to him by the Margarite-pearl, he is merely quitting his debt in steadfastly serving her (III.vii.892–901). However, at first he erroneously hopes that in serving the pearl through free will rather than 'necessyte' he merits reward: 'if I by my good wyl deserve this Margarit perle and am nat therto compelled, and have free choice to do what me lyketh, she is than holden as me thynketh, to rewarde th'entent of my good wyl' (III.ii.222–5). Love, however, corrects him with the traditional Christian view that grace cannot be 'earned': 'retribucion of thy good wylls . . . beareth not the name of mede but onely of good grace, and that cometh not of thy deserte' (III.vii.877–9). Goodwill does not 'earn' reward for it is precipitated by 'grace'—as Anselm writes: 'Assuredly, even though uprightness is kept by free choice, still its being kept must be imputed not so much to free choice as to grace; for free choice possesses and keeps uprightness only by means of prevenient and of subsequent grace' (Hopkins and Richardson 1976: 203). Once Usk accepts the harsh finality of Love's concluding argument: 'Thus thy gynning and endyng is but grace alone' (III.vii.903–4), she leaps into his heart there to 'onbyde . . . for ever' (III.vii.911).

The lesson is that love, whether romantic, spiritual, or political devotion, should need no reward other than the grace to serve such

<sup>26</sup> Book III borrows extensively from *De Concordia Praescientiae et Praedestinationis Nec Non Gratiae Dei Cum Libero Arbitrio*: chs. ii–iv from Quaestio I; chs. v–vii from Quaestio II; and chs. viii–ix from Quaestio III. Sanderlin (1942: 69–73) first demonstrated the *Testament's* debt to Anselm's work, noting that Usk has changed the term *rectitude*, meaning the *end* assigned to free choice—'rightwysnesse' (III.viii.965) or the rightness of will as Medcalf (1989: 190) terms it—to 'the word *love*, meaning an *act* of the will' and referring especially to his own will's love of the Margarite. Similarly, Usk substitutes 'recta voluntas' with 'loving wil'. Medcalf (1989: 188–9) examines how closely Usk follows Anselm in certain passages, and Schlauch (1970: 97–103) provides a stylistic and grammatical examination of Usk's translation of Anselm; neither discuss the political implications of Usk's deployment of Anselm's philosophy.

love; serving love is its own reward, just as the *Consolation* defines goodness as its own reward (*Bo.* IV. pr. iii). However, despite the text's ostensible didactic and lofty concerns, the personal and particular is not transcended, for the argument returns to the specifics of Usk's situation in a way unprecedented in Boethius's or Anselm's texts (see e.g. *TL* II.iv.363 ff.; III.i.106 ff.). As such, on the political level the discussion of grace and free will initially intimates, as Strohm (1992: 103) has argued, that Usk *freely chose* to switch allegiance and serve the royalist party as opposed to being compelled by circumstance. Yet in reality the emphasis is ultimately on grace as opposed to free will—that Usk's desire or will to so serve was first inspired by the Margarite-pearl's grace, and thereby such emphasis operates primarily as a compliment to whoever the pearl represents.

The text appears not simply concerned with the lessons proffered, but with the presentation of Usk having learned these lessons, as he fashions himself as a loyal and selfless 'servant' who expects nothing in return for his 'service', whether Christian devotion or political loyalty, for the grace to serve is its own reward. He reiterates he will be steadfast and not be 'turned by frendes, and disease of manace and thretnyng in lesynge of my lyfe' (III.v.591–2)—in other words, those things that mar his reputation.

This is a persuasive combination, particularly for a reader who has some influence over his fate; moreover, it is enticing for one who is in need of such faithful servants. Indeed, the potentially pragmatic and material value of such a scheme appears to surface at junctures. When the discussion of grace and reward turns to Usk's political situation, with the promise from Love that his actions against Northampton merit reward—'Right suffred yet never but every good dede somtyme to be yolde [repaid]' (III.vi.789)—it suggests that in reality Usk hopes that grace of a material and worldly nature might be *won* by good service after all: 'Contynuaunce in thy good service by longe processe of tyme in ful hope abyding, without any chaunge to wylne in thyne herte . . . if it be wel kept and governed shal so hugely springe tyl the fruite of grace is plentuously out sprongen' (III.vi.698–701). The text, therefore, tacitly counter-poses a reward system based on constancy, truth, and hard work, within which Usk can place himself; 'grace' is never divested of its worldly interpretations (Strohm 1990: 103–4)—it refers to Usk as a suitor, a Christian, *and* as political servant. The bestower of earthly grace, as Love makes clear, is the king—'To the gracious kyng arte thou mikel

holden, of whose grace and goodnesse somtyme herafter I thinke thee enforme' (II.iv.383-4)—who rewarded Usk with a pardon following his appeal against Northampton: 'What goodnesse, what bountie with mokel folowing pyté founde thou in that tyme? Were thou not goodly accepted into grace?' (II.xiv.1404-5). There is, therefore, a subtextual concern with the possibility of being rewarded again with a similar 'grace'. On one level the grace hoped for is the opportunity in the wake of appealing Northampton to be of service once again, that Usk desires liberation, patronage, and promotion. The ambiguity of the treatment of love and service allows this to emerge, even while it is not fully acknowledged.

Usk markets his loyalty and desire to serve in a worldly capacity, therefore, while at the same time wishing to appear disinterested, concerned primarily with spiritual matters. As such, Love's leap into Usk's heart may supply an *ostensible* conclusion to the text, but it is not the attainment of the narrator's 'quest'. Ultimately this remains unrealized as Usk must still gain the mercy and 'grace' of whoever the Margarite represents, witnessed in the *Testament's* acrostic, which signals that the potential for the fulfilment of this 'quest' lies outside the text.

### III

The *Testament* appears specifically epideictic, leading to speculation regarding the possible identity of the Margarite. Usk portrays himself as fearful that the treacherous slander he suffers will 'be brought to the jewel that I of meane' (I.vi.653); he also describes the Margarite as a jewel who makes fair all the realm (I.iii.335), the regality of which might suggest King Richard, particularly considering Usk's comparison of the Margarite-pearl to another king, King David (II.xi.1130-3) and the treatment of Usk's political affiliations in terms of courtly love. Love's assurance that reward for Usk's service will follow, particularly as this service has brought him 'newe disese' (II.xiv.1399), also persuades that the pearl and King Richard are on one level synonymous:

And so thylke Margaryte thou servest shal sene thee, by her servyce out of peryllous trybulacion delyvered, bycause of her servyce into newe disese fallen . . . Remembre . . . howe horribly somtyme to thyne Margaryte thou trespasest, and in a great wyse ayenst her thou forfeyst . . . What good-

nesse, what bountie, with mokol folowyng pité founde thou in that tyme? Were thou not goodly accepted into grace? (II.xiv.1397–405)

Given that earlier in the *Testament* (II.iv.383) Usk specifically refers to his royal pardon as receiving his king's 'grace', and given also the material nature of the grace discussed here, the 'trespass' seems to refer to Usk's actions against the royal party, while the service that has brought him 'newe disese' appears to imply his switch of allegiance to the royal party and the slander he consequently suffers. The royalist emphasis is continued when good service is defined as: 'resonable workynges in plesaunce and profit of thy soverayne' (III.ii.163–4). Furthermore, Usk defines his relationship to the pearl in terms of a bond: 'under this bonde am I constrayned to abyde . . . under lyveng lawe ruled' and by that law he is obligated to be rewarded according to his deserts by pain or wealth unless mercy waives the debt of pain (III.i.98–101). Usk refers to his role as 'subject' and recipient of reward, pain, or mercy from one who has power to dispense such things—whether Usk's God or his king is meant remains elusive, but in the light of the worldly interest repeatedly propounded, I would argue he implies his king.

Furthermore, Usk adds to Boethius's historical exempla, in order to emphasize the role of the monarch, particularly the English monarch, and he attempts to create a historical context in which English kings are given the same great, yet tragic, status as classical heroes and rulers.<sup>27</sup> Tellingly, the only king presented in a thoroughly positive and infallible light is Richard II; Love says, for example: 'To the gracious kyng arte thou mykel holden, of whose grace and goodness somtyme hereafter I thinke thee enforme whan I shew the ground where as moral vertue groweth' (II.iv.383–5). Alongside descriptions opposed to the all-too-frequent misrule of kings, therefore, exist conciliatory gestures towards Usk's own king.

Usk's allegiance throughout the *Testament* is directed towards a principle and a person: the former the 'common good', the latter, I would argue, Richard II.<sup>28</sup> This would account on the one hand for

<sup>27</sup> Usk invokes Edward III in the same vein as Hercules and Alexander the Great (Prol. 60–6). In addition to Edward III, Usk also refers to King Arthur (II.ii.180), Richard II himself (II.iv.382–6), King John (II.vi.559–60), and Henry Curtmantil (II.vii.628–31): Edward III could not defeat France; Arthur's lineage died out; King John's pride brought war with France and the loss of crown lands in that country; and Henry Curtmantil (Henry II) died poor and unmourned.

<sup>28</sup> However, L. Lewis (1999: 63–71) speculates that the Margarite-pearl is Margaret Berkeley, wife of Thomas Berkeley. However, 'Margarite' derives from the

Usk's concern that whoever the Margarite-pearl represents does not believe the slander he suffers (I.vi.653) as the Margarite is the only person who can end his imprisonment (I.iii.337–8), while on the other hand, it explains the persistently abstract nature of the pearl, the lack of physical characteristics.<sup>29</sup> Indeed, the femaleness of the Margarite—even though the pearl may represent a male figure, such as Richard—is not due only to Usk's redeployment of the rhetoric of the lover's fidelity within a political context, but also to the feminine gender of the Latin word for pearl, *margarita*. The logic behind late-classical and medieval personification allegory (and notably the reason why Boethius makes Philosophy female, as the Boethian commentary-tradition explicates), is that in Latin and Romance languages, feminine nouns—particularly abstract nouns—when personified and imagined anthropomorphically by authors, are given a female form (Cooper 1991: 31–2, 35).

It is likely that the *Testament* once contained named references not only to Usk himself but also to his king, but the text was edited and tampered with, and such direct references were removed somewhere between Usk's holograph and the version in Thynne's possession from which he printed his edition. If we can reorder Book III to accord with the acrostic, then it must originally have been ordered that way: that is, there was once something visible there that became invisible through the disordering of the book's chapters, suggesting the text was tampered with and that it is not, as we have it, complete (Shoaf 1998: 22). A quire appears to have been turned inside out and reversed, but this meant that the apparent halves did not match up evenly, and that part of the text was missing. As Bressie (1928b: 28) writes: 'The first part contains 512 lines, the second 494 lines, the third 378, and the fourth 80 lines, of the Thynne text, and these will not balance unless we assume that part of the text is missing.' A

Latin for pearl (*margarita*)—the 'appeal' of the acrostic meaning simply: 'pearl of virtue have mercy on thine Usk'. Lewis's reading depends on reading the Margarite-pearl literally, as an actual woman, rather than as a mutable symbol, of which only one facet is the object of courtly love, but deployed as a feudal metaphor for devotion to the 'common wele'. Margaret Berkeley is identified by Lewis because her of maiden name: de Lisle (alternatively 'de Insula' in memorials). However, it appears more likely that the island Usk refers to is taken from Gower and is intended as Britain. For a different reading of the identity of the Margarite as Queen Anne, see Bressie (1928b: 27–8).

<sup>29</sup> Siennicki (1985: 21, 83, 131, 146, 171–2, 203–14) reiterates Skeat's (1897: 476) argument that Usk's description of the Margarite as a 'womanly woman' (II.xii.1246) is an analogy not a *descriptio*.

portion of the text does seem to be missing given Love's words that she will inform Usk of the grace and goodness of the king when she discusses 'the grounde where as moral vertue groweth' (II.iv.385). Yet when in Book III she discusses the ground where moral virtue flourishes there is no ensuing discussion pertaining to the king, or anywhere else in the *Testament*. This suggests the original existence of something later offensive to the prejudiced reader who would wish to mutilate it. Such mutilation was probably a Lancastrian agenda, like the obliteration of Richard's portrait from Bodley MS 581.<sup>30</sup> As R. A. Shoaf (1998: 24) writes, the removal of 'references and allusions to Usk and Richard II repugnant to a Lancastrian; and the easiest means of removal would have been mangling the quire and re-inserting it in the manuscript'.

If there is—and was once more clearly—a connection between King Richard and the Margarite-pearl, then the lapidary traditions and their royalist allusions that inform *Pearl* are of interest here. John Bowers (1995: 111–15) has argued persuasively that there is a connection between Richard's concern with the divine sanctity of his role as king and *Pearl*'s suppression of earthly and spiritual boundaries, via its regalian imagery. Richard's preoccupation with the spiritual aspect of his role is apparent in the Wilton Diptych.<sup>31</sup> The crown he wears in this picture is one he actually owned; pinnaced and decorated with 132 pearls (for a clear photograph of this crown see Gordon and Barron 1993: 13) it is reminiscent of the crown worn by the celestial *Pearl*-maiden: 'Hiȝe pynakled of cler quyt perle, l Wyth flurted flowrez perfet vpon' (*Pearl*, IV.207–8). The crown is the traditional symbol of divine empowerment; it is the archetypal representation of the theory known as 'the king's two bodies'—the

<sup>30</sup> Shoaf (1998: 22, 20–5). Shoaf argues that given Thynne's reverence for Chaucer it is unlikely that he would have tampered with his copy. Dane (1998: 92–3) notes that the type of manuscript Skeat hypothesized as the 'original' upon which Thynne based his copy—a manuscript in 16s—was quite rare and usually contained collections of Chauceriana, thereby suggesting that the canonization of the *Testament* as Chaucer's or Chaucerian must have occurred earlier in the fifteenth century. However, see Middleton (1998: 70, 75) where she discusses the likelihood of the source manuscript being a manuscript in 8s.

<sup>31</sup> This portrays Richard kneeling at the feet of St John the Baptist, who reaches out to him with his right hand, while in his left he carries a symbolic lamb. Behind Richard stand St Edmund and the sainted Edward the Confessor. Facing Richard are the Virgin and Christ child, and behind them eleven angels. (For excellent plates of this, see Gordon and Barron 1993: 24–8.) Goodman (1999: 13) writes: 'its iconography perfectly encapsulated the spiritual agenda of the late medieval English polity'.

king as a private mortal being vested with a material, exterior gold circle or diadem at his coronation, and his concurrent embodiment of immutable royal power, of an immaterial, abstract and perpetual 'institution' descended from God: the Crown (Kantorowicz 1957: 7–8, 337). Usk's Margarite-pearl may operate as a metonym for the Crown, for Usk writes: 'the shynynge sonne of vertue in bright whele of this Margaryte' (II.i.92–3) and 'no wight is worthy suche perles to weare but kynges or princes or els their peres. This jewel for vertue wold adorne and make fayre al a realme' (I.iii.333–5). As such the Margarite also appears synonymous with the common weal, for as a symbol, the Crown embraced both the *corpus politicum* and the *mysterium coronae* and was represented by the organic analogy of the human body, a concept which Usk appears to invoke—God 'con-firmed' peace 'on erthe' so 'that in one heed of love one body shulde perfourme' (I.vi.587–9). As Kantorowicz writes (1957: 363), for the later Middle Ages the whole body politic was present in the Crown, from kings to lords and commons, and he quotes bishop John Stafford (d. 1452): 'In the figure of the Crown, the rule and polity of the realm are presented; for in the gold, the rule of the Community is noted, and in the flowers of the Crown, raised and adorned with jewels, the Honor and Office of the King or Prince is designated.' These words recall Richard's pearl-pinnacled crown, and draw attention to the correlation of jewel and monarch. However, they were spoken some forty years after Usk was writing. Yet if this view was also current during Richard's reign, it may provide a basis for Usk's representing his sovereign as a jewel—the pearl as a symbol and a person would represent the common weal and Richard himself. Indeed, Richard had a keen sense of his Christological identity,<sup>32</sup> and Usk's placing his king in a symbolic concept which represented the divine and common good is certainly in keeping.

In addition to Richard's crown of pearls, the abundance of pearls in the royal jewellery has been noted (Bowers 1995: 138–40; Cherry 1987: 177–8). To name but a few items, Richard owned a golden altar cross set with nearly four hundred pearls, a gilt collar set with fifty-eight pearls (Saul 1997: 355) and two broomscod collars—one

<sup>32</sup> Bowers (1995: 144–5). Richard was so acutely conscious of his sacred kingship and his divine right to rule, that ultimately, in the revision of the Law of Treason in 1397, he legally merged all that the Crown as a symbol represented with the person of the king, so that treason against himself equalled an act of high treason against the Crown (Bellamy 1970: 208, 229).



ornamented with twenty-seven pearls, and the other with twenty-three pearls (Mathew 1968: 27). Further, in 1386, for the Feast of the purification of the Virgin, Richard had made special robes upon which White Hart badges—his personal emblem—were embroidered in pearls, as was later Richard's White Hart badge in the Wilton Diptych (Gordon, Monnas, and Elam 1997: 170; Gordon and Barron 1993: 21, 30–1). Usk's references to the 'livery' of Love's servants and his self-portrayal as one of her 'privy familyers' (II.iii.294) may be an allusion to Richard's increasing use of badges and livery collars, linked to his active attitude to retaining following the Wonderful Parliament of 1386, as Richard recruited men into his service up and down the land<sup>33</sup>—Usk eventually was to be such a recruit. Certainly other texts such as *Pearl*<sup>34</sup> and *Richard the Redeles* appear to refer to Richard's livery.<sup>35</sup> However, whether the royal fondness for pearls, the growing royalist significance of livery, and the possible link between the two in the White Hart emblem were consciously borne in mind by Usk when writing is uncertain, particularly given that Richard did not *publicly* adopt the White Hart as his livery badge until 1390 (Gordon, Monnas, and Elam 1997: 169), and as it is possible that Usk was writing as early as 1385, during a second imprisonment.

Although Richard had a reputation as a connoisseur of French literature, due to the list of royal books in the Memoranda Roll for 1384–5 which consists of French romances and poetry (Rickert 1933: 145; Bowers 1995: 121; Saul 1997: 354), he purchased none of these. Instead they appear to have been mainly inherited from his grandfather, and most of them had been sold or pawned within a

<sup>33</sup> Gordon, Monnas, and Elam (1997: 72); Given-Wilson (1986: 213–14). Given-Wilson (1986: 241) points out that the two periods that witnessed new legislation on livery badges (1388–90 and 1399–1401) followed attempts by Richard II to use livery badges to extend his following at politically critical junctures. See also Given-Wilson (1999: 126–7).

<sup>34</sup> Pearl makes use of the concept of liveries and their associated allegiance to convey the fidelity and harmony of Christ's brides 'And alle in sute her livrés wasse' (XIX.1108), and describes the 'makelles perle' (XIII.733–44) worn as a badge by the Pearl Maiden and others belonging to the heavenly household. Bowers (1995: 136–7) discusses the poem's regal imagery together with Richard II's political and personal affiliation with Cheshire in the 1390s, and suggests *Pearl* is possibly a pro-royalist work and that its poet may allude flatteringly to Richard's policy of bestowing the White Hart badges as livery.

<sup>35</sup> Unlike *Pearl*, *Richard the Redeles* (Passus II.101) clearly, though critically, alludes to Richard's royal livery (Barr 1993: 18–20, 112). See also Barr (1994: 72–3) for a discussion of the poem's allusion and wordplay on this topic.

year of his possession of them. It seems too much importance has been given to this list and that as the books are recorded in the Exchequer and not in the Chamber they could not have formed part of Richard's personal reading matter. It is probable that in the new court culture these French romances would have been thought rather old-fashioned by Richard and his courtiers (Scattergood 1983: 29–43; Green 1976: 235). It is, of course, difficult to gauge how literary Richard was, and to what extent he was interested in English literature.<sup>36</sup> Without the miraculous discovery of the Chamber accounts or a proper inventory of Richard's library, this is something likely to remain unclarified. But it does seem possible, and perhaps even likely, that Richard viewed the reputations of his courtly *littérateurs* as contributing to his image as a 'sage'. In Usk's choice and defence of English (Prol. 16–27), he may, therefore, have been playing to a view that was already favourable (Saul 1997: 360).

A possible connection between the *Testament* and Richard II might also elucidate Usk's interest in law. While Usk's interjections on matters of law are more probably aimed at an audience of royal administrators, it should be noted that Richard's interest in this subject was exceptional for an English king of the period (*ibid.* 358). He commissioned a book of statutes<sup>37</sup> and a literary compilation<sup>38</sup> the dedication of which heeds his legal expertise, saying that he governed 'in sublime fashion not so much by force of arms as by philosophy and the two laws'. He was also familiar with the rudiments of civil law and made adroit use of the concepts of sovereignty and majesty in elaborating the language of address (*ibid.* 357–8).

Usk is concerned as early as Book I with law—positive or written law and more importantly natural law or 'law of kynde' (I.v.453 ff.). Natural law as a medieval concept is an area of considerable ambiguity and there is not appropriate space here to give a full discussion of its origins and meanings (for this see Alford 1977: 942 ff.; Barr 1992: 49–80). Suffice it to say that confusion over its exact

<sup>36</sup> Scattergood (1983: 30) refutes the idea of Richard presiding at the centre of a literary court culture based on the English language with Chaucer and Gower as its prominent representatives. Yet he admits that there is evidence for Richard's interest in English literature, such as Gower's references to the CA as 'A bok for King Richardes sake' and to himself as 'leige man' to the king, and his description of Richard's 'commissioning' the poem on the Thames one day.

<sup>37</sup> St John's College, Cambridge, MS A.7. This is obviously a presentation copy (Saul 1997: 358; 1999: 44).

<sup>38</sup> The collection of tracts in Bodley MS 581. See Saul (1997: 357; 1999: 44).

definition arises from its representing both a natural, animal instinct, particularly to procreate, and equally a natural ability inherent in humanity to distinguish what is right and just. Isidore of Seville placed emphasis on the latter meaning, highlighting natural law's commonality and distinguishing it from written law. Gratian took this further, identifying the law of nature with the law of God and the gospels, and Nicholas of Lyra located natural law in man's heart as natural reason, because written law, divine or civil, is derived from natural law. Aquinas saw natural law not as contrary to the natural world, but as part of the rational order of the universe (Barr 1992: 50, 52–3) and that its first principle was love of God and of one's neighbour (White 1988: 8). These concepts are also fundamental in Giles of Rome's *De Regimine Principum*, a work very close to Aquinas's own of that name, and which, unlike Aquinas's, was certainly known in England before the fifteenth century—indeed, Richard II himself possibly knew Giles's text (Saul 1999: 44–5). Many people owned private copies and John Trevisa translated it into English at the end of the fourteenth century (Barr 1992: 53). For Giles, 'kynde riȝt and kynde lawe is iwrete in owre hertes' and 'kynde riȝt' dictates 'positive riȝt', with the latter merely qualifying and taking further the former; Giles also specifically links 'kynde riȝt' with common profit (Fowler, Briggs, and Remley 1997: 367–8).

Similarly, for Usk natural law is found in the heart, for it is Love's law, 'by God ordayned and stabliſshed to dure by kynde reasoun' (I.v.453–4). It is 'commune to every kyndely creature . . . and . . . general to al peoples' (I.v.455–6) and secondary and answerable to it is 'mannes lawes' (I.v.448) or positive law. The latter point is extremely important for Usk. In his switch of allegiance he portrays himself as obedient to Love and reason and thereby as true to the 'law of kynde'—a static and timeless law, distinguished from, and superior to, the 'dyversyté' (I.v.446) of cultures, factions, and customs—and by doing so he attempts to place himself above legal reprehension and to justify his political volte-face. Furthermore, Usk may have hoped to win royal favour through the importance given to natural law, in particular that all under this law are bound by obedience to the Margarite-pearl (III.i.97), for natural law was often used to highlight the naturalness of monarchical authority (see *PP*, C-text, Prol. 139–50; White 1988: 16–17).

Aside from the predominant, but perhaps slim, hope that his book would come before Richard II, just who was Usk's intended audi-

ence? Usk is openly concerned with the *Testament's* reception: 'Nowe gynneth my penne to quake to thincken on the sentences of the envyous people whiche alwaye ben redy, bothe ryder and goer, to skorne and to jape this leude booke, and me, for rancoure and hate in their hertes' (II.i.46–8; see also III.ix.1088–92). Indeed, the text goes so far as to inscribe the reader, constructing potential critical readers as envious (Prol. 72–3), and soliciting the support and prayers of the 'good reder' (III.ix.1114) with the reminder that: 'He that prayeth for other, for himselfe travayleth' (III.ix.1118–19).

The choice of English as the language considered 'natural' for his text,<sup>39</sup> the scheme of love, the reverence for Usk's king, and choice of textual authorities—Boethius, Anselm, Aristotle, more topically Chaucer, and possibly Gower—are defined by the presumed collective and communal moral values of the reader(s). In this assumed 'collective authorship' (Heffernan 1988: 18–19) Usk defines himself as 'like' his reader, his value system a reflection of theirs. The reader is not only required to possess an analytic ability that incorporates a knowledge of contemporary literary and linguistic practice, able to penetrate the integration of religious and political language—'a sleight inseer, whiche that can souke hony of the harde stone' (III.i.104–5), a 'good reder' (III.ix.1114)—but is also required to be of the author's political/social milieu.

Given the above, it is most likely that Usk's intended audience constituted the 'community of law and letters' made up of the justices, lawyers, and clerks at Chancery with whom he associated pursuant to his appeal against Northampton (Galloway 1997: 299–300, and Hallmundsson 1978: 362–5). At the time the Chancery was no longer simply an administrative body, but had evolved into a court of law, which began to receive petitions and present them to the triers of petitions, men assigned by the king, and although by 1385 those who tried petitions were nominated by a clerk of Parliament, such a clerk always belonged to the Chancery.<sup>40</sup> It is likely, therefore,

<sup>39</sup> Usk's attitude to language reveals a consistent theme of the *Testament*: the professed importance of what is natural. He chooses to compose his work in English and in prose because this is natural; similarly, his political actions are motivated by his natural, almost filial, love for the city of London, towards which he has 'more kyndely [*natural*] love' (I.vi.579) than for any other place on earth, just 'as every kyndely creature hath ful appetyte to that place of his kyndly engendrure' (I.vi.579–80).

<sup>40</sup> Hallmundsson (1978: 359). Hallmundsson finally dismisses such men as the likely intended audience due to the fact that they too were persecuted in the wake of

that Usk wished his text to appeal to the clerks, lawyers, and judges of Chancery, notably Nicholas Brembre himself, Robert Tresilian, chief justice of the King's Bench, and Robert Bealknap, chief justice of the Common Bench. Tresilian and Bealknap were not only Richard's most trusted advisers, but literary men with literary connections. Tresilian knew Chaucer and probably Gower too, and was present at Usk's testimony in August 1384. Bealknap moved in Gower's circle of friends, and also knew Chaucer. Both Bealknap and Chaucer were appointed justices of the peace for Kent, and Chaucer testified before Bealknap in the Scrope-Grosvenor case and appeared before him as mainperneur for Simon Manning, whose wife, Katherine, may have been Chaucer's sister (Hallmundsson 1978: 362-3).

For such a desired audience, therefore, but one he cannot quite reach directly because of his incarceration and/or his fall from political grace, Usk, in his literary re-creation of himself transfigures his loyalty as a lover into his capacity for political allegiance, and at junctures translates traditional theological views of free will and grace into his willing choice to serve worldly concerns without regard for reward. Rather than autobiographical detail serving the ideological scheme, as is most commonly found in medieval literature, in fact the ideological scheme serves Usk's self-presentation and self-exoneration, intended to operate as an 'appeal' to his readers. Self-inclusion is motivated not by the authority potentially claimed through personal experience in exemplifying a broader message, but rather for audience persuasion. Imprisoned within a negative public image, he must convince of the greater reality and veracity of an inner, private self designed to be politically attractive. Written before Usk's royal preferment in the form of enlistment as a royal servant and probably during a second imprisonment during 1385, the text is part self-propaganda created to woo Brembre's royalist party and key royal administrators, and potentially even the king himself. By alluding to Chaucer and gleaning from his *Boece* and *Troilus*, and from Gower's *Vox Clamantis*, it seems Usk hoped to flatter this readership, and to follow such writers in attaining royal patronage.

Usk does not convincingly present himself as certain of the vain-

the 'Merciless Parliament'. Yet as Usk almost certainly wrote the *Testament* during and following his imprisonment for involvement with Northampton's conspiracies, rather than as late as 1387-8, then Hallmundsson's suggested audience remains a likely one.

glory of this world.<sup>41</sup> He was not writing to save his soul, but to save his career and win release. He had succeeded before through penning his appeal; this had not been dictated as an oral deposition to a coroner to be then written as an objective account, as was usual, but written in Usk's 'own [honde]' (Chambers and Daunt 1931: 22) as a first-person narrative and a personal accusation or *appellum* (Strohm 1992: 145 ff.). The Westminster Chronicler recounts that Usk introduced each article of his appeal at the trial with 'I, Thomas Usk, *traitor*, etc.' (Hector and Harvey 1982: 93 [my italics]) and the text itself is composed as a confession of guilt by a contrite man who, as royal witness, asks for 'grace & mercy of my lyge lord the kyng' offering a promise of better conduct—that he will 'euer stonde be the town & . . . be redy [at] al tymes' (Chambers and Daunt 1931: 30–1). The appeal may have saved his life, but it cost him his reputation; however, he retained a faith in his literary ability to change his circumstances, for with the *Testament*, he modifies his appeal's earlier textual identity, rewriting himself as simply once-misguided in his choice of allegiance, but ever-loyal in his service.

<sup>41</sup> My reading of the *Testament*, therefore, sharply differs from that of Carlson (1993: 55 ff.), who believes that Usk renounces politics in favour of 'higher affairs of the heart'.

# James I of Scotland and *The Kingis Quair*

## I

Born in 1394, the last child of Robert III of Scotland, by the time he was 8 years old James Stewart was the single male heir to the Scottish throne. Robert III's second son had died before James was born, while his eldest son, David, Duke of Rothesay was murdered in 1402—probably starved to death—while in the custody of the Duke of Albany, who had for years been the virtual ruler of Scotland due to his brother Robert's ill health. To secure young James's safety, therefore, in mid-March 1406 he and his escort secretly obtained a passage to France. On 22 March, however, his ship was captured by Norfolk pirates, and James was taken to Henry IV at Westminster. Shortly after hearing of his son's capture, Robert died on 4 April 1406, and thereby, James's value as a prisoner increased: Henry, who already held Murdoch, Albany's son, now held captive the nominal Scottish king (Balfour-Melville 1936: 10, 21, 281; and M. Brown 1994: 9–17).

Following Robert's death, Albany was made governor of Scotland and embarked on a foreign policy directed to his own ends, doing little to secure James's release. Uncrowned and denied the authority of his rank,<sup>1</sup> James was powerless to change this. He was to spend eighteen years as a prisoner of the English, periodically incarcerated in the Tower and at other times kept with the Court, often at Windsor Castle (Balfour-Melville 1936: 47–8, 60; M. Brown 1994: 20).

The year 1415 saw Murdoch's release, and with it, the end of Albany's pretence of attempting to secure the same for James. In this same year, however, James's fortunes improved as he was afforded an effectual political role: he was able to present himself actively as

<sup>1</sup> Records up to 1412 merely refer to James as 'son of the late king' (M. Brown 1994: 18).

the King of Scots, enjoying for the first time the symbols of his rank; in return he was to accompany Henry V to France so that, with their own king, Henry could confront the 6,000 Scots who supported the Dauphin. In his new role, James was present both at Henry's marriage to Catherine of Valois in June 1420 and her coronation, and on St George's Day in 1421, before he returned once again to France, he was knighted by Henry.

Henry's death in August 1422, however, led to the end of James's French expedition and to his release a year and a half later. With the death of their king and the minority of his heir (Henry VI) the English desired peace, and felt it imperative to end Scottish support for the Dauphin. Negotiations began for James's release—the English clearly felt James would be a potential ally in Scotland.<sup>2</sup> In February 1424, immediately preceding, and indeed as part of the conditions of his release, James married an English noblewoman, Joan Beaufort. Joan's family was prominent both in social standing and political power. Two of her uncles, Thomas, Duke of Exeter and Henry, Bishop of Winchester, were half-brothers of Henry IV and both held important governmental positions (Balfour-Melville 1936: 100). The couple left London shortly after their marriage, reaching Durham on 28 March (for the signing of the Anglo-Scottish truce), and arriving at Edinburgh in early May. Shortly afterwards James was crowned king.<sup>3</sup>

The smooth relinquishing of power from Murdoch, then governor, to James at the coronation belied underlying tensions. By June 1424, all outward appearances of collaboration ended, as James began a campaign to limit the power of Murdoch and the Albany-Stewarts that ended in their obliteration. Following trials on 24 and 25 May for somewhat spurious charges of treason, Walter Stewart, his grandfather, Duncan, Earl of Lennox, Murdoch, and his son Alexander were all condemned and beheaded (Duncan 1976: 9). Shock rippled throughout the Scottish nobility. Yet James continued to present himself as returning restorer of peace, justice, and order (M. Brown 1994: 116–17; Duncan 1976: 2–6). Not since Robert the Bruce had Scotland been under such strong rule, as James imposed a system of government based upon the Lancastrian totalitarian one

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. 24. The English terms were £40,000 for James's so-called 'expenses in England' with sufficient hostages as security until this sum was paid.

<sup>3</sup> His coronation at Scone took place on 21 May 1424; the first Parliament of his reign met at Perth and opened on 26 May.



that he had witnessed.<sup>4</sup> Perhaps not surprisingly, the English found that James was not the weak satellite king they had anticipated; indeed, from 1428 they were to all intents and purposes competing with the French for his support.

By 1436, with Scotland effectively under his control, with international respect and recognition and with a male heir to cement his position, it appeared James was truly at the top of Fortune's wheel. Yet for all outward appearance, his security did not run deep. The destruction of the Albany-Stewarts had not been forgotten by his subjects, and their obedience rested less upon respect and affection than on fear and self-interest. Further, his subjects saw royal demands for increased taxation as greed, particularly his demands in October 1436 for further money to sustain the border war against the English.<sup>5</sup>

By the meeting of the estates at Perth on 4 February 1437, amid widespread discontentment, a plot for James's murder was afoot. Robert Graham, James's uncle Walter Stewart, Earl of Atholl, and Atholl's grandson Robert were the main protagonists, successfully recruiting men who in their former support of the Albany-Stewarts were motivated by past resentment. James was unaware of any hostility, and therefore, following the meeting, he continued to reside at the customarily undefended Dominican Friary at Perth. Shortly after midnight, therefore, on 20 February 1437, Graham and his mob entered the royal chamber and James was brutally murdered.

*The Kingis Quair* was written by James I during his captivity. Attribution of the *Quair* to James is partly based on the second scribe's colophon in the only extant manuscript, Arch Selden B.24 (dated c.1488–1500—see Boffey and Edwards 1997: 6 for a description). The colophon reads: 'Explicit etc. etc. Quod Iacobus primus scotorum rex Illustrissimus' (fo. 211a) which is supported by a rubric (fo. 192a) in a hand later than the manuscript (Boffey and Edwards 1997: 21), entitling the poem: 'Heirefter followis the quair

<sup>4</sup> Balfour-Melville (1936: 106). This included the strong authority of the Crown and a centralized government, heavy taxation, a reformed Church, and a free commons.

<sup>5</sup> A demand felt as insupportable considering James's recent humiliating military defeat by the English at Roxborough (Duncan 1976: 23). Scotland was at this point allied with the French, for in June 1436, James's eldest daughter Margaret married the French Dauphin, son of Charles VII. As part of this alliance, James was, with the expiry of the English truce, to wage war on the borders.

Maid be King James of Scotland the first callit the Kingis Quair Maid quhen his Maiestie wes in England'. J. T. T. Brown (1896: 7), however, first doubted the validity of the colophon, largely because of the scribes' incorrect ascription of five poems to Chaucer; yet the attribution to James I is unique, whereas attributions of poems to Chaucer at the time were not.

Furthermore, James's literary endeavours are well chronicled. Walter Bower's *Scotichronicon* (c.1440s) confirms that James enjoyed literary composition. Bower, a contemporary of James, writes that he applied himself with 'eagerness' to 'the art of literary composition and writing', and narrates an instance during which James spontaneously composed a Latin couplet. Furthermore, the Perth manuscript (Nat. Lib. of Scot. Ad. MS 35.6.7), which contains a shortened version of Bower's *Scotichronicon* (c.1460–80) also contains an epitaph (fos. 270<sup>v</sup>–271<sup>r</sup>) which is found in no other manuscript, and which refers to James I as the devotee of Love, and mentions his compositions and love songs. The epitaph also refers to Venus, Minerva, and Fortune, figures invoked in the *Quair* (Watt 1987: viii. 309, 259; ix. 128–31, 197).

John Major's *Historia Majoris Britanniae* (1521) states that James wrote 'an ingenious little book about the Queen while he was yet in captivity and before his marriage' (Constable 1892: 366)—surely a reference to the *Quair*. Major's information probably came from his friend, the Scottish poet Gavin Douglas, who was a relative of Henry, third lord of Sinclair, the owner of the manuscript containing the *Quair* (Norton-Smith 1971: p. xix), and probably the person who commissioned it.<sup>6</sup> Douglas was possibly privy, therefore, to the Sinclairs' knowledge of the *Quair*'s history. It was Henry Sinclair's grandfather who was with James when he made his fateful voyage, for the Sinclairs were closely connected with the Scottish royal family—Henry Sinclair's grandmother was James I's sister (Boffey and Edwards 1997: 22). Further, the main scribe of the manuscript appears to have been connected with the Sinclairs—he is the scribe of three other Scottish manuscripts, which appear to have been copied for, and to have belonged to, that family.<sup>7</sup> To the Sinclair family the

<sup>6</sup> See Boffey and Edwards (1997: 11). Sinclair's arms, which he assumed after 1488/9 appear on fo. 118 with the note 'liber Henrici domini Sinclair' on fo. 230<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>7</sup> Now National Library of Scotland MS Acc. 9253; St John's College, Cambridge, MS G. 19(187); and lastly a manuscript in the possession of the Rt. Hon. Earl of Dalhousie. See Boffey and Edwards (1997: 9–10).

*Quair* was probably a precious literary heirloom and it is hard to conceive of their being fooled by a 'forgery' (Lawson 1910: p. lii).

Major also refers to further Scottish poems belonging to James,<sup>8</sup> which show his activity as a poet and lend credence to his having written the *Quair*, and several other writers also mention James's efforts at literary composition.<sup>9</sup> Sir David Lyndsay's *Testament and Complaynt of the Papyngo* praises James as the 'flude of eloquence' (432) and even borrows a line from the *Quair*: 'And spairis nocht the prince more than the paige' (411) (Lawson 1910: pp. xlviii–xlix).

Furthermore, the *Quair* is 'about' James I. The accuracy of biographical details such as the correct time of James's departure by sea (Norton-Smith 1971: 59–60), or that the narrator is nearly 30 years old in the poem, corresponding with James's age upon release from captivity, refutes Brown's belief that the poet merely took these details from the chronicles, which are mostly inaccurate regarding such particulars (J. T. T. Brown 1896: 59; McDiarmid (1973: 39–40). Furthermore, the language of the *Quair*—northern or Scots English with an irregular but pervasive mixture of Midland sounds and forms—fits well with a man who had left his native Scotland when nearly 12 years of age, sufficient time for him to have a thoroughly entrenched Scots dialect, who was kept captive with, and frequently visited by, other Scots, yet who was also exposed to the southern English dialect and its literature (Jeffrey 1978: 207–21; Mapstone 1997: 66). As Sally Mapstone writes, there 'is more good evidence for James's authorship of the poem than there is against it' (ibid. 67).

The Aquarian setting of the poem's opening suggests the time of composition is February, according well with February 1424, covering the situation implied in the poem—James's release and his marriage—and complying with the rubric and Major's claim that the poem was written while James was still in England (Norton-Smith 1971: p. xxiv; Lyall 1993: 79). The poet-narrator's distanced perspective has led some critics to assume that a space of some years exists between the author's present and the past events he poeticizes,

<sup>8</sup> These are *Yas Sen*, which has not been definitely identified and *At Beltayn*, which is possibly a model for a similar poem entitled *Peblis to the Play*. See Skeat (1911: pp. xvi–xxi); and McDiarmid (1973: 46–7).

<sup>9</sup> These are: Hector Boece, *The History of Scotland* (1526), the Scottish trans. of this by John Bellenden (1536), John Leslie, *History of Scotland* (1578) (trans. into Scottish eighteen years later by Father James Dalrymple), and George Buchanan, *History of Scotland* (1581).

and, therefore, to refute the assertion of the rubric and John Major, that the poem was written whilst James was in England.<sup>10</sup> It might equally be said, however, that the frustration the narrator describes so feelingly as his reaction to imprisonment, and the heat with which he describes his experience of falling in love, prove that these were very recent events. This possibility is reiterated by the poem's close, the very section that critics argue suggests the narrator's emotional and temporal distance, for here there is also his joy at his good fortune and his exuberant thanks to all involved. It appears that the poem embraces both views, celebrating both the closure of a recent period of James's life and intimating a fresh philosophical distance attained as he begins a new life both as free man and as King of Scotland (Mapstone 1997: 57).

As such, I argue that like Usk's *Testament*, the *Quair*'s meaning and the careful literary identity James sculpts for himself are closely linked to the specifics of his actual situation, notably precipitated by a desire to appeal not only to his trusting captors who are about to release him, but to his subjects from whom he has been separated for eighteen years. James was returning to an unsettled land; his magnates had been accustomed to first Albany's and then Murdoch's rule; many knew little of James and possibly viewed his return from England with suspicion and trepidation. Given such a climate and audience, I argue that the text turns James's imprisonment to his advantage, claiming for him the reason and self-governance so important in a ruler, implying that these qualities were retained and even fostered by his imprisonment, and obliquely suggesting that his marriage and release are the very reward and affirmation of these qualities. Like Usk, James's favourable and political self-portrayal often rests upon his redeployment of other texts—again the topical concerns of Gower and the reputation of Boethius.

Like Usk's *Testament*, the *Quair* draws upon Boethius's *Consolation*, within a pedagogical framework of love to present favourably the author's literary identity. At the opening of the *Quair*, the narrator, troubled by insomnia, takes up 'a boke to rede upon a quhile' (14); it is a copy of Boethius's *Consolation*, which precipitates his

<sup>10</sup> e.g. McDiarmid (1973: 39) writes: 'it is plain that the author writes as one who looks back to the occasion of his marriage from a distance of years' and MacQueen (1989: 56) who posits that 'several years had passed and had given the king the opportunity to develop the philosophic detachment exhibited'.

interpretation of his own experience of fortune.<sup>11</sup> While he lies in bed he hears the ringing of the Matins bell, and ‘reads’ it as a signal to set his experiences down in writing: ‘ay me thocht the bell | Said to me: “tell on, man, quhat thee befell”’ (76–7). This reference to the act of writing, linked so explicitly with the narrator’s experience, reveals that poet and narrator are synonymous.

Whilst the *Quair* should not be read as a literal narration of James I’s meeting and wooing of Joan Beaufort (C. S. Lewis 1936: 235, 237), or as a naturalistic recapitulation of his thoughts or dreams during his captivity, there can be little doubt that the biographical details relate to James I. The historicity of these details invites an autobiographical reading, particularly given the likelihood that the first audience of a poem by a king would have been aware of the events of his life, and would have recognized their poetic reiteration (Goldstein 1999: 236–7; Mapstone 1997: 66). Such details are the departure from his country as a child, perhaps because of political strife there: ‘out of my contree, | By thair avise that had of me the cure’ (152–3), suggesting an individual of high political status; his capture at sea by enemies—the English; his captivity in their country for eighteen years: ‘Of inymis takin and led away | We weren all, and broght in thair contree | . . . in strong prisoun . . . | Nere by the space of yeris twise nyne’ (166–74); and a love-match associated with his own liberation (lines 1266–7, 1307–9).

Furthermore, like the *Testament*’s episode of the ‘shyppe of traveyle’, James extends the Boethian metaphor of a ship on a ‘see of fortune’ (*Bo.* I. pr. iii; I. met. v; II. pr. i; and II. met. iv) to encapsulate past and present experience, moving from universal to individual concerns. The metaphor is first invoked to emphasize youth’s vulnerability on fortune’s sea—youth ‘wantis it that suld thee reule and gye: | Ryght as the schip that sailith stereles | Vpon the rok[kis], most to harmes hye’ (100–2). From this the poet moves to his own situation: ‘I mene this by myself, as in partye’ (106), and the ship subsequently evolves into an expression of the struggles of artistic endeavour—it becomes the ‘mater’ of his poem, its sail his ‘wit’ which lacks the ‘wynd’ of inspiration to drive it forward (124–5). Yet the ship also represents the passage of his troubled mind: it is one with the poet’s psyche, in a manner similar to Usk’s *Testament*, and

<sup>11</sup> All quotations from the *Quair* are taken from Norton-Smith (1971), citing line numbers.

Gower's *Vox Clamantis*. The dangerous 'rokkis', synonymous with the 'prolixitee | Of doubilnesse that doith my wittis pall' (120–1), embrace not only the double/allegorical meaning of poetry, but also the poet's fear of worldly duplicity. Most importantly, the ship is transmuted into the ship remembered from actual experience, from which the author was captured at sea as a youth (157 ff.). The ship metaphor, therefore, extends the invitation to read the text as autobiography by conflating the difficulties of poetic creation with the recollection of personal detail.

At the opening, the poet vacillates from 'diuerse thing' (10) and 'thoughtis rolling to and fro' (64) to 'all myn auenture | I gan ourhayle' (68–9), until focusing—from his now mature perspective—upon his 'sely youth' (92) and its vulnerability to Fortune. Such musings are constructed with skilful artifice to reflect the progression of actual thought, and deliberately impart an autobiographical self-consciousness. Within the opening and concluding frame, the poet's understanding is repeatedly portrayed as reliant upon his interpretation of his past experience, whether this consists of autobiographical event or dream-vision. The dream-vision, therefore, appears as an auxiliary part of the poet's experience, distinguishing the *Quair*, in its greater self-reflexivity, from many other late-medieval dream-visions where the dream itself is central. Similarly, the greater length of the frame-narrative in comparison to other dream-visions reiterates both the central focus upon, and the omnipresence of, the author's textual identity. The emphasis on the correct configuration of wisdom, love, and fortune within the poet's understanding shows that the trajectory of the poet's transforming awareness is not simply the structuring impulse of the text, or the pedagogical criterion for the reader of his 'lytill trefy' (123), but is itself, in fact, the primary subject-matter. The text's concerns pivot around the poet's self-presentation, not simply as Chaucerian dreamer,<sup>12</sup> but moreover as individualized exponent. In addition, therefore, to the philosophical viewpoint the poem moves towards, as great an emphasis is placed upon James's achievement and understanding of that viewpoint.

Comparison with other medieval poems, probably known to James I, employing dream-visions reiterates this. In Chaucer's

<sup>12</sup> For the influence of Chaucer's poetry, notably *KnT* and *TC*, see annotations in Norton-Smith (1971), and McDiarmid (1973). See also Scheps (1971: 159–65); Ebin (1974: 321–41); Kratzmann (1980: 37–9, 53); Spearing (2000: 128).

*Parliament* the narrator is portrayed as failing to reach enlightenment. In *The Book of the Duchess*, all that the narrator has gained is the dream itself, 'so queynt a sweven' (1330), that he feels bound to write it down. Similarly, unlike Chaucer's *Parliament* or *House of Fame*, or Gower's *Confessio*, there is no ironic discrepancy presented between the *Quair*'s author and its narrator, no potential dichotomy between poet and protagonist (Kratzmann 1980: 53; Quinn 1981: 338ff., 349–50). The absence of such a dichotomy means that the text resists classification with the tradition of 'pseudo-autobiography' illustrated by the above-mentioned texts of Chaucer and Gower.

Much previous critical debate regarding the *Quair* has focused on whether the text may be read as autobiographical or as derivative artifice. The text's use of tradition has been a particular aspect of its criticism, so that whilst initially too great an emphasis was placed upon reading the *Quair* as a literal autobiography, subsequent criticism has tended to ignore this element, and focus solely upon the poem's use of convention, an imbalance that is only now beginning to be redressed (Quinn 1981: 332–53; Fradenburg 1991: 130–4; and more recently Mapstone 1997: 51–69). In 1961 John MacQueen (1961: 117–31) argued that the *Quair* did not refer to 'real life', but was a synthesis of different traditions. Since then, to see the poem as embracing literary traditions while leaving questions of authorship and autobiographical significance aside has become the trend, for although Lois Ebin's later article perceptively argued that the poem was a personal response to rather than an imitation of Boethius and Chaucer, the question of autobiography was not directly addressed.<sup>13</sup> Yet an author's use of convention does not preclude such a reading. Rather than questioning, therefore, whether the *Quair* is a truthful account of personal experience, I would argue enquiry should rather be focused on why the poem conjoins the autobiographical and the conventional, the latter appearing ultimately subordinate to, indeed constructing, the author's textual identity. Although, therefore, I agree that the poem 'must be read with the

<sup>13</sup> Ebin (1974: 321–41). My reading accords with Ebin's as opposed to Carretta's (1981: 15–16) view of the *Quair* as a 'gross distortion' of the *Consolation*—that the poet 'fails to understand the *sentence* that teaches us how properly to overcome Fortune', or MacQueen's (1961: 118) view that the *Consolation* provides the 'main controlling factor in the *Quair*'. Rather, the *Quair* proffers an alternative philosophy rooted in foreknowledge and virtue, as opposed to *contemptus mundi* thinking.

allegorical tradition in mind' (Preston 1956: 341), I would argue for a re-evaluation of the *Quair* as a poem containing a conscious autobiographical import, deliberately so, given James's actual situation.

Throughout the *Quair*, James is acutely aware of the fact that he is presenting his audience with 'literature' of a kind with which they may have been familiar. Not only does he begin by positing a connection between his text and that of Boethius, but in his dream-vision he further links his text with that of others, writing that in the court of Venus he sees many lovers:

Of quhois chancis maid is mencion  
In diuerse bukis (quho thame list to se),  
And therfore here thair namys lat I be. (544-6)

In the envoy, James also remembers his 'maisteris dere' (1373), Gower and Chaucer, and the poem makes use of literary conventions such as the dream-vision, the complaint of Venus, and the catalogue of nature. Yet this use of convention and the text's self-consciously literary nature do not necessarily imply that the reader is invited to read the *Quair*'s poet-protagonist as wholly fictional. The poem purports to have been written in retrospect, as the poet contemplates his previous experience—'all myn auenture | I gan ourhayle' (68-9). As such, the reading of Boethius and the adoption of Chaucerian models are presented as a means for the author to understand himself and interpret his past, as opposed to the unlikely medium through which the present is experienced. Moreover, as I shall argue, the incorporation of intertextuality aids the poet's self-presentation, particularly allusions to Boethius's *Consolation*.

## II

The *Quair* indicates an indebtedness to Boethius at its outset, leading readers to expect a poetical reiteration of Boethian philosophy, which in fact does not ensue. What readers are given instead is a protagonist who aligns his own predicament with that of Boethius, and whose view of fortune, whilst influenced by Boethian philosophy, is very much his own. As an alternative to Boethian stoicism and *contemptus mundi* philosophy, the *Quair* propounds self-governance, reason, and foresight in order to minimize Fortune's ill effects—a primary aspect of the poem's philosophy seldom



iterated.<sup>14</sup> In the dream-vision, Minerva, reason personified (Ebin 1974: 334–5), gives voice to both predestination and to free will:

‘sum clerkis trete  
That all your chance causit is tofore  
Heigh in the hevin . . .  
Bot othir clerkis halden that the man  
Has in himself the chose and libertee  
To cause his awin fortune . . .’ (1016–25)

Yet the latter is particularly emphasized:

‘Fortune is most and strangest euermore  
Quhare leste foreknewing or intelligence  
Is in the man’ (1037–9)

Although ostensibly the message is a spiritual one—guidance and foresight is found in emulating God (904–5)—the emphasis of the poem is upon worldly felicity, its loss, but more importantly its attainment. Rather than renounce Fortune, James wishes to know how best to ride her wheel, ultimately even thanking ‘Fortunys exil[tr]ee | And quh[e]le’ (1322–3).

The influence of the *Consolation*, therefore, is not to be sought in a reiteration of Boethian philosophy, but rather in Boethius’s self-portrayal as successfully reaching an understanding of his personal adversity and creating of himself a literary exemplar. For James redeploys the imprisoned situation and the self-won reason of the Boethian-figure for his own self-presentation in a manner reminiscent of Usk’s *Testament*.

Whilst James acknowledges the ‘counsele of Philosophye’ (17) and Boethius’s ‘metir suete, full of moralitee’ (23), it is clear from his description that for him one of the *Consolation*’s main values is to be sought in its autobiographical element, particularly given how he first refers to the *Consolation*: ‘Of quhich the name is clepit properly | *Boece* (efter him that was the compiloure)’ (15–16). Boethius like James suffered imprisonment, but moreover ‘pouert in exile’ (21), just as James was forced from his own ‘contree’ (152). Further, Boethius is superlatively described as ‘that noble senatoure’ (18), ‘this worthy lord and clerk’ (22), and ‘this noble man’ (32) who overcame misfortune through his own self-governance. Boethius:

<sup>14</sup> There are exceptions. Spearing (2000: 132) mentions the poem’s optimism and prudence, noting prudence is ‘a political virtue and a kingly duty’.

in himself the full recouer wan  
 Of his infortune, pouert and distresse,  
 And in tham set his verray sekernesne. (33–5)

James appears, therefore, to have been drawn to the autobiographical nature of the text as much as the philosophy. His text will also interpret the events of his own life and mastering of inner conflicts. This explains why James professes to pass lightly over the philosophical element of the *Consolation* (45–9).

Previous critical views have understood the opening of the *Quair* in terms of the poet's deriving inspiration from Boethian philosophy,<sup>15</sup> yet the text's revisionist and positive emphasis upon earthly felicity undermines this. Rather, the inspiration appears derived from the model and reputation of the Boethian persona as James implies affinities between himself and Boethius, allowing for himself a favourable self-presentation as self-governed and mature, which also has a political value given his kingly role.

Furthermore, whilst influenced by the *Consolation* the *Quair* conspicuously departs from this text, and as with Usk's departures, this seems linked to the author's self-presentation. Like the *Testament*, the *Quair* does not simply incorporate autobiographical data and material concerns at the outset to leave these behind in pursuit of the metaphysical. The text specifically delineates James's understanding of his past in a way that suggests he will be a better 'servant' of the material world, albeit by reaching an awareness of his earthly role within a metaphysical scheme. Further, having taken up the *Consolation* (14–15), James proceeds to call out for poetic inspiration: 'At my begynning first I clepe and call | To you, Cleo, and to yow, Polymye' (127–8), thus summoning the goddesses whom Philosophy deliberately banished from Boethius. Boethius indicates that the Muses are the glory of his happy *youth*, but ultimately he equates them with the triumph of emotion over reason; James, however, in *maturity* prays to them for aid. While for Boethius 'the vertew of his youth before | Was in his age the ground of his delytis' (36–7), James has a more negative view of youth: youth is more subject to Fortune's machinations (55–6, 62–3). Ultimately, James's attitude to Fortune is the obverse of Boethius's: for James, Fortune 'was first my fo | And eft my frende' (66–7).

<sup>15</sup> See Preston (1956: 340–1); Lyall (1993: 80); Scheps (1971: 143–5, 152); Straus (1978: 10); Kratzmann (1980: 39); Mapstone (1997: 54); and Fuog (2001: 142–6), for a differing emphasis to mine of Boethius's influence claimed in the *Quair*.

The suggestion is that his good fortune is due to his self-rule and maturity acquired through incarceration and his understanding that true liberty exists in self-governance as opposed to the removal of actual prison bars. James narrates how he was 'takin' by 'inymyis' (166), and put 'in strayte ward and in strong prisoun' (169), and throughout the text, he refers to himself as a 'thrall' (263) and a 'sely prisoner' (306). Yet a concern with more than simply literal incarceration is suggested when James laments:

'quhat haue I gilt, to faille  
My fredome in this warld and my plesance? . . .  
'The bird, the best, the fisch eke in the see,  
They lyve in fredome, euerich in his kynd.  
And I a man, and lakkith libertee.' (178–85)

Accordingly, in the poem's denouement, James portrays himself as having understood the answers to such questions—that true liberty for humans consists in the alignment of free will and reason, and accepting that in their reasoning capacity humans vastly differ from animals.<sup>16</sup> As such, James juxtaposes his predicament with the seemingly felicitous one of the birds 'In lufis seruice besy, glad, and trewe' (448). Without free will or reason, the birds have only to praise and thank Nature, their 'gouvernoure' and 'quene' (455). The text, therefore, foregrounds the contrast between creatures simply ruled by Nature and humanity whose nature must be self-ruled. The coinciding success of James's love-suit and his release from prison, both of which tacitly ensue from his promises to Minerva of continued reasoned conduct in love, implies that true freedom exists in human free will. Through the catalyst of falling in love, therefore, he is led to maturity, to understanding the responsibility attached to human free will and thereby, the true nature of 'imprisonment'—Boethius's own lesson in the *Consolation*. The *Quair* propounds true freedom as existing in the use of free will to adhere to virtuous Christian love as opposed to irrational desire. If the observance of reason is the lesson of the prisoner of the *Consolation*, then adherence to reasoned love is that of the prisoner of the *Quair*. As one's free will accords or disagrees with Christian virtue, so it leads respectively either to fortune or misfortune. As such Minerva advocates a virtuous and reasoned love and if this is what James intends she will

<sup>16</sup> See *Bo.* IV. Pr. iii. To 'forletith' the 'nature of mankynde' means to 'forletith to ben a man; [and] syn he ne may nat passe into the condicion of God, he is torned into a beeste'.

help him, for she will not deny 'Desire' (988) as long as it is 'set in Cristin wise' (989).

Accordingly, a variety of references suggest that the culmination of James's self-governance and discipline in love result in marriage. James says his heart is: 'for euir sett abufe | In perfyte ioy (that neuir may remufe | Bot onely deth)' (1313–15), and that: 'In lufis yok that esy is and sure . . . | Sche hath me tak' (1346–8). Indeed, the phrase 'lufis yok' is used specifically of marriage in Chaucer's *The Clerk's Tale* and *The Merchant's Tale* (CTIV(E)113, 1285, 1837). The term 'loves yoke' is also used in *The Boke of Cupide*, line 140 (Scattergood 1975: 43). Additionally the suggestion of marriage can be seen both in the gestures of acceptance and the symbolic value of the turtle dove, as the bird of Venus, yet also the bird of Christian iconography.<sup>17</sup>

James depicts himself, therefore, as coming to 'largesse' (1276) by means of his self-governance, the rational use of his free will, a microcosm of divine will. His faithful love for his lady replicates the love he bears for God, as God's rule or 'purueyance' (906) becomes—as Minerva advises (904–10)—the model for his self-rule, his own 'gouirnance' (1366–72). James incorporates, therefore, virtuous human love into a specifically Christianized rendering of the *Consolation's* philosophical scheme, and portrays himself as bound to such a scheme through free choice. In so doing, he foregrounds the notion of imprisonment as an ontological state, emphasizing psychological freedom over physical imprisonment. But, moreover, at a time when he was returning to Scotland to take up power, his imprisonment is portrayed in a manner that aids his self-presentation, allowing him to fashion himself as an admirable Boethian examplar, and as having reached the epitome of self-rule, a quality contemporarily reiterated as of the utmost importance in a king.

As the poem of King James I of Scotland, therefore, I would argue the text contains a political import in the presentation of its author as having achieved self-governance. Furthermore, allusions to contemporary literature play an important role in this agenda, and I would argue that allusions to Gower's *Confessio* are primarily

<sup>17</sup> Spiller (1986: 223–4). A dove with a branch was a Christian symbol—notably the flowering branch the token of Joseph's acceptance as the husband of the virgin, and the dove representing the approval of the Holy Spirit. Spiller writes that the dove in the *Quair* is representative of the lady's grace and the concurrence of Divine Wisdom in the union.

geared to a politicized self-presentation, deployed to underpin the Boethian prisoner's self-governance that James claims for himself.

In the *Envoi de Quare*, James dedicates his poem to Gower, to Chaucer too, but Gower is given precedence:

Vnto [th']jnpnis of my maisteris dere,  
Gowere and Chaucere, that on the steppis satt  
Of rethorike quhill thai were lyvand here. (1373-5)

Furthermore, the *Quair* borrows from Gower's *Confessio Amantis*,<sup>18</sup> an influence that has been ignored in the text's critical history, notably in favour of the debt to Chaucer (Schepps 1987: 50ff.; 1971: 143-65). The *Quair*'s reference to Gower and Chaucer does not seem to be merely a mock-modesty topos, not only because of the clear poetical Chaucerian influence in the *Quair*, but also because James assumes none of the inadequacy and dull-wittedness of contemporary writers who deploy this topos.<sup>19</sup> Instead it appears he does indeed wish to be placed within the discourse of their writings. Not only does he send his 'buk' to 'thair saulis' in heaven (1378-9), but more unusually to their poems (1373), reiterating that his text is constructed upon and contextualized by theirs.

A concern with remaining in the discourse of previous authors is demonstrated by phrases such as: 'maid is mencion | In diuerse bukis' (544-5) and: 'as bokis specifye' (130); further, whilst James presents his literary identity as inspired by the Matins bell to write 'Sum new[e] thing' (89), this itself is an allusion to *The Book of the Duchess*<sup>20</sup> and the *Confessio*. In the Prologue to the original version of the *Confessio*, Gower narrates how, rowing on the Thames one day, he met King Richard in his royal barge and was invited aboard, to have the king suggest he write 'som newe thing' (Peck 1980: 494). Yet related to Gower's assertion that this is indeed what he has done with the *Confessio*, is the conscious concern with literary tradition in

<sup>18</sup> See notes to the editions by Norton-Smith (1971: 56, 62, 69, 70, 75, 76, 82); and McDiarmid (1973; 131, 124) where he stipulates that it is Gower's version of the tale of Philomene that is followed. See also J. A. W. Bennett (1982: 87).

<sup>19</sup> cf. Hoccleve, *The Regement of Princes*: 'Mi dere maistir—god his soule quyte— | And fadir, Chaucir, fayn wolde han me taght; | But I was dul, and lerned lite or nagh' (2077-9). All quotations from Furnivall and Gollancz (1970). Also, the poet of the *Court of Sapience* writes of Chaucer and Gower: 'I symple shal extolle theyr soveraynte, | And my rudeness shal shewe theyr subtylte' (48-9). Quotations from Harvey (1984).

<sup>20</sup> At the close of the dream a castle bell strikes and awakens the dreamer (BD 1321-5).

the tribute to old books—‘Of hem that writen ous tofore | The bokes duelle’—how he will ‘wryte of newe som matiere, | Essampled of these olde wyse’ (Prol. 1–8). As with Gower’s *Confessio*, therefore, James’s ‘new[e] thing’ (89) is highly intertextual. For, if the poem’s ‘eloquence ornate’ (1377) is Chaucer’s, seen in the frequent recognizable turn of phrase, then the ‘moralitee’ (1377) or didacticism rests upon Gower’s. As McDiarmid (1973: 140) writes: ‘The influence of “moral Gower”, as Chaucer calls him in *Troilus*, has been didactic rather than poetical’, and similarly, Norton-Smith (1971: 83) notes of the *Quair*’s dedication: ‘The inclusion of Gower accords well with both poets’ concern to relate reason and virtue with natural love and affection.’ Neither, however, pursue this view. The possible influence of the *Confessio* upon James’s verse, therefore, has not been considered before, and this has led to the omission of a possible political reading, as James redeploys Gower’s concerns with self-rule and chaste behaviour and the importance of these for those who rule.

One of Gower’s primary legacies to later medieval literature is his ‘moralitee’—his unequivocal investing of human love with a communal importance and an ethical and, thereby, political relevance (Minnis 1991: 158–80). It was a popular concept at the time, one which Anne Middleton (1978: 96) has termed ‘common love’, an ideal which, in its alliance with reason and communal and social responsibilities, is the obverse of the singular desire of courtly love. This ideal love is explicated most fully in the *Confessio*, where Gower emphasizes the synonymy of the virtuous lover and the virtuous man, with particular relevance to the virtuous king or ruler.<sup>21</sup> Indeed, the *Confessio* was originally written for Richard II.<sup>22</sup> In the light of Gower’s text, clearly known to James, the qualities James presents himself possessing in matters of love—as reasoned, chaste, self-governed, and constant—may have wider extra-textual implications, as they appear to with Usk’s self-presentation in the *Testament*. For if the *Quair*’s poet-protagonist invites an autobiographical reading as James’s textual identity, the implication is that James possesses these qualities as a man, and moreover, as a king, given his public status.

<sup>21</sup> Similarly, as Kohl (1979: 127) has highlighted, in Lydgate’s *Siege of Thebes* love becomes mainly a concept of the political order, the social bond linking the estates of an ideal state.

<sup>22</sup> It was, however, later redirected to the future Henry IV following Gower’s disgust with Richard’s rule.

Throughout Gower's text, the government of self and society is a dominant theme, and in this respect the philosophy of the *Confessio* and the *Quair* have much in common. Both focus on self-governance and the corresponding relationship of fortune, and, within this concern for self-rule, place the role of virtuous love epitomized in chaste marriage. Moreover, the *Confessio* links these values specifically and most importantly with the role of a king. It is a text that explores the relation between love and correct self-governance and its correspondence to kingship, commissioned by an ill-fated king and written by an author James expressly admires. Given the *Quair*'s concern with self-governance, its allusions to the *Confessio*, its dedication to Gower, and its composition by a king, Gower's ethical viewpoint appears highly pertinent. Furthermore, it is likely that Gower's text was known amongst James I's intended audience, the fifteenth-century Scottish nobility, and that, therefore, readers may have understood the implicit Gowerian concerns with kingship and self-rule, and have realized the relevance they had for the poem of their king and his self-presentation. Indeed, there is evidence of a late-medieval Scottish acquaintance with Gower's texts.<sup>23</sup>

In Book's VII and VIII of the *Confessio*, Gower develops the concept that kings should not only be wise and virtuous governors of their kingdoms, but also reasoned self-governors of their own mental and emotional realms:

For if a kyng wol justifie  
His lond and hem that beth withynne,  
First at hym self he mot begynne,  
To kepe and reule his owne estat,  
That in hym self be no debat . . . (CA VIII.3080–5)<sup>24</sup>

As such, kings are exemplary to all men for:

. . . every man for his partie  
A kingdom hath to justefie,  
That is to sein his oghne dom.  
If he misreule that kingdom,  
He lest himself . . . (CA VIII. 2111–15)

<sup>23</sup> Boffey and Edwards (1997: 18–19) mention evidence of early Scottish readings, importation, and book-ownership of Gower's poetry. See also J. A. W. Bennett (1981: 294–6). Certainly at least one manuscript of Gower's *Confessio* was in Scotland during the fifteenth century (now BL Add. MS 22139), see Lyall (1989: 240).

<sup>24</sup> See also VC VI.viii.606–10.

The equation of microcosmic self-rule and macrocosmic political governance in the *Confessio*, its place in the advice-to-princes genre, its debt to the pseudo-Aristotelian *Secreta Secretorum*, its indistinction between the virtues of the ‘honeste’ lover and the good Christian, and the incongruity of Gower’s ethical framing of the seemingly incompatible material of courtly love, have been discussed and resolved elsewhere (Coffman 1954: 953–64; Porter 1983: 135–62). Suffice it to say that the placing of the *materia* of love in a moral perspective had been attempted before Gower, in the scholastic study of Ovid’s erotic works—furthermore, love is the force that governs *all things* in the *Consolation*. The relationship between these moral or ethical issues and kingship may be understood when recalling that for Aristotle, as for Plato, politics embraced ethics, and ethics was, therefore, a subsection of politics (Minnis 1991: 158–80).

The principal means by which Gower exemplifies the necessary self-governance and rational behaviour of kings is within the context of love, and in both the *Confessio* and the *Quair* poet-figures are portrayed in the process of acquiring wisdom and self-rule through the lessons of love. In the *Quair*, however, the onus is changed: James’s self-portrayal is not an ironic one, and rather than a lover who is the recipient of advice illustrated by virtuous and irrational kings, its poet is a king who portrays himself as a recipient of advice and as a virtuous lover. Indeed the theme of receiving and giving counsel exists throughout the *Quair*, from the opening reference to the ‘noble senatoure’ Boethius compiling the ‘*counsele* of Philosophye’ (17, my italics), to the ‘counsele’ (791) and ‘rype and gude aise’ (794) of James’s own ‘counseilour[s]’ (793) Venus and Minerva. Moreover, James depicts himself not only as willing to be counselled, but as attested by the denouement as having acted in accordance with their advice. The interview with Minerva culminates with James explicitly developing this self-image of a recipient of counsel:

‘Now go thy way and haue gud mynd vpon  
 Quhat I haue said in way of thy doctryne.’  
 ‘I sall, madame’, quod [I]. (1051–3)

In late-medieval political thought, unanimous importance was placed on a ruler’s taking counsel from the wise and virtuous.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>25</sup> The ideal of a wise, advice-seeking, and morally exemplary monarch was endemic throughout Europe—informed by biblical, Platonic, and Aristotelian con-



Failure to do so had many historical precedents as the cause of much political strife, notably the conflict between Henry III of England and the barons regarding the right of the barons to impose advisers and ministers on the king. The willingness to receive advice was considered an ideal virtue in a king. Edward I of England stated that he was bound by oath to act on Crown matters only with the consent of the prelates and magnates. In Edward III's reign, Walter Burley, periodically associated with that king's government, wrote in his *Commentary of Aristotle's Politics* (1340) that a king together with wise magnates can achieve more than a king alone (Black 1992: 156). This correlation between governance and sapientialism is expressly voiced in the *Confessio*: 'For conseil passeth alle thing | To him which thenkth to ben a king' (CA VIII. 2109–10). For those who rule may do so with stability provided that they: 'With good consail on all sides | Be kept upriht in such a wyse, | That hate breke nought thassise | Of love . . .' (CA Prol. 146–9—see also VC VI.vii.531–2; VI.ix; VI.x). Solomon is posited as an exemplum of kingly wisdom: 'In Salomon a man mai see | What thing of most necessite | Unto a worthi king belongeth' (CA VII.3891–3) before Gower progresses to link this wisdom specifically with wise counsel:

Bot what king wole his regne save,  
 Ferst him behoveth forto have  
 After the god and his believe  
 Such conseil which is to believe,  
 Fulfid of trouthe and rihtwisenesse. (CA VII.3913–17)

James also refers to Solomon (as a 'wise man' (928)), quoting from Ecclesiastes (3: 1) a biblical book traditionally thought to have been written by Solomon. Furthermore, James's words are a conscious echo of the *Confessio*: 'He hat nought lost that *wel abitt*' (CA III.1658). James writes:

'All thing has tyme', thus sais *Ecclesiaste*,  
 And wele is him that his tyme w[e]l abit.  
 Abyde thy tyme, for he that can bot haste  
 Can nought of hap, the wise man it writ . . . (925–8)

The political relevance of James's self-portrait as a patient man who accepts wise counsel cannot have been lost on the *Quair*'s con-

temporary audience, his own magnates. This may explain James's failure to name himself in the text, in that he had no need to, given a known and knowing audience (Kratzmann 1980: 33–4, 44; Goldstein 1999: 236–7; Mapstone 1997: 66). It is possible that the poem was designed not so much for silent reading as to be delivered orally, attested by its illusory beginnings and endings (MacColl 1989: 118). Indeed, the references in the *envoi* to the envisaged role and ability of its performer evoke a court-setting, even if this constituted a wider audience beyond James I's own royal court:

And prey the rede to haue pacience  
Of thy defaute and to supporten it.  
Of his gudnese thy brukilnese to knytt  
And his tong for to reule and to stere,  
That thy defautis helit may ben here. (1354–8)

Such court entertainment is described in a near contemporary history of James's life and death, describing the king and his courtiers 'occupied at pleying at þe chesse, at þe tables, in *reding of romannse*, in singing, in pyping' (Connolly 1992: 56, my emphasis).

Gower and James are both concerned with chastity and lust and their relation to self-governance. In Book VII of the *Confessio*, Gower stresses Truth, Largesse, Justice, Pity, and Chastity as pre-requisite virtues in the ethics of good kingship, giving by far the greatest space to the last: chastity.<sup>26</sup> For Gower, chastity is most important in a king:

Bot most of alle in special  
This vertu to a king belongeth,  
For upon his fortune it hongeth  
Of that his lond schal spede or spille. (CA VII.4450–3)

Possibly, James recalled the above lines when composing the *Quair*; furthermore, the *Quair* appears influenced by the *Confessio* in relation to chaste love and the ideal of marriage. Influenced by Giles of Rome's *De Regimine Principum*, Gower views the acquisition of self-rule by an individual of the commonwealth as ending in 'honeste love' or married love. In Giles's second book on 'Economics', marriage is the perfect state of governance and a vital contribution to the health of the political community, for it is presented as the

<sup>26</sup> See the line count in Olsson (1992: 205). Chastity has 1,174 lines in total, whereas surprisingly, justice has merely 407 lines, and truth just 273 lines.

natural and rational aspiration of every man who has achieved self-governance. Like the political community, it is the natural consequence of humanity's need to live in association with others, and its dependence upon fidelity or 'honeste love' accords with reason and ethical self-rule.<sup>27</sup>

Forthi scholde every good man knowe  
and thenke, hou that in mariage  
His trouthe plight lith in morgage,  
Which if he breke, it is falshode,  
And that descordeth to manhode,  
And namely toward the grete,  
Wherof the bokes all trete . . . (CA VII.4226-32)

The distinction between beasts who follow their appetites, and the good man or king who must control his, prevails in Gower's treatment of chastity (Porter 1983: 159). Similarly, in the *Quair*, chaste love, and it would seem marriage, represent freely choosing to assume the bonds of responsibility and maturity, recognizing that man shares the nature of animals yet in reason is above them. It celebrates an ordered human love that eschews 'singular profit' for devotion to the 'common profit', an earthly love that mirrors the heavenly, as is found in the similar conclusion of the *Confessio* (Fisher 1965: 181). In the *Quair*, James refers to the nightingales outside his prison window through the story of Philomene and Progne, using the *Confessio*'s version (McDiarmid 1973: 124; and Skeat 1911: 73). In doing so, James makes a little 'aside' on marriage and correct service in love, chiding false husbands to 'mend, in the twenty deuil way' (392), and significantly, he pledges his faithfulness to his lady 'to the notis of the philomene' (428). For James the bondage of virtuous, reasoned love and thus fidelity, chosen through sagacious free will, is ultimately liberating, freeing a man from the miseries that lechery is heir to, and thereby from the unreasoned aspect of his nature he shares with other creatures. James, therefore, presents his successful love-suit in dual form: as the conclusion to his imprisonment in England, as it was indeed conducive to his actual liberation; and as the culmination of his reaching self-governance and maturity. James appears, therefore, to have read Gower's text within the 'governance of princes' tradition. He imbued his poetry

<sup>27</sup> For a full discussion of marriage and Gower's debt to Giles of Rome, see Porter (1983: 144-59).

with Gower's 'moralitee', particularly the importance of chastity and self-rule among rulers, and as such, his self-ruled self-presentation in the *Quair* is politicized, given his own status as king. In addition to the deployment of the *Consolation* by which James claims for his imprisoned self a Boethian triumph of reason, the Gowerian influence allows him to underpin this flattering portrait of self-rule and reason further through his claim for self-governance and chaste behaviour via the realm of love.

### III

In the later Middle Ages, chastity contemporarily embraced wider meanings than the purely sexual, and was often equated with all flagrant lusts—seen, for example, in the implied relation in Chaucer's *Parliament* between individual desire and common profit. The former equates with the sexual desire of the birds, the latter with the harmonious communal sanction given to each bird's choice of mate according to its place in the social scale, so that ultimately this communal harmony resolves into the literal harmony of birdsong, linking thematically, therefore, the dream of Chaucer's narrator with the sociopolitical themes of his reading matter, prior to falling asleep (Strohm 1989: 125–30). The relationship between individual desire and common profit is also explicit in the *Confessio*, and I would argue implicit in the 'moralitee' of the *Quair*. The chaste self-image James projects may have had a political impetus given the ungoverned and unchaste behaviour that effectively precipitated the murder of his brother, the Duke of Rothesay, once heir to the Scottish throne. As John Shirley writes in *The Dethe of the Kynge of Scotis*, Rothesay was imprisoned and starved to death because he:

wex fulle viceous in his liveing, as in depucellyng and deffouling of yong maydeyns, and in brekyng þ' order of wedloke, be his foule ambycious lust of aduoutrie. Wherefore þe lordes and the nobles of þe reaume of Scottlande, considering þat vicious lyving of þat saide duke of Rossayae, soore dreding yf he hadde regned aftur his fadur, þat many inconveniences, infortunes, and vengeance myght owe fyllonye and fallen uppon al þat region, by cause of his lyf soo opnly knowen vicious . . .<sup>28</sup>

<sup>28</sup> Connolly (1992: 49). This is augmented by Walter Bower's chronicle *Scotichronicon* (c.1440–7) which states that before Rothesay's death the king

In the political arena James was to enter, the maturity and self-rule he claims in the *Quair* were perceived as valuable qualities in a ruler. In the self-presentation of a poet who is to govern a realm as its king, self-governance, therefore, assumes a public and political relevance.

The relationship between literature and politics at this time, particularly concerning good kingship, is well documented and discussed, primarily in terms of the change of literary preference from epic and *chansons de geste* to Arthurian romance and its insistent theme of the public repercussions of personal failure (E. Peters 1970: 2–5, 24–5, 81–115). Additionally, Richard Firth Green has demonstrated the period's utilitarian view of literature and the practical value it was invested with by its aristocratic readers—that poets often came to view themselves as mentors of royalty (Green 1980: 135–202). In the *Quair* it appears the obverse occurs: a royal poet consciously presents himself as an able 'self-mentor'.

James cannot have been unaware of the political and social possibilities of his positive self-image in what is effectively his autobiography, for he certainly was not in his other extant writings. The letters sent to Scotland in January 1412 show James constructing a favourable literary identity.<sup>29</sup> He addresses his uncle, Robert, Duke of Albany, in affectionate terms: 'Most der and best belufit eme' (Fraser 1880: 284), yet he was aware, as the letter demonstrates, that Albany was doing little to work for his release. The letter progresses from this disarming opening in an elevated style, asserting a voice of regal authority, as James presents himself as sustaining political power in his native land: 'Qwarfor we pray . . . yhe mak exsecucion for our deliuerans efter the ordinans of our consale generale, so dowly that in yhour defaut we be nouch send to sek remede of our deliuerans otherquware in tyme to cum' (ibid.). Furthermore, in line with the theme developed in the *Quair*, James shows he is willing to receive counsel—in a letter sent to the Earls of Douglas and Dunbar, and the Lord of Dalkeith, regarding his release he asks: 'qwat [zhe] thynk war vs to do gife delay war made as it has bene in tymis [gane]' and he is careful to promise in return for aid in his release 'gud rewarde in tyme to cum' (ibid. 285–6).

appointed 'certain counsellors (powerful barons and knights)' to 'control and advise' him because his behaviour was 'unruly' but he spurned these 'honourable men' and 'gave himself up wholly once more to his previous frivolity'. See Watt (1987: viii. 39).

<sup>29</sup> The dating of these letters has been conclusively ascertained by Balfour-Melville (1922: 28–33). The letters are printed in Fraser (1880: 284–7).

James's projection of a kingly self-image, however, is witnessed most obviously on his return to Scotland, not only in the display associated with his coronation, but in the role he assumed for himself as harbinger of justice and peace throughout his reign. Consistent with this, royal expenditure was later directed towards elaborating the outward prestige of this image, notably in the building of royal palaces, such as Linlithgow (1428) and Leith (1434), and increased expenditure upon royal apparel.<sup>30</sup>

In an age when government depended on the individual ability of the king, the character and quality of the ruler was bound to have a great impact upon the course of his reign, something that increased in importance in the fifteenth century as the sphere of royal activity in the fiscal, judicial, and religious structures of the kingdom was greater than ever before (M. Brown 1994: 1; E. Peters 1970: 1–2, 15–16, 19). One of the central difficulties of medieval political thought was the dual role medieval kings were invested with—on the one hand as individual Christian men and on the other as quasi-juristic personifications of divine law, and therefore for justice itself—a theory with its roots in Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, and voiced throughout the period from Henry de Bracton (c.1220) to Sir John Fortescue (c.1460) (Black 1992: 152–6). If the *Quair* is the poem of King James, it can be read as embracing both concerns: the individual character of a king, and also his role as obedient to, indeed as a vessel for, divine will. The poem is concerned with James's virtues as a *man*, seen, for example, in his repeated self-references as such: 'tell on, *man*, quhat thee befell' (77, my italics)<sup>31</sup> and also in his self-image in the denouement of the poem, as having attained self-governance. Yet equally it conveys the poet-persona's recognition of God's governance as a model to be followed at all costs: 'Tak him before in all thy gouernance' (904).

<sup>30</sup> See M. Brown (1994: 117 ff.; 1992: 23). The potent myth of James I's stable kingship was proliferated by Bower in his *Scotichronicon*, which imparts an image of James I as an exemplary and prudent king, an ideal 'law-giver and leader'. Bower neglects the discontent of his reign, depicting Atholl instead as an isolated dissatisfied enemy, arch-schemer and 'principal advisor and instigator' of James's murder. See Watt (1987: viii. 217, 300–3).

<sup>31</sup> He also calls himself 'a creature' (181) and 'I a man' (185). Emphasis upon the king as 'bot a man', together with awareness of the hazards of rulers who are young and ill-advised and require reform are notable aspects of fifteenth-century Scottish advice-to-princes literature, aspects that characterize both *Lancelot of the Laik* and *The Buik of King Alexander the Conquerour*. See Mapstone (1997: 60–4).

James presents his falling in love and his realization of self-governance as connected to his realization of freedom and marriage, and obliquely to his reigning as king: 'To my larges that I am cumin agayn | To blisse with hir that is my souirane' (1266–7). Although James does not refer to himself as king, this may have been a conscious allusion to his being uncrowned when writing, especially if in accordance with the rubric's claim 'Maid quhen his Maiestie wes in England', the poem was written during the four-month period that encompassed James's marriage, release, and return to Scotland (Mapstone 1997: 57). Yet his audience would no doubt have understood 'souirane' and 'hertis quene' (430) as a pun on Joan's role, as both James's queen and his sovereign in love (ibid. 56). Finally, therefore, James leaves behind his solitary 'voice' and assumes a more expansive and embracing discourse, seen in the above lines and further in his reference to 'all my brethir that ben in this place' (1283), to his readers: 'sum micht think or seyne' (1268), and ultimately in his relinquishing his poem in the *envoi*: 'Go litill tretise . . .' (1352). There is a sense that he has moved into a role of public and communal significance, of integration from his initial position of imprisoned isolation, shown explicitly in his earlier self-reference as a cipher or zero: 'I suffer allone amang the figuris nyne' (194). Here he appears to define himself as worthless, needing others to give him value, just as a zero needs other numbers to give it value.

The imprisoned Charles d'Orléans uses this same conceit in a similar fashion when stressing his isolation and hopelessness in Ballad 58 of his *English Book*: 'Me thynkith right as a syphir now y serue | That nombre makith and is him silf noon' (Arn 1994: lines 2042–3). James may have felt this expression also conveyed his lack of a public and political role, for the conceit is given a specifically political meaning in other medieval texts. In *Richard the Redeles*, members of Parliament are compared to a 'siphre [zero] . . . in awgrym [*mathematics/arithmetic*], | That noteth a place and no thing availith'<sup>32</sup>—they merely fill a place but have no intrinsic value. The *Testament* also uses the metaphor politically, however, Usk inverts its negative meaning into a positive one, to convey the value of servants to kings: 'suche famulers aboute kynges and great lordes shulde great might have. Althoughe a sypher in augrym have no

<sup>32</sup> IV.53–4. See edition by Barr (1993: 132). See also Whiting (1968: 87). The zero in arithmetic had no power of signification itself, but gave signification to the other numbers in the Arabic numeral system.

might in signifcacion of it selve, yet he yeveth power in signifcacion to other and these clepe I the helpes to a poste to kepe him from fallyng' (TL II.vii.673–6). In other words, a servant is like a zero which adds value to the ruler who is the digit.

Finally freed and united with his 'quene' (430), James presents his own regal good fortune as earned through virtue, eschewing 'lust and bestly appetite' (947) and obeying Venus and Minerva, and having 'set' his 'hert[e]' (891–3) in accordance with their guidance. In this the *Quair* consciously departs from earlier Boethian poems, notably Chaucer's *Knight's Tale*, where self-won reason or virtue has no effect upon Fortune's arbitrary control. For although Arcite and Palamon are slightly differentiated, and Palamon marries Emelye, there is no sign that his more reasonable behaviour has made Fortune well disposed towards him. Events may be attributed by the narrator to 'Fortune', 'destinee', and 'chance', but these are clearly subordinated to 'purveiance', Boethius's *providentia*.<sup>33</sup> As Stephen Kohl has discussed, a more earthly and positive reading of the *Consolation* increasingly appears to be an aspect of fifteenth-century Boethian poems in comparison to those of the fourteenth century. Lydgate's *Siege of Thebes*, for example, specifically presents the individual alone as responsible for his destiny, not Fortune or *providentia* (Kohl 1979: 123 ff.). Yet while Lydgate's poem gives a political lesson on the conduct of rulers, in the *Quair* a future ruler himself demonstrates this lesson of reason and self-rule. Again, James and other fifteenth-century poets possibly had a precedent in Gower for the view that man creates his own fortune—'oft gud fortune flourith with gude wit' (929)—for the *Confessio* locates fortune within the individual.<sup>34</sup> This is not to say that Gower denies the existence of Fortune; he gives voice to traditional views that 'som men wryte | And sein that fortune is to wyte, | And som men holde oppinion | That it is constellacion | Which causeth al that a man doth' (CA Prol. 529–33). Indeed, Minerva's words to James concerning

<sup>33</sup> IV. pr. vi; cf. *KnT* 1663–72. See Kohl (1979: 120–1). See also Fradenburg (1998: 167–8) for a discussion of Scottish poetry, including the *Quair*, as commonly departing rather than deriving from Chaucerian precedents and the self-designation of such poetry as critical discourse—the nature of literary revisionism as the subject of their discourse.

<sup>34</sup> Gower places the responsibility of 'that wherof men pleigne' squarely on man: he is 'coupable' for 'of his propre governance | Fortuneth al the worldes chance' (CA Prol. 582–4), so 'that the man is overal | His oghne cause of wel and wo. | That we fortune clepe so | Out of the man himself it groweth' (CA Prol. 546–9).



determinism and free will echo this: ‘sum clerkis trete | That all your chance causit is tofore | Heigh in the hevin . . . Bot othir clerkis halden that the man | Has in himself the chose and libertee | To cause his awin fortune’ (1016–25). Gower addresses, therefore, the problem of contingents and the possibility of humans achieving a certitude of moral knowledge (Olsson 1992: 19), and for him the answer rests ultimately with God—‘God wot of bothe which is soth’ (CA Prol. 534)—hence the importance of adopting Christian virtue to counter Fortune, seen both in the *Vox Clamantis* (see II.v.239–42; II.iv.211–14), and the *Confessio*:

. . . if men weren goode and wise  
And pleasant unto the godhede,  
Thei scholden noght the sterres drede. (CA VII.652–4)

Herein lies the ‘key’ to the philosophy of the *Quair*, and the difficulty of reconciling the determinism associated with: ‘And thus endith the f[a]tall influence | Causit from hevyn quhare powar is commytt . . . Quho couth it red agone syne mony a yere | “Hich in the hevynnis figure circulere”’ (1366–72), with James’s correct use of free will and his ensuing good fortune. In the *Confessio* and the *Quair*, a divine plan and Fortune coexist, but Fortune’s apparently arbitrary nature can be countered by human reason and virtue. Both poets can thereby describe Fortune at length in traditional terms, and in the *Vox Clamantis* as well as the *Confessio*—both of which are to an extent ‘mirrors for princes’—Gower specifically connects fortune with kingship. He writes: ‘Est nunc subtus ea, nunc et in orbe supra. | Regnabo, regno, regnavi, sum sine regno, | Omnes sic breuiter decipit illud iter’,<sup>35</sup> for a king ‘on the whiel | Fortune hath sette aboven alle’ (CA VII.3170–1). Gower is thereby reiterating Fortune’s traditional and well-known depiction in medieval iconography and literature as a wheel with four kings ascending and descending, one at each of the horizontal and vertical poles of her wheel (Patch 1927: 15–23, 160–6; Wimsatt 1970: 39). The signification and—in view of his situation—the irony of this traditional representation of Fortune cannot have been lost on King James, when finally restored to the Scottish throne, he depicted himself as

<sup>35</sup> VC II.iv.154–6. ‘On her wheel she is now below and now above. “I shall reign, I reign, I have reigned, I am without reign”—just this quickly does her course beguile us all,’ Stockton (1962: 101–2).

spinning on her wheel where: 'is non estate nor age | Ensured—more the prince than [is] the page' (60–1).

The aristocracy of the fifteenth century was fascinated by, and saw a political philosophy in, the laws that bound them to Fortune's wheel. For them the theoretical application of Boethian wisdom was a means of political survival<sup>36</sup>—the period's sense of political insecurity is witnessed readily in the prefaces of Walton's verse translation (Lawton 1987: 769), itself the version of the *Consolation* James probably knew.<sup>37</sup> Furthermore, between 1411 and 1416, while James was imprisoned in England, Hoccleve was working on *The Regement of Princes*, which he presented to Prince Henry, a text that presents a view of kingship that shares much with Gower's (Fisher 1965: 63). Similarly, Lydgate was at this time working on his *Troy Book*, commissioned by Prince Henry, a text that details the cyclical nature of the seasons and the counterpoint to this in the vacillations of human fortune, together with interpolations of political sententiousness (Pearsall 1969: 33, 40–1; Green 1980: 155, 190. Henry commissioned the work in 1412 while still Prince of Wales). James may have had the latter in mind when he wrote of Venus's palace: 'Here bene the princis faucht the grete batailis, | In mynd of quhom ar maid the bukis newe' (591–2) (Norton-Smith 1971: 70). While poets were writing for princes, warning them of the nature of Fortune, James, a prince, portrays himself being warned of Fortune's nature by Fortune herself. She tells him to 'Spend wele' the 'remanant' of his life (1197) and explains the nature of her wheel: 'For the nature of it is euermore, | After ane hicht, to vale and geue a fall—| Thus, quhen me liketh, vp or down to fall' (1200–2).

Such 'intertextuality' between poetry and actual life concerning the fortunes of the illustrious can also be seen in the request by Charles d'Orléans for a copy of the *de Casibus*, while he was himself an imprisoned prince who had fallen low on Fortune's wheel.<sup>38</sup>

<sup>36</sup> Lawton (1987: 789); Green (1980: 145). As Kohl (1979: 126) writes: 'In the fifteenth century, philosophical wisdom is drawn upon to overcome the practical difficulties and problems of life and is no longer restricted to securing a detached view of life and calm endurance of misery and distress.'

<sup>37</sup> Walton's verse translation may be tacitly linked with the concerns of political literature, notably that of 'governance of princes', commissioned as it was by the daughter of Lord Thomas Berkeley, a man known to have commissioned translations of advisory texts—John Trevisa translated for him Giles of Rome's *De regimine principum* and also Vegetius's *De re militari*.

<sup>38</sup> See Pearsall (1970: 251); Askins (2000: 38). Charles had the copy of the text delivered to him by his chancellor, Guillaume Cousinot in 1434; he commissioned a

Similarly, Charles's brother, Jean d'Orléans, comte d'Angoulême—a prisoner of the English for thirty-three years (1412–45)—devoted his time to copying Latin works, notably Boethius's *Consolation* (Crow 1942: 91). In the last century, Gustave Dupont-Ferrier was able to identify this copy in the Bibliothèque Nationale, which as well as having been written by Angoulême is also well studied and instructively annotated by him (Crow 1942: 92). James's viewing and presenting of his own life and imprisonment through a Boethian frame was not, therefore, an isolated event. When writing, James may have had in mind another advisory 'text' concerned with fortune, one that was written specifically for him whilst he was imprisoned: the *Epistola Consolatoria* he received from the University of Paris ten years before he wrote the *Quair*:

Dum facta hominum ex litterarum monumentis colligimus, illustrissime princeps ac metuendissime domine, videmus universa sub sole fortune sevientis incursibus fore omniquaque subjecta, preter ea que subnixa sunt in stabili virtutis fundamento . . . Si enim utraque fortune conditio, et prospere et adverse, debito ponderentur examine ac equa lance pensemus, ceperimus indubie adversam in omnibus potioem et omnis vite ac discipline magistram . . .<sup>39</sup>

James's life, rule, and death, however, were ironically to become themselves immortalized as an advisory text: John Shirley's *The Dethe of the Kynge of Scotis*.<sup>40</sup> James's murder held a grim fascina-

new copy of the work after he returned to France. See Champion (1910: 19). Furthermore, Charles's reading matter included at least seven copies of the *Consolation* in Latin and French (at least two of them glossed, one by Nicholas Trivet), of which he had two with him in England—all of which demonstrates he was aware of *contemptus mundi* philosophy and negative literary representations of Fortune's sway. See Arn (1994: 49), and Champion (1910: 21–2, 26–7).

<sup>39</sup> Deneffe and Chatelain (1889–97: iv. 2018). 'Since, most illustrious prince and most feared lord, we gather the deeds of men from amongst the records of those who are lettered, we see all things subjected under the heel of cruel fortune by hostile attacks, except those things which are resting on the stable foundation of virtue . . . If each condition of fortune, whether favourable or adverse, is weighed correctly and we think through keenly and with a level view, we may perceive without doubt her to be the more powerful mistress in all things, in every life and discipline' (I am grateful to Professor Anne Hudson for her translation of this letter). The *Epistola Consolatoria* was sent to James in 1414, and as Balfour-Melville (1936: 60) writes, the real purpose of this document was 'not so much to afford him consolation as to win him over to the Pisan side in the papal controversy'.

<sup>40</sup> See Connolly (1992: 46–69). The Latin original of this has not been identified. Although Balfour-Melville (1936: 243) refuted its historical accuracy, his sceptical view has recently been revised, notably by M. Brown (1992: 23–45; 1994: 172–93).

tion for contemporaries, eliciting more accounts than any other event in fifteenth-century Scotland. Shirley's text became part of the tradition of *specula principum*—in one manuscript it was even copied alongside the political classic of this genre: the *Secreta Secretorum* (M. Brown 1996: 26, 28). The ideal, therefore, was never to become real. Instead, James's rule became tyrannical—one of his assassins (Sir Robert Graham) is alleged to have declared: 'I have þus slayne and deliuered yow of so crewell a tyrant, þe grettest enemye þat Scottes or Scotland myght haue' (Connolly 1992: 66). James failed, therefore, to realize the regal image he invented of himself on his return to Scotland, projected in both his political and judicial strategies. Moreover, he failed to mirror the self-governed identity, or re-enact the Boethian prisoner's self-won reason claimed as the result of his own imprisonment and promised in his *Kingis Quair* to his subjects.

## Charles d'Orléans and his *English Book of Love*

### I

On 25 October 1415, in the bloody aftermath of the battle of Agincourt, Charles, Duke of Orléans, at the age of 21, was literally pulled from beneath a heap of bodies to begin a twenty-five-year English imprisonment. As a prince of the house of Valois who would later become father of Louis XII, uncle of François I, and moreover, figure greatly in the settlements ending the Hundred Years War, the historical import of this moment is notable (Coldiron 2001: 101). Despite this, however, the literary results of Charles's captivity have not been studied in proportion to their significance or interest, in particular his English poetry, especially given the unique and early place this occupies in the history of the lyric in England and notably, I would argue, in the traditions of the lyric book and of pseudo-autobiography.

When brought to England Charles was initially locked in the Tower, but the popular view that he simply 'pined away' during his imprisonment in England is inaccurate. Although he suffered from periods of isolation, generally his years in England were busy socially and otherwise. He was often on the move, either with his 'guardians' or because those responsible for his custody were frequently changed (Askins 2000: 27–45). Between 1415 and 1429 he moved between London, Westminster, Windsor, Pontefract Castle in Yorkshire, Peterborough, Fotheringay Castle in Northamptonshire, London, Bolingbroke in Lincolnshire, Canterbury, Bourne in Lincolnshire, and Peterborough again. In December 1429 he was moved to Ampthill in Bedfordshire, in the custody of John Cornwall, Lord Fanhope, who also held Charles's brother, Jean d'Angoulême.

In 1432 Charles's daughter, Jeanne, died at the age of 23. She was born to his first wife, Isabelle, daughter of Charles VI and widow of Richard II of England, whom Charles had married when he was 11,

but who had left him a widower at the age of 14. To add to his grief, his second wife, Bonne, daughter of Bernard, Count of Armagnac, and niece of the Duke of Berry, also died at this time.<sup>1</sup> In the summer of that year, William de la Pole, Earl of Suffolk and husband of Alice Chaucer, Geoffrey Chaucer's granddaughter, requested and was granted the custody of Charles. Life appears to have taken a momentary upward turn, for Suffolk was to prove an affectionate and sympathetic friend, and, moreover an admirer of French culture and art.<sup>2</sup> The friendship between Suffolk and Charles continued after Charles's return to France in 1440, for Suffolk later visited Charles at his residence at Blois.

For the next few years records show that Charles was much on the move between 'guardians', and from May to October 1439 he was in Calais actively involved in peace negotiations. Finally he was formally released on 28 October 1440, and the event was marked by a ceremony in Westminster Abbey. Charles sailed for Calais on 5 November where he was greeted by the Duke of Burgundy who had been instrumental in negotiations for his release. Shortly after Charles's return to France, he married Marie de Clèves, the 14-year-old niece of Isabelle of Portugal, Burgundy's wife. At the time of his release, Charles was 46 years old. He had spent twenty-five years as a prisoner of the English and it appears he was considerably Anglicized by the experience—Hall's *Chronicle* states that Charles 'was deliuered out of Englande into Fraunce at that tyme, bothe speakyng better Englishe then Frenche'. Whilst the reference is perhaps too late to carry much authority, there is contemporary testimony of the fluency of Charles's English from René d'Anjou (Arn 1994: 29).

The years following the end of Charles's captivity saw the release of his brother Jean (1445), the birth of his daughter Marie (1457), the birth of his son (1462), the future Louis XII, and finally, the birth of a second daughter, Anne (1464). In 1465, returning to Blois from Tours, Charles broke his journey at Amboise because of sudden ill health; he died shortly afterwards on the night of 4 January. He was 70 years old.

The nature of Charles's imprisonment in England appears to have

<sup>1</sup> Bonne died between 1430 and 1435 (Arn 1994: 25).

<sup>2</sup> Suffolk had himself been a political prisoner of the French in the custody of Charles's own half-brother, Dunois, having been captured on 12 June 1429, following the battle of Jargeau. (Pearsall 2000: 145–8; Arn 1994: 16–17).

varied a good deal, but there is no doubt that the occasional periods of hardship and isolation that it brought provided opportunities for unbroken concentration and exercise of the imagination. Charles's life in England, therefore, appears to have been well suited to study, and he was permitted to bring a sizeable library with him from the books he owned at his residence in Blois and was able to add to this collection.<sup>3</sup> It appears that, although he was kept under close surveillance, as a member of the French royal family he was looked upon as an honoured guest.<sup>4</sup> There was, however, constant pressure for Charles to raise the ransom money for his own and his brother Jean's release, and he worked tirelessly to govern and protect his lands—in this, he could certainly not forget that he was in the hands of his enemies, and that his true status was that of prisoner (Fein 1983: 16; Arn 1994: 15, 18). Furthermore, it appears that at times he was kept under closer surveillance than at others, largely depending upon the current political situation between France and England. After the death of Henry V (1422), the permission for safe conducts became stricter, stipulating that visitors and servants of Charles were to stop for no longer than one night in any one place (Fox 1969: 12). At this point, political power was in the hands of a council of regency, and although they were willing to allow Charles access to his servants, they were determined to avoid the development of a conspiracy to release him. Indeed, in letters dated 1417 and 1419, Henry V warns against Charles as a spy and a potential escapee and ally of the Scots, and asks for tightened security (see Coldiron 2000a: 192–3).

When Charles was finally released, among the possessions he took back to France was a small book embossed with his coat of arms; it was a volume of his own poetry, predominantly French, composed in England. Behind him he had left a volume of English poetry, now BL MS Harley 682,<sup>5</sup> which loosely paralleled the poems in his 'French

<sup>3</sup> The library he collected in England contained close to a hundred books. For inventories of all of Charles's book collections and for those books he brought back from England in 1440 see Champion (1910: pp. xxv–xxix). See also Spence (1986: p. xiv); Fein (1983: 16); Arn (1994: 18, 27); Askins (2000: 29–45).

<sup>4</sup> See Champion (1911), esp. ch. 8, 'La "Prison" Anglaise'. See also McLeod (1969: 134; 144); Fein (1983: 16); Arn (1994: 15).

<sup>5</sup> The first and fourteenth quires of the manuscript are missing. For a description of the manuscript see Arn (1994: 101–22; 2000: 61–78). In addition to the Harley manuscript, the fragmented remains of a copy made from it some time in the middle of the 15th cent. are to be found in Cambridge University Library (a fragment of two leaves used as paste-downs survives as CUL MS Add. 2585) and the Bodleian Library,

book'. The poetry forms a 'lyrico-narrative' (Huot 1987: 1-2, 336-7) text comprising two ballade sequences and a sequence of roundels adjoined by narrative verse; the subject of the poetry is the two love affairs of its poet-narrator, the lady in each case unnamed. Indeed, much scholarly research has been poured into establishing the historical identity of the two women for whom Charles professes to write. It is more likely, however, that in each case the lady is a poetic construct necessary for Charles's art, and does not represent a historical woman—Charles's third wife, Marie de Clèves, possessed a copy of the first fifty-two roundels (minus Roundels 30 and 31) in French, and it is unlikely she would have wanted to own these had they been composed for her husband's former lover (Spence 1986: p. xvii; Arn 1994: 19). Research has focused particularly on the identity of the second lady, and those poems written after Charles's second wife, Bonne, died.<sup>6</sup> However, as John Fox writes 'it is not even known for certain whether or not the lady in question was an imaginary figure, his first wife Isabelle de Valois, his second wife, Bonne d'Armagnac, an acquaintance in England or sometimes the one, sometimes the other, or even an amalgam of all four!' (Fox 1969: p. x).

The Harley manuscript containing Charles's *English Book of Love*<sup>7</sup> resembles in size and arrangement the form of Charles's French poems in the Bibliothèque Nationale, MS fr. 25458 (Steele and Day 1970: p. xiv; Arn 1994: 119-22; 2000: 61-78). This was Charles's personal manuscript, partly written in his own hand (the autograph sections are all to be found in the part of the manuscript written after his release from captivity). The first half of the English poems in Harley, up to and including Roundel 52, roughly correspond to Charles's early French poetry in his personal manuscript. The remaining English poems largely have no French equivalents.<sup>8</sup> In

Oxford (fragments of a single copy on parchment have survived—Thomas Hearne pasted two leaves of this manuscript into vol. 38 of his *Diaries* on 2 Sept. 1712: Bodl. MS Hearne's Diaries 38 fos. 261-4).

<sup>6</sup> Seaton (1957: 20-35); Fox (1969: 13-15); Champion (1911: 261-72); and Goodrich (1967: 97-100).

<sup>7</sup> The most recent edition of Charles's English poems, Arn (1994), is entitled *Fortunes Stabiles*, but here the text will be referred to by the second part of Arn's title, Charles's *English Book of Love*, and henceforth as *English Book*. All quotations will be taken from Arn (1994), citing line numbers.

<sup>8</sup> In addition to the *English Book*, the nine English lyrics in Charles's own predominantly French manuscript are possibly by Charles (printed in Arn 1994: 381-8), as are the three English poems (ibid. 388-9) found in BL MS Royal 16 F.ii, a manu-



view of the fact that Harley's layout is obviously taken from Charles's personal manuscript, which he took back to France with him in 1440, and considering the fact that two English ballades (1111 and 1113) are reworkings of ballades received by Charles from Philippe, Duke of Burgundy in 1439, Harley 682 must accordingly be dated as 1439–40 (Arn 1994: 37).

Charles's authorship of the poems in Harley 682, or the possibility that they are the work of a translator, is still debated by some scholars (Calin 1994: 70 provides a most recent example). Overall, however, the evidence favours Charles as author (Arn 1994: 32 ff. provides a survey of the material on Charles's authorship) and the burden of proof appears to lie with those who dispute it (Steele and Day 1970: pp. xxvi–xxvii and Meier 1981: 372 discuss whether the English or French versions came first). The English poems are far from straight translations, and as the text of Harley progresses, no French parallels exist. Supporting Charles's authorship are the reworkings into English of two French ballades by the Duke of Burgundy (nos. 1111 and 1113). These ballades formed part of a poetic exchange between Charles and Burgundy, as a component of the process of reconciliation that culminated in Charles's release (Harrison 1980: 475–84). Whoever wrote these two English ballades, therefore, must have had access to the private poetic correspondence exchanged between the two men. Moreover, internal evidence also points to a Frenchman as author. The poet's preference for masculine rhyme and his habit of rhyming on unstressed final syllables; his conflation of [-i] and [-e] (as well as [i] and [e]) rhymes; his un-English word order; his occasional strange spellings; his use of unusual or incorrect prepositions, tenses, parts of speech, and colloquialisms; his dependence on a few prefixes, like *for-*, *a-*, and *en-*; and his creation of forms ending in *-ment*—all point to a Frenchman (Arn 1994: 36; 1993: 222–35).

The English poems in Harley 682 represent a new and separate artistic endeavour—the French poems were not slavishly followed, instead a series of sound plays, puns, and different metaphors were often introduced, so that those English poems with French 'originals' are often very different (Arn 1994: 36–7, 460; Steele and Day 1970: 302–6; Fox 1965: 433–62; Coldiron 2000b: 14–16, 29–38). Furthermore, unlike the French poems, the English poems constitute

script of Charles's French poems. See Backhouse (2000: 157–63) for a discussion of this manuscript.

a coherent 'story' or *dit* of love and loss, completed at least conceptually. As Arn (2000: 62, 76–7) highlights, the English and French poems run 'parallel' for the opening sections until the narrator's retirement to the Castle of No Care, but subsequently the French poems diverge and are largely arranged not according to content or story, but according to form: ballades and complaintes, chansons and caroles, and rondeaux. There is also, as Coldiron (2000b: 22, 34, 41) discusses, a greater thematic connectedness in the English version, where Charles's persona is quite different. I approach the English poems, therefore, as a whole text or 'book'. For as J. A. Burrow (1988: 230) has discussed, Harley 682 is an example of 'the late medieval sequence' marked by what he calls 'bookness', a 'work in which separable items by a single author . . . are held together in a fixed order within a single volume', the effect of which depends upon its own material existence as a book.

Although the *English Book* appears ostensibly a narrative book charting the poet's two love affairs, the text is actually pseudo-autobiographical, and as such, does not reveal the textual strategies of the other primary texts I discuss, in particular the *Quair*, despite other similarities. (Charles, like James, was also a political prisoner of the English, and was possibly held at junctures with James in the Tower and at Pontefract Castle, Yorkshire (Marks 1989: 248; Fox 2000: 91–2), and like James he composed his 'book' during his captivity. The text also deploys dream-vision, invocations of Venus and Fortune, and describes the narrator's fortunes in love, and again like the *Quair*, the 'I' voice appears a central aspect.) Indeed, the narrator's presented ennui and self-reflection, the omnipresence of the 'I' voice, and the seeming realism of vented emotion within the lyric sequences, have meant that the *English Book* has been read autobiographically with far less reservation than has the *Quair*.

The 'I' voice of Charles's *English Book*, however, is deceptive and seemingly forms the poet himself, largely through the references to poetic composition (e.g. 197–202), and through Charles's self-naming. He first names himself in the opening 'patent' of Cupid and Venus, where he is referred to as 'the duk that folkis calle I Of Orlyauunce' (5–6). He also refers to himself as 'Yowre servaunt, Charlis Duk of Orlyauunce' (2720) in his 'petition' addressed to Cupid and Venus, as well as at the close of his epistle to Cupid and Venus which he 'signs': 'Bi the trewe Charlis, Duk of Orlyauunce'

(3044). Lastly, when he later meets Venus, she addresses him as 'Charlis' (4788). Furthermore, the juxtaposition of the voices of allegorical figures with Charles's namesake-narrator means that where the narrator himself speaks, abandoning mouthpieces—such as his Heart or Thought or Hope—it seems that a very real Charles d'Orléans speaks, as occurs, for example, in Ballade 57. Yet this is part of the text's play of tone, of the many hiding games 'Charles' plays throughout (Coldiron 2000b: 36–7—cf. Ballades 6, 11, 18, 24, 25, 32–5, 37–9 and 43). An autobiographical reading has less ground for substantiation when recalling also that, unlike the *Quair*, there is no reference to biographical data from the author's curriculum vitae.

Charles wrote over 6,500 lines of English poetry while imprisoned, yet his situation is referred to, if at all, in the vaguest manner, through images of confinement, and possibly through a pervasive introspection, a sense of isolation, and a concern with separation and absence. Yet though these concerns may have been aspects of Charles's life as well as of his art, this does not mean the 'I' voice of his poetry posits a revelation of his deepest self. It cannot be known for certain that the themes of solitude and absence, which pervade his poetry, actually result from and mimetically represent his actual suffering. Such themes may simply be deployed in an artistic contrivance; indeed, the equation between confinement and the imprisoning tyranny of love has literary precedents, particularly in fourteenth-century French poetry, which I discuss below. The melancholic isolation of Charles's narrator, therefore, is not necessarily the result of physical confinement, restricting Charles to 'inner exploration' (Fein 1983: 19) nor does it follow that: 'cut off from his familiar world, plunged without preparation into an alien culture, he turned inward for consolation' (ibid. 18). Critics such as Stakel (1988: 166–72); Cholakian (1983a: 41–58; 1983b: 1–5; 2000: 109–15) and Planche (1975: 246) have had a tendency to view the 'I' voice in Charles's poetry to some extent as sincere self-analysis, something that is problematic for a modern text, let alone a medieval one.

Reading the poet-narrator as autobiographical or pseudo-autobiographical relates to the text's conception and reception. If much of the text once formed private correspondence, the lyrics written by Charles as actual verse-missives to his lady, serving a private and practical role, then notions of autobiographical veracity are enforced. Green (1983: 136) posits such a communicative function. Citing the view of Stevens (1961: 209) that when 'the courtly

maker uses a word like “hert” or “trew-love” he may well be thinking of a “thing”, a physical emblem or device’, Green suggests we read many of Charles’s verses as actual epistles enclosing the gift of a heart-shaped brooch. He cites verses such as Roundel 58:

Madame, y wold, bi God alone,  
How that myn hert were in yowre sleue,  
For in good trouth ye wol not leue  
How fayne he wolde fro me bigoon.  
So good, take it now anoon,  
For frely him y to yow geve. . . (3983–8)

He also suggests a similar reading for Ballades 32 and 107, particularly the closing lines of the second stanza of the latter: ‘For as heron y gefe thee [his heart] to hir here | Without departyng alle my lyvis space’ (6084–5).

A consistent literal reading is problematic, however, given that frequently the heart ‘Charles’ addresses is his own, presented consistently throughout the text as the emotional facet with whom he, as narrator and as Reason, communes.

Whatever the original purpose of the lyrics, their author’s extant arrangement and presentation of them as forming a trajectory linked by narrative verse suggests a fictive emphasis. Indeed, already in the fourteenth-century there were significant innovations in poetic and codicological practices that witnessed a new self-consciousness in the manipulation of lyric and narrative, and in the concept of poetic identity, evoked in the anthology codices solely devoted to a single author, for example, Guillaume de Machaut, Jean Froissart, and Christine de Pizan (Huot 1987: 211ff.; Coldiron 2000b: 147). I would suggest that contemporary readers would have read the *English Book* as a ‘whole book’, and would have been sensitive to its pseudo-autobiographical status, when read as such.<sup>9</sup>

Playful constructions of *apparent* literalism exist as literary precedents in Old French pseudo-autobiographical, lyrico-narrative ‘books’, particularly works by Machaut and Froissart.<sup>10</sup> Machaut’s

<sup>9</sup> Coldiron (2000a: 185–7) writes that the manuscript evidence reveals that Charles’s poetry was read by a much broader early readership and over a much longer period of time than has usually been assumed to be the case.

<sup>10</sup> See Calin (1974: 55–74; 146–66); Brownlee (1984: 37–63); J. Taylor (1990: 539–48); Boulton (1993: 188–97, 203–8). Charles owned works by Froissart who was also a guest of Charles’s father, Louis, at his court. As for Machaut, Charles could hardly have escaped his influence; indeed, Charles’s most recent editor argues that

*Voir Dit*, for example, narrates the story of the poet-protagonist's love affair with Toute-belle, a young girl of a noble family, and is composed of narrative sections enclosing some sixty lyric poems and some forty-six letters (Gybbon-Monypenny 1973: 133–6). The text was traditionally thought by critics to be literal autobiography, largely due to touches of seeming realism, such as Machaut's request to Toute-belle that she date her letters in future because he has difficulty sorting them for inclusion in the book (letter xxvii).<sup>11</sup> The text's early editor, Paulin Paris, certainly regarded the text as the literal consequence of the poet's actual love-affair, even believing he had correctly identified Machaut's beloved as Peronne d'Armentières (Paris 1875: pp. xxiii–xxvi). However, critical opinion has subsequently become more sceptical, discussing the text as deliberate fiction, and noting its internal markers as such (Gybbon-Monypenny 1973; Calin 1974; Beer 1981; Huot 1987; Boulton 1993; J. Taylor 1993; de Looze 1997). As Boulton (1993: 201) writes, on the literal level, the poems and letters serve as authenticating pieces, a device playfully attempting to prove the 'veracity' of both the love-affair and the text. Similarly, Gybbon-Monypenny (1973: 133) argues that the text is pseudo-autobiographical, and that the narration of erotic love is typical of this genre, which he defines as 'an account by a poet, usually in verse, of an episode or episodes of his own supposed love life, into which are interpolated a number of his own lyric compositions. The songs are said to have been composed in connection with the love affair described, and the narrative serves, among other things, to explain their genesis'.

Charles's *English Book* appears to conform to this description of pseudo-autobiography; it encompasses a first-person narrative allegedly of the author's love affair, told partly through incorporated verse-epistles within the story of poetic production. The text consists of lyric sequences posited as having an external function: each of the two ballade sequences are presented as a collection of love letters, each sequence addressed to a different lady, while 'Charles' is employed to write the double ballade on Fortune (4680–735) on behalf of another suffering lover (4659–65). Furthermore, the

most of Machaut's works were known to Charles (Arn 1994: 45–6). Further, Dunois, Charles's half-brother, owned a Machaut manuscript, see Champion (1910: 126). See also Poirion (1965: 277–8).

<sup>11</sup> See lines 490–8, 511–14. See Leech-Wilkinson and Barton Palmer (1998: 340–1) (citations are taken from this edition), and Gybbon-Monypenny (1973: 134–5).

sudden juxtaposition of sadness and joy, absence and reunion, accusations and penitence found in adjacent lyrics addressed to the lady suggests that the ballades themselves contain a narrative subtext, appearing to chart extra-textual events. Ballade 96 suggests an impending separation, that the two lovers 'nedis must depart | And when to mete þe tyme is nouncertayne' (5660-1). The separation is given a further realism in that, by Ballade 98, 'Charles' intimates he is back in his lady's presence: 'Welcome, my leche, me forto sle or saue!' (5819). Similarly, Ballade 108 consists of Charles's accusations, while in the following Epistle his contrition appears due to his previous petulance. The verses are given what Martin Camargo (1991: 113) calls a 'functional identity'. The question remains, however, whether such verses did indeed relate to and reflect external events, or whether they are construed with careful artifice within the genre of consciously fictive pseudo-autobiographical 'books'. The fictionality of the love-affair appears emphasized, for example, in Ballade 116, where 'Charles' dramatically incorporates his lady's voice, undermining her actuality:

- [AMANT:] Lende me yowre praty mouth, Madame.  
 Se how y knele here at yowre feet?  
 [LADY:] Whie wolde ye occupy the same?  
 Now whereabowt first mot me wite. (6367-70)

Furthermore, the anxious sincerity of the love lyrics is paradoxically undermined by the narrative sections, which comment upon the lyrical 'I'. At the close of the narrative section, and the resumption of the ballade sequence at Ballade 85, in which 'Charles' directly addresses his lady, two almost comically different narrating tones are apparent in adjacent verses. In the former the poet rationally explains his motives, and addresses the reader; in the latter, he poses as the ridiculous suffering lover, who is on the point of death:

But neuyrtheles to this purpos y fell:  
 That when y myght (for fere of forgetyng),  
 Bi mouth y wolde my mater to hir tell,  
 And, lak of space, to take it bi writyng;  
 Forwhich that thus bigan my new servyng,  
 When þat y fond my tymys of laysere,  
 As sewith next, if it lust yow to here.

*Ballade 85*

Of fayre most fayre, as verry sorse & welle

From yow me cometh, as brefly to expres,  
 Such loue þat y ne may it from yow helle  
 Alle shulde y die—God take y to witnes!  
 Desire me takith with such a ferventnes  
 That y must nedis put me at yowr will  
 Wherso ye lust, of rigoure or kyndenes,  
 Me forto saue or do me payne or spill. (5345–59)

Moments of humour also imply a conscious divide between author and narrator. Humour is created at the narrator's expense as he becomes more passionate in his declarations and more despairing at his reversals of fortune (Arn 1983: 14). Charles presents his narrator in these sections in a manner of Chaucerian humour and foolishness, for example, in his gallant concern and elaborate rhetoric, worried that Venus is cold and weary from travelling over the cold sea without adequate clothing, and then in his buffoon-like attempt to steal a kiss from her (4772–8).

It is probable that contemporary readers would have readily appreciated the playful conflation of seeming authenticity and fictionality within the 'book' in the form of letters 'received' and 'sent', pseudo-confessions, pseudo-documents, and alleged subterfuge, together with the consciously humorous presentation of the narrator. Charles's text, therefore, shares the pseudo-autobiographical aspects found in the works of Machaut, Chaucer, and Gower's *Confessio*; there is no invitation to read the narrator as a non-ironic representation of the author as exists in the *Testament* and the *Quair*. Read as a whole 'book' as opposed to a collection of love lyrics, and read in the light of the above Old French pseudo-autobiographical 'books', the narrator appears consciously ironic and unstable. Indeed, a stable reading of the *English Book* as autobiographical somewhat flattens the text, for it ignores the playful way such readings are invited and then sabotaged; it also overrides Charles's use of the sincere rhetoric of love poetry as a playful aspect of the veracity and fiction of the whole 'book', as the earnest pleas for fidelity and sincerity towards his lady are juxtaposed with the playful and unstable creation of 'Charles'. Such instabilities construct the ironic discrepancy between the narrator and actual author, and reveal the book's pseudo-autobiographical nature.

## II

As a pseudo-autobiographical text, the *English Book* does not display the careful authorial self-presentation of the *Testament* or the *Quair*, and as such, also does not possess a political agenda in the persuasion of its audience and their view of the author. As Coldiron (2000b: 43) writes, the writing subject belongs neither to autobiography nor political self-fashioning, but is primarily of literary representation. The treatment of imprisonment, therefore, is not redeployed to portray the author and his mettle and understanding in a favourable light, as occurs with the *Testament* and the *Quair*, because this political agenda is lacking. Rather, imprisonment is the subject of more formal and literary concerns.

The images of incarceration are filtered into a different sort of imprisonment: the narrator as a prisoner of love. The most overt and only *open* reference to imprisonment occurs in Ballade 40, where 'Charles' protests:

To balade now y haue a fayre leysere;  
 Alle othir sport is me biraught as now  
 Martir am y for loue and prisonere;  
 Allas, allas, and is this not ynow? (1440-4)

'Charles' frequently describes his heart in pseudo-military terms as besieged by Danger and attacked by Thought, Woe, and Absence, the metaphorical enemies of his love-suit (1004-36), depicting his heart within the confines of a prison or fortress (1076-9). Such images suggest the protection offered by seclusion, permitting a retreat of the heart and its memories into a refuge of solace, particularly implied in the evocation of a spiritual hermitage: 'My poore hert bicomem is hermyte | In hermytage of Thoughtfull Fantase' (1511-12). Yet it is possibly too speculative to say, as David Fein does, that such images are a form of meditation through which Charles sought to escape adverse external circumstances—that such images represent distinct responses to the state of exile: resignation, escape, and transcendence (Fein 1983: 28). There is a danger in reading the imprisonment motifs and lamentations too literally, and making too simple an assumption of mimesis. Ballade 97 reveals such a problem. Here 'Charles' explicitly compares himself with an anchorite, not because both are imprisoned as Spearing (1992: 85)



suggests, but rather because the anchorite's incarceration, having only to stare upon the stone walls of his cell, is preferable to the misery 'Charles' feels even though he has the freedom to roam within the company of 'fayre folkis' (5797).

Rather, through the topoi of love's incarceration 'Charles' is confined within literary tradition. The 'prison of love' is a topos found throughout the development of the courtly lyric; the figurative imprisonment of the poet represents the helpless state of the martyred lover, a helplessness that, moreover, the victim readily accepts. Machaut uses the motif in typical courtly fashion: 'S'Amours me tient en sa prison joieuse, | Je me rens pris sans faire nul contraire' ('If love holds me in his joyful prison, | I surrender myself without resistance' (N. Wilkins 1972: 59)). The 'prison joieuse' symbolizes the tyranny of love over its subjects, a tyranny that the poet willingly embraces. Images linking love and imprisonment are also found in Machaut's *Voir Dit*,<sup>12</sup> and in Froissart's *La Prison amoureuse*.<sup>13</sup> Indeed, one critic's comment upon Froissart's poem is relevant to the *English Book*: 'If this [the topoi of imprisonment] is supposed to be evocative of real life, why are such pains taken to redefine imprisonment as intertextual reference? Indeed, what is this allegorized prison if not a self-conscious return to the *Roman de la Rose*—that is, to literature?' (de Looze 1997: 119).

In a courtroom defence of his son-in-law Jean d'Alençon, accused of treason by Charles VIII, Charles described the ennui he suffered as a prisoner of the English, even though his imprisonment was generally of a liberal nature (Arn 1994: 15–18; Askins 2000: 27–45):  
I lived, for twenty-five years of my life shut up in English prisons—owing to the sorrows, the physical sufferings, and the dangers among which I was

<sup>12</sup> Toute-belle permits a sexual encounter by declaring she has incarcerated her lover's allegorical enemies, who had until now prevented this: 'j'ay emprisonné Dangier & Malebouche' (281)—de Looze (1997: 97) discusses the indebtedness of this moment to the *Roman de la Rose*.

<sup>13</sup> In Froissart's poem, the chronological elements appear to shadow the captivity and eventual release of Froissart's historical patron, Wenceslas, Duke of Luxembourg, who is represented by the character Rose in the poem, and the narrative appears to provide a template for real events from Luxembourg's life. The period of Rose's silence in the poem, for example, is thought to match the period during which Froissart's patron was held incommunicado in prison. Yet simultaneously, the prison is interpreted in an entirely allegorical manner—simply as Rose's estrangement from his beloved lady. See de Looze (1997: 119), discussing Letter IX: 61–4. See also Boulton (1993: 214–23).

lodged, I very many times wished that they had found me dead upon that field of Agincourt where I was taken prisoner! How often did I long to be put out of the misery I so long endured! (Stakel 1988: 166)

Knowledge of the above statement has led critics to make too literal a connection between the 'imprisonment' of the suffering lover within the *English Book*, and the painful time Charles here evokes. Yet in considering the topos of the 'prison of love' in literary tradition, together with the text's comical pseudo-autobiographical nature, the argument that the *English Book*'s 'incarcerated' narrator possesses a direct autobiographical resonance is tenuous.

As such, the lover's 'imprisonment' in the *English Book* is presented with irony, and as counter to the Boethian view of *libertas* attained through reasoned self-rule and the alignment of free will, as is reiterated in the *Quair*. Like James (*Quair*: 442–62), 'Charles' compares his unhappy situation with the seemingly happier one of the birds outside: in Ballade 72 he complains that the birds should thank Nature, because they have their mates while he does not:

Tho gan y reyne with teeris of myn eyne  
 Mi pilowe, and to wayle and cursen oft  
 My destynny, and gan my look enclyne  
 These birdis to, and seid, 'Ye birdis ought  
 To thanke Nature (where as it sittith me nouȝt)  
 That han yowre makis to yowre gret gladnes,  
 Where y sorow the deth of my maystres  
 Vpon my bed so hard of noyous thought.' (2471–8)

Yet unlike James, 'Charles' is not presented as progressing from this viewpoint; he has no realization of the difference between creatures simply ruled by Nature and humanity whose nature must be self-ruled. Rather, 'Charles' is constructed as a 'fool of love'; humorously extreme in his despair, he remains imprisoned by his desires and increasingly subject to Fortune.

The antithesis of Boethius in the *Consolation*, and James, with his concept of reasoned, virtuous love in the *Quair*, 'Charles', without reason, places too great an importance upon sexual desire. This subsequently becomes clear when Venus tells him (in the context of choosing a new lady): "Remembre must ye that ye ar a man" (4869) in words that so precisely echo Philosophy's to Boethius: "Remembrestow that thow art a man?" (Bo. I. pr. vi.55–6). Here, however, the meanings are completely different. For whereas

Philosophy sought to show Boethius that he was a *rational* animal, Venus is attempting to show 'Charles' that he is a human *animal*, and so ought to follow the nature of animals.

Charles owned seven copies of Boethius's *Consolation* in both Latin and French, at least two of which were glossed, one by Nicholas Trivet, and he had two copies with him in England (Champion 1910: 20–2, 26–7; Arn 1994: 49). Given that Charles clearly knew Boethius's text well, Venus's words add to the construction of an ironic and playful pseudo-autobiographical identity.

The possible influence of Gower's *Confessio Amantis* upon Charles's *English Book* contrasts with the influence of this text upon James I's *Quair*. It is likely that Charles had read Gower's poem, particularly given its popularity (over fifty copies survive), and also the likelihood that Charles may have had access to a copy during his English captivity.<sup>14</sup> Arn (1994: 44–5) argues that Charles had read the *Confessio* and she notes the similarities and borrowed phrases from Gower's text.<sup>15</sup> The *Confessio* probably inspired Charles's Roundel 57, 'My gostly fadir, y me confesse', where the lover confesses to stealing a kiss for which he must, as a true penitent, make restitution (Pearsall 1983: 187; J. A. W. Bennett 1968: p. viii). The Roundel recalls the moment when Genius urges Amans to confess if he 'hast stolen eny cuss' (cf. Charles's 3969–82 with CA V.6548–72). This is a specifically Gowerian precedent, for the combining of two very different traditions—ecclesiastical confession and love poetry—occurs for the first time in Gower's *Confessio Amantis*. As J. A. Burrow (1983: 5) states, Gower's chosen title, 'The Lover's Confession', pronounces this 'double descent'. He also writes: 'during his twenty-five years of captivity in England, the French prince could hardly have failed to learn something of an English poem then much in vogue, the *Confessio Amantis*'. Burrow argues that the vision of Age and the withdrawal of Charles from love bear

<sup>14</sup> For a discussion of some of the extant manuscripts of the *Confessio Amantis*, see Doyle and Parkes (1978: 163–210). Askins (2000: 30–40) has discussed Charles's very probable 'exposure' to English texts during his twenty-five-year captivity through interaction with his and his brother's 'keepers' and their social milieu. He argues that Charles knew Gower's text and suggests that Charles may have had access to a copy through Margaret, widowed Duchess of Clarence, who owned a copy and had been his brother's keeper.

<sup>15</sup> Arn (1994: 44–5) also argues that Charles was acquainted with Gower's *Cinkante Ballades*, particularly in his handling of Fortune—cf. Gower's Ballade 18 with Charles's 24 and 90 and their respective uses of Valentine and May imagery.

a distinct resemblance to the closing pages of Gower's poem (J. A. Burrow 1986: 186), and he suggests that it 'is entirely likely' that Charles knew the *Confessio*, as his farewell to love has much in common with that of Amans (J. A. Burrow 1983: 20).

Charles appears, therefore, to have been influenced by Gower's *Confessio*, and more particularly by Gower's 'self'-portrait therein. Now in 'myddil age' (2603) 'Charles' is told by Age to withdraw from serving love, a moment that seems indebted to Gower's presentation of his narrator as a lover faced with his eventual unsuitability for love because of his years, and, therefore, necessitating his withdrawal from Love's service on the advice of Genius (CA VIII.2060–209). Age specifically states that hitherto, 'Charles' has had Youth, ungoverned by Reason: 'Youthe . . . | Which hath thee gouernyd longe in nycete | Nought havynge Resoun hit forto mesure' (2561–3). Reason is, therefore, associated with Age, and as, therefore, Love and Age are incompatible (2576), the implication is that Love and Reason are equally incompatible. This view is reminiscent of Genius's advice that:

For love, which that blind was evere,  
Makth alle his servantz blinde also . . .  
Yit is it time to withdrawe,  
And set thin herte under that lawe,  
The which of reson is governed . . . (CA VIII.2130–5)<sup>16</sup>

The encroaching age and fading youth of 'Charles' (2568–71) recalls the moment where 'Gower' recognizes his faded youth in the mirror provided by Venus (CA VIII.2824–30); while the moment in which Age tells 'Charles' that he must leave love (2575–6) and that he may do so without slighting his honour (2588–9), appears reminiscent of the advice of Venus to 'Gower', that he make a 'beau retreat' (CA VIII.2403–39).

Moreover, both texts include the narrator's submission of a petition to Venus and Cupid, asking to be released from love service. The melancholy document written by 'Charles' following the advice of Age, and presented to the god and goddess of love is reminiscent of that which Gower's narrator writes to Cupid and Venus on the advice of Genius (*English Book*, 2716ff.; CA VIII.2280–300). Furthermore, both lovers who have pledged their hearts to serve

<sup>16</sup> See also 'Yit myghte nevere man beholde | Reson, wher love was withholde' (CA VIII.2197–8).

Cupid and Venus ask to have their wounded hearts restored. (Cf. 2754–71 with CA VIII.2287–92; 2894 ff. with CA VIII.2749 ff.; and 2596 ff. with CA VIII.2421 ff.)

Given such similarities, the humorous and ironic onomastic presentation of the lover-narrator as poet, one 'John Gower' (CA VIII.2908), is what seems to have interested Charles, the *Confessio*'s pseudo-autobiographical aspect. For just as the reader differentiates between Chaucer the poet and Geoffrey the protagonist, so must the reader do the same in the *Confessio*, in which Amans identifies himself as 'John Gower' (Olsen 1990: 7), an identification made complete when Gower introduces his own name into the context of a petition—'Sche axeth me what is mi name. | "Ma dame," I seide, "John Gower"' (CA VIII.2320–1).

Gower presents himself pseudo-autobiographically, speaking onomastically of the 'I', yet without attempting to recreate a stable textual identity, which would invite a reading of the poet-protagonist as autobiographical. It is, of course, difficult to judge the extent to which Gower's text informs that of the *English Book*, because Charles was also probably indebted to Machaut and Froissart, authors who had also influenced Gower himself (J. A. Burrow 1983: 5–8). But it seems that one of the facets of Gower's text that interested Charles was not the political, pedagogical aspect of the text that informs the *Quair*, but the ironic distance between poet and his created persona.

### III

Both James I and Charles were political prisoners, even fellow captives. Both composed *books* of poetry that are first-person narratives of love and imprisonment that draw upon Chaucerian and possibly Gowerian poetry. Both were 'princely foreigners who would probably not have become English poets at all if they had not been long-term Lancastrian prisoners' (Spearing 2000: 124). Yet, unlike the *Quair* and the other texts I discuss, there appears no link, direct or oblique, between Charles's political situation and his motivation for creating his *English Book*. Or rather, if there is, this exists as a negative extra-textual link, an omission. For as A. Coldiron writes, Charles does not rework into English his political French poems, his 'glories of Gaul', for he had reason enough as the

number one French political prisoner to want to avoid offending English powers (Coldiron 2000b: 24–8).

The *English Book* is petitionary, therefore, only in terms of the conventions of the lover as his lady's 'thrall', and allusions to incarceration do not serve a portrayal of the author's reason, endurance, or self-justification. For unlike the other texts I discuss, Charles does not construct a politically favourable autobiographical identity in order to persuade his audience, but rather an ironic pseudo-autobiographical lover in order to entertain.

# The *Testimony* of William Thorpe and the *Trial* of Richard Wyche

## I

The *Testimony*'s author William Thorpe is possibly the man of that name who became vicar of Marske, Cleveland, in March 1395 (Aston 1967: 326; Hudson 1993: pp. xlviii–xlix). This is speculative, however, and very little is known of the *Testimony*'s Thorpe, aside from what the text provides. On Sunday, 7 August 1407 he was interviewed by Archbishop Arundel at Saltwood Castle, Kent, where he was imprisoned. His *Testimony* forms a dramatic record of this alleged interview, during which he was questioned by Arundel on a number of charges of heresy. The text states that these charges were brought against Thorpe by the men of Shrewsbury, following his arrest in April for preaching heretical doctrine in St Chad's church (lines 624–31—all quotations from Hudson (1993) citing line numbers). However, no external record exists either for Thorpe's alleged examination by the Archbishop, or for his being sent from Shrewsbury to Saltwood.<sup>1</sup> It would seem, however, that Thorpe had previously been investigated for heresy, having been held by Robert Braybrooke, Bishop of London.<sup>2</sup>

There is no record of Thorpe subsequent to the alleged interview with Arundel. Yet if this interview occurred, the question remains as to why there is no formal conclusion to the process Thorpe describes, for instead he is simply sent back to prison, with no suggestion of a

<sup>1</sup> Nothing is found in Arundel's archiepiscopal register (Lambeth Palace Library, 2 vols.).

<sup>2</sup> Though no record is found in the London register of Braybrooke, two documents in John Lydford's notebook verify the *Testimony*'s claim that Thorpe was previously held by Braybrooke. The first document is a list of articles drawn up against Thorpe for presentation to the bishop, while the second claims to be Thorpe's reply to those articles. See Hudson (1993: pp. xlvii–xlix).

formal judgement passed against him, further questioning, or an ensuing official legal process. This is more perplexing if it is to be believed that Thorpe was as constant in his answers as his *Testimony* purports. Anne Hudson has speculated that Thorpe, like the Lollard Peter Payne, escaped to Bohemia. In Bohemian sources a possible suggestion to this effect is found: a list of beliefs is contained in Prague Metropolitan Chapter Library MS D.49, fos. 179<sup>v</sup>–181<sup>v</sup> entitled *Opiniones Wyllhelmi Torp, cuius librum ego habeo* (Hudson 1993: p. liii). Furthermore, the two extant Latin versions of the *Testimony* (Vienna Österreichische Nationalbibliothek MS 3936 and Prague Metropolitan Chapter Library MS O.29) appear to have been copied in Bohemian hands (Hudson 1993: pp. xxviii–xxix). Whilst no record exists of Thorpe's involvement in Hussite matters, it is probable that he had some contact with Bohemia to warrant such interest in an English Wycliffite.<sup>3</sup>

Slightly more is known of the Lollard priest Richard Wyche. It appears he was imprisoned and questioned for heresy by Walter Skirlaw, Bishop of Durham, and that his *Trial* is allegedly a record of this investigation, existing in the form of a letter. The text cannot predate 1401 because during that year Purvey recanted and this event is referred to in the text (537).<sup>4</sup> Equally, the latest possible date for the text is 1406, the year in which Skirlaw died. Wyche states, however, that he was brought before the bishop on 7 December (531); based, therefore, on Skirlaw's investigations of other heretics during the winter of 1402–3, the examination probably took place on 7 December 1402 at Bishop Auckland, while a likely date for the composition of Wyche's letter would be March 1403 (Snape 1939: 356; von Nolcken 1997: 127, 145; Copeland 2001: 152–3). Although no register of Bishop Skirlaw survives, among the muniments of the Dean and Chapter of Durham and in the cartulary of Kelso Abbey, records survive for the investigations of three priests in the same area: James Nottingham, John de Roxburgh, and John Whitby.<sup>5</sup> These men were probably Wyche's associates, and as such,

<sup>3</sup> Hudson (1993: p. liii) has speculated that Thorpe may have made his way to Bohemia with, or in the immediate footsteps of, two Czech scholars: Mikuláš Faulfiš and Jiri Křehnic, who in 1407 were copying works by Wyclif in Oxford, Gloucestershire, and Northamptonshire.

<sup>4</sup> All quotations from Richard Wyche's letter will be taken from Matthew (1890), citing page numbers. I am grateful to Professor Anne Hudson for her (unpublished) translation of Wyche's letter, from which I also quote.

<sup>5</sup> Durham Dean and Chapter Muniments, Loc. XVII No. 26 and *Liber S. Marie de Calchou* respectively, cited in Snape (1939: 356).



it is likely his investigation took place in the same winter as the proceedings against them. In this respect, it seems feasible that the 'Bhytebi' (541) to whom Wyche entrusts his letter may be a reference to John Whitby, given that the Bohemian scribes of the only extant copy of Wyche's *Trial* often rendered oddly the text's English proper names (Snape 1939: 357).

The outcome of Wyche's examination by Skirlaw is not stated within his letter, but according to an appendix printed with the *Fasciculi Zizaniorum*,<sup>6</sup> he was eventually persuaded to make a full recantation and submit himself to correction by Skirlaw or his commissary between October 1404 and March 1406 (Shirley 1858: 501–5). Wyche's subsequent freedom is confirmed by his later reappearance as a supporter of Sir John Oldcastle (Hudson 1988b: 515). Like Oldcastle, he became an important participant in the relationship between English Wycliffites and Bohemian Hussites, writing to Jan Hus in 1410.<sup>7</sup>

In 1419, Wyche was again investigated on suspicion of heresy, and on this occasion was summoned before convocation (Jacob 1945: iii. 56–7). Wyche admitted to having been previously condemned by Skirlaw and, therefore, stood in danger of being burnt as a relapsed heretic.<sup>8</sup> On this occasion, however, it was not to be his fate, and subsequently he was released, in July 1420, from the Fleet prison where he had been held (CCR *Henry V* 1419–1422: 82). His activities did, however, come to an end on 17 June 1440, when he was finally burnt for his beliefs on Tower Hill in London (Hudson 1988b: 449). A cult grew up around his martyrdom, and the city of London *Journals* give evidence of the veneration of his remains (Strohm 1998: 228).

Four primary witnesses exist for Thorpe's *Testimony*: one early fifteenth-century manuscript (s.xv<sup>1</sup>) in English (Bodl. MS Rawlinson C.208), two medieval Latin Continental manuscripts, one now in

<sup>6</sup> Appendix VI deriving from BL MS Royal 8. F.xii. The *Fasciculi Zizaniorum* extant in Bodl. MS E. Musaeo 86, is a collection of documents concerning Wyclif and his followers, and their heresy. Part of the compilation is printed as part of the Rolls Series, edited by Shirley (1858).

<sup>7</sup> Aston (1997: 21); Hudson (1988b: 126). Wyche's letter to Hus is preserved in Prague University Library MS XI. E. 3, fos. 112<sup>v</sup>–113. His letter was sent to Bohemia in the same year as Oldcastle's letter to the nobleman Woksa von Waldstein (preserved in Prague University Library MS XIII. F. 21, fo. 146).

<sup>8</sup> Wyche admitted to having been condemned by Skirlaw and master Richard Holme. Jacob (1945: iii. 57). Snape (1939: 360) has suggested that Holme was a member of Skirlaw's *familia* and possibly his chancellor at this time.

Vienna (Vienna Österreichische Nationalbibliothek MS 3936—c.1420), the other in Prague (Prague Metropolitan Chapter Library MS O.29—c.1430; see Hudson 1993: pp. xxviii–xxix), and an early printed English version (c.1530).<sup>9</sup> There are also several sixteenth-century secondary witnesses.<sup>10</sup>

Thorpe creates the impression that he wrote his work very shortly after his conversation with Arundel on 7 August 1407. However, of the four primary witnesses, the English manuscript contains a colophon which refers to ‘Arnedel, Archbischof sumtyme of Cauntirbirie’ (161–2) suggesting that Arundel was no longer Archbishop and, therefore, indicating a date of February 1414 at the earliest. However, this may be a scribal addition, and there is nothing within the text that refers to events after 1407.<sup>11</sup>

Wyche’s *Trial*, as discussed above, is likely to have been written between 1402 and 1403, and probably in March 1403 (von Nolcken 1997: 127, 145; Snape 1939: 356). It survives only in Latin in a Bohemian manuscript (Prague University Library MS III. G. 11, fos. 89<sup>v</sup>–99<sup>v</sup>), the nationality of the scribe evinced in his errors in rendering English proper names (Matthew 1890: 530). Despite the text’s Latin preservation, it was almost certainly originally written in English. The specificity of the English names of the letter’s recipients indicates an English version, while the Latin version may have been composed for a larger, probably Continental, audience. Indeed, the use of the vernacular was one of the most important aspects of Lollard belief (Hudson 1994: 223; 1985: 145, 149), and Wyche appears no exception, for he is known to have argued that the layman should pray in his own language, because by understanding

<sup>9</sup> STC 24045. Four copies of this book survive in the following libraries: the British Library, Brasenose College Oxford, the University of Glasgow Library, and the library of Blickling Hall. See Hudson (1993: pp. xxx–xxxi).

<sup>10</sup> These are an abbreviated and incomplete Latin version written into Bodleian Library, Oxford, MS e Musaeo 86, fo. 105<sup>v</sup>, and five inserted unnumbered leaves, by John Bale, worked from the c.1530 English print. John Foxe also printed this Latin text in the *Commentarii Rerum in Ecclesia Gestarum* (Strasbourg, 1554), and reprinted it in his *Rerum in Ecclesia Gestarum* (Basle, 1559). Foxe’s *Acts and Monuments* (London, 1563) reprints the English c.1530 edition. By 1547 Bale thought William Tyndale was responsible for this early printed English version, and Foxe appears to have followed Bale in this attribution in his *Actes and Monuments*. See Hudson (1993: pp. xxxi–xxxvi).

<sup>11</sup> Hudson (1993: p. lii). Events which were important for both Lollards and the authorities and which one would expect to be mentioned are: the publication of Arundel’s *Constitutions* in 1409, the presentation of the Lollard Disendowment Bill in 1410, and the Oldcastle Rising of 1413–14.

what he uttered, he would deserve better by his prayer (Shirley 1858: 502).

Both the *Trial* and the *Testimony* share similarities with the texts of Usk and James I. For just as with the *Testament* and the *Quair*, the texts present a persuasive autobiographical identity so constructed to impact upon the political situation for which the author finds himself imprisoned. Both texts construct textual identities whose exemplary behaviour in the face of imprisonment and persecution is designed to encourage other Lollards in the firmness of their beliefs, and convince of the corruption of the Church. And as with the *Testament* and the *Quair*, Wyche and Thorpe construct a favourable literary identity through intertextual reference, notably by inviting comparisons with hagiographic figures. Furthermore, the texts are also designed to oppose and counter the printed word and propaganda of the Church with Lollardy's own authoritative texts. The *Trial* and the *Testimony*, like the *Testament* and the *Quair*, therefore, demonstrate an imprisoned and persecuted author composing a text in which autobiographical self-presentation has an important political role to play.

The situations of both Wyche and Thorpe are remarkably similar: the heretical investigation of a suspected Lollard, which appears to fall short of a formal trial, occurring at the beginning of the fifteenth century, yet before the publication of Arundel's *Constitutions* in 1409, and described by the 'suspect' himself shortly after the examination, when he was returned to prison. Indeed, Wyche's *Trial* and Thorpe's *Testimony* are the only two surviving documents in which a Lollard describes his own heretical examination (von Nolcken 1997: 132). Similarly, both authors describe the attempts of their examiners to gain their submission by persuading each 'defendant' to swear an oath of submission, a coercion entailing the employment of an *agent provocateur* (*Testimony*, 1827–39, and *Trial*, 534–5). Furthermore, each text appears to have been written when the ultimate outcome of the author's investigation was undecided.

There is also the similar dissemination and Continental Latin preservation of both, suggesting a similar readership for the texts, both in England and in Hussite Bohemia. It is feasible that Thorpe knew Wyche's letter, given that they were both active in the north of England, and may, therefore, have been known to each other. Indeed, the 'domini Wilhelmi Corpp' (543) related to Henry of

Topcliff, the sympathetic priest Wyche mentions, may be a scribally corrupt form of Thorpe (Kightly 1975: 4, 17), for at this time, C and T were often confused in English and Continental script (Hudson 1993: p. xlviii). It is possible that Thorpe saw in Wyche's text a model by which to recount his own experiences and simultaneously disseminate his Wycliffite opinions (Hudson 1993: p. lix; von Nolcken 1997: 130).

While the extent to which Thorpe's alleged imprisonment and interrogation are fictionalized remains unclear, the *Testimony* proffers a mimetic reading of the events concerning its first-person narrator as nominally those of the author. The text invites an autobiographical reading, and the construction of an autobiographical identity begins in the opening lines of the prologue (1–2) where Thorpe explicates his reasons for undertaking the text. Following the prologue, the text proper opens thus:

Knowen be it to alle men þat reden or heeren þis writinge byneþforþ þat, on þe Sondai next aftir þe feste of saint Petir þat we clepen Lammase, in þe 3eer of oure Lord a þousand foure hundrid and seuene, I, William of Thorp, beyng in þe prisoun in þe castel of Saltwode, was brouȝt bifore Tomas of Arnedel, Archebischof of Cauntirbirie and chaunceler þanne of Ynglond. (166–71)

The text is, therefore, proffered as a testimonial, a legalistic declaration of the truth; it is presented less as art than as historical fact, as a document incorporating verifiable facts concerning other events and individuals possibly well known to a readership at this time. These are namely the reputations and recantations of infamous Lollards (499 ff.), and biographical information such as Thorpe's parents' wish for him to be a priest, his uncertainties over such a profession, the displeasure of his friends, and his receiving the blessing of his parents to seek out the counsel of wise priests (437–516). Moreover, Thorpe's cautious explanation for undertaking the work (18 ff.) reveals a concern with the reception of the text and his identity—that this 'William of Thorp' be understood as a credible witness, without designs of self-interest.

As a letter, Wyche's text naturally invites the reader's assumption of the conflation of narrator-writer and actual author. As with the *Testimony*, the author is named: 'Ego Richardus Vicz . . .' (535) ('I Richard Wyche . . .'). The incorporation of Wyche's name within the narration of his interrogation suggests that the *Trial*, like Thorpe's

*Testimony*, was written not only for a known first audience (as is suggested by the personal messages concerning individuals whom both he and his addressees know (541–4)), but also with a wider, anonymous readership in view, and for posterity. Indeed, both texts contain many of the elements described by Kathryn Kerby-Fulton as symptomatic of a late-medieval author's attempt to protect and even market himself (Kerby-Fulton 1997: 79), such as the revelation of authorial identity, the depiction of details from the author's curriculum vitae which might reaffirm his reputation, and concern regarding giving offence to readers, particularly witnessed in anxiety over the reception of the text.

Furthermore, despite the presentation of their textual identities as capable of humour,<sup>12</sup> there is no ironic distance between first-person narrator and author. Each author constructs his textual identity as a stable, mimetic self-representative. The texts proffer a discursive unity in the representation of identity, the name is a contractual sign of identity (Gilmore 1994: 42), similar to Usk's acrostic, as opposed to an ironic device, as with 'Charles d'Orléans'.

Yet in inviting such an autobiographical reading, if Thorpe's account is to be believed as fact, this raises a number of questions. Was this an informal examination, rather than an official trial, which would perhaps explain why no record survives? It seems the depicted situation is not that of a trial, even though Arundel has a list of the accusations against Thorpe from Shrewsbury (of which no official record survives), and although he flaunts the willingness and jurisdiction to punish Thorpe by death on several occasions (406–9, 639–56). For in comparison to trials where the suspected heretic was as theologically learned as Thorpe appears to be, a team of official ecclesiastical advisers was usually assembled, as was the case in the trials of Walter Brut, John Badby, and John Claydon.<sup>13</sup> Furthermore,

<sup>12</sup> On finding their suspect intractable, Wyche narrates how in their exasperation his interrogators adjourned the investigation, and he notes with pithy humour, that while they left for lunch, he was left for prison (539). Thorpe similarly displays an acerbic wit in his censure of those who undertake pilgrimages, particularly their 'rowtinge songis', and their 'baggepipis' (1320–31). Further humour is added to this moment in that it forms a memorable example of Thorpe's outwitting Arundel on a theological issue, in this instance, eschewing the value of religious music. See Hudson (1993: p. lv).

<sup>13</sup> Walter Brut appeared before Bishop Trefnant of Hereford on 3 October 1393, and attendant were fifteen officials, two doctors of canon and civil law, two masters and three bachelors of theology. Hudson (1994: 223). On 1 March 1410, John Badby was tried before Archbishop Arundel and Archbishop Walter Bowet of York, together

where a person had been believed to be guilty of heresy by the community, the defendant was commonly expected to counter this opinion by purgation—by having acquaintances swear that they believed his denial of guilt (Kelly 1989: 444; 1998: 280). When Thorpe refuses to submit (611–16), causing Arundel to produce the list of errors from Shrewsbury (617–20), no such purgation process follows; rather, Arundel seems content for the present to rest with the situation as Thorpe's word against the men of Shrewsbury (639–52).

Several details the *Testimony* mentions can be verified, such as Thorpe's investigation by Braybrooke (2169–80), and the sermons of William Taylor and Thomas Alkerton given in 1406 at St Paul's Cross and the heckling and ensuing dispute (Fines 1968: 500; Hudson 1993: pp. xiii–xvi). The details Thorpe provides of John Malvern—that he was 'a phisician' and 'persoun of seint Dunstane in þe eest in Londoun' (176–7)—are also correct. Malvern was Henry IV's physician, and held the living of St Dunstan's in East London from 1402 until his death in 1422. Moreover, Malvern's presence during Thorpe's investigation is fully credible in that he was also present at the trials of Walter Brut and John Badby; moreover, should Thorpe have invented the situation, a canon lawyer would be the more likely choice for such a fictional role (Hudson 1993: 1). Thorpe is also correct in the naming of several men as Lollards: Nicholas Hereford, Philip Repingdon, John Purvey, and John Aston. Moreover, Thorpe's comments about them are accurate, particularly concerning John Purvey.<sup>14</sup> Here Thorpe is correct in what he reveals and in greater detail than appears in other sources, suggesting Thorpe had access to inside knowledge. He makes two references to Purvey. The first (541–4) intimates that Purvey had relinquished the

with the bishops of London, Salisbury, Exeter, Norwich, Bangor, and Bath and Wells, as well as several prominent members of the laity: Edward, Duke of York, Chancellor Thomas Beaufort, Lord Roos, Henry Beaufort, and the future Archbishop of Canterbury, Henry Chichele. See D. Wilkins (1737: iii. 325–8). John Claydon's trial on 17 August 1415, was a large affair, held publicly in St Paul's Cathedral before Henry Chichele, Archbishop of Canterbury, and Thomas Falconer, Mayor of London, as well as two bishops, a number of theologians, doctors of canon and civil law, clerics, and public notaries (Jacob 1947: p. vi. 132). Furthermore, as Hudson (1993: p. lvi) points out, it is unlikely that Arundel would have undertaken the examination of Thorpe himself.

<sup>14</sup> Thorpe alludes to Nicholas Hereford, Philip Repingdon, and John Purvey (499–516; 570–7; 2084–9), and to John Aston (570–7). Hudson (1993: pp. li–lii), discusses the historical accuracy of Thorpe's comments.

office given to him following his recantation in 1401, the second (545–8) suggests that at this time Purvey's allegiance to the Church was no longer certain. Both references are strengthened by the fact that though Purvey had recanted, he re-emerged in 1414 as a supporter of Oldcastle, and during which he was found to own books sympathetic to Wycliffite views (Jurkowski 1995: 1180–90; Hudson 1993: p. lii).

The situation that unfolds in the *Testimony* is less concerned with Thorpe's attempt to deny heterodox ideas, but rather one that creates a platform for him to defend their correctness. Thorpe does not deny his guilt outright, his account instead is one of skilful evasion and equivocation. For although he denies each of the five charges brought against him, he quickly qualifies each denial of guilt, suggesting that rather than denying the whole charge, he quibbles over part of the charge. Arundel, for example, reads him the second charge that in Shrewsbury 'þou prechedist þere openli þat ymagis owen not to be worschipid in ony wise' (1057–8), and Thorpe responds initially by a clear denial: 'Ser, I prechid neuer þus, neiþer þoru3 Goddis grace I wol in ony tyme consente to þenke ne to seie þus' (1059–60). However, he subsequently equivocates, qualifying this statement by referring to scripture, here Gen. 1: 26, 31, saying that: 'alle þingis whiche he [God] made weren ri3t goode . . . and worschipful in her kynde' (1061–3), but then making an exception for those things made 'wiþ mannus hond' (1072). The intimation is that the wording of Arundel's accusation, that Thorpe proposed that images should not be worshipped 'in ony wise', permits room for qualification and denial.

The text displays a pattern here, for each of the charges are dealt with by Thorpe in a similar way—denial, qualification of denial, and criticism of the charge itself. However, the pattern appears more literary than literal; it is quite incredible that the space and time Thorpe requires to follow this pattern of refutation and qualification would have been so readily granted by Arundel. At moments, therefore, Arundel recedes, becoming merely a prompt for raising further topical questions necessary for Lollard pedagogical purposes. This is witnessed, for example, by the fact that it is Thorpe, not Arundel, who first questions the correctness of swearing on a book (332–4). Moreover, Thorpe later avoids submitting by turning a series of questions on Arundel (2025–57). The text appears too neatly structured to be a faithful rendition of actuality. While Arundel may have

had the list of errors to frame his line of questioning, it seems an additional fictional structuring device occurs: Thorpe's own raising of the key issues and directing of the questions.

In comparison, the *Trial* appears to possess greater verisimilitude and credibility. As a letter, the opening and closing sections, which embrace the central trial narrative, contain specifics that add a sense of veracity across the text: Wyche supplies the names of people and places: 'Dees Oknolle' and 'Chester in Restret' (531), and a possible means of getting his books to him (543–4). He also gives details of his stomach ailment and his treatment.<sup>15</sup> The specifics also extend to time,<sup>16</sup> a facet generally lacking in Thorpe's *Testimony*, and which reinforces verisimilitude because references such as 'on Saturday afternoon' ('in die Sabbato post Nonam' (535)) are trivial and unnecessary, and can only have been added because Wyche is relating a factual account, wishes to capture it accurately, and such references aid his memory. While Wyche's account is a carefully crafted one and contains a number of fictionalized elements and a strong narrative line (discussed below), it is more credible than Thorpe's *Testimony*, simply because it does not reveal an overtly organized structure, and there is a naturalistic unpredictability to the dialogue, and the direction and type of questions Wyche is presented with.

If the presented situation of both texts is authentic, just how did Thorpe and Wyche contrive the production and publication of their texts? In this respect, it is worth recalling the existence of another Lollard (Latin) text, one certainly composed in prison: the *Opus Arduum*.<sup>17</sup> However, unlike the *Opus Arduum* which uses extensive

<sup>15</sup> 'Et bonus Deus . . . visitavit me per magnam strictitudinem in ventre' (541). 'And the good God . . . has visited me through a great suffering in my stomach'. Copeland (2001: 161–2) sees this as part of Wyche's concern with 'representing himself accurately to friends and colleagues' and as consciously reminiscent of St Paul's affliction in 2 Cor. 12:7.

<sup>16</sup> e.g. 'Et ego pecii consilium et diem aptum. Non, dixerunt, sed habebis tempus usque post prandium' (531). 'And I asked counsel and a suitable day. "No," they said, "but you shall have time until after dinner".' Or 'Postea in die Lune vel Martis ante festum Cinerum . . .' (538). 'Afterwards on the Monday or Tuesday before Ash Wednesday . . .'

<sup>17</sup> The *Opus Arduum* is a commentary on the Apocalypse. Its date and the author's imprisoned situation are provided in the final colophon to two manuscripts, and his imprisonment is reiterated throughout the text. The final colophon reads: 'Explicit quoddam opus breue et debile super Apokalipsim Iohannis, inchoatum circa Natalem Domini et, aliquando mense interposito, aliquando quindena nonnunquam ebdomada et multis diebus interruptis, completum feria quinta in ebdomada Pasce proximo sequentis anni domini M<sup>o</sup>cclxxx<sup>o</sup> in carcere' (Brno University, MS Mk 28, here fo. 216). See Hudson (1985: 44, 55) and also Bostick (1989: 76).



quotation, when Thorpe refers to the fathers and canon law, he quotes only infrequently and briefly. The same is true of Wyche's letter, albeit to a lesser degree, a fact that may favour the credibility of Thorpe and Wyche having indeed written their texts whilst in prison.

It is possible that all three writers, Thorpe, Wyche, and the *Opus Arduum* author, may have had access to their own copies of texts, perhaps containing extracts from authorities, or their own beliefs supported by such extracts. This is not without parallel: William Taylor, who was tried before Henry Chichele's convocation in 1421, took out a roll of notes, which had obviously, therefore, not been confiscated immediately upon his arrest (Jacob 1945: iii. 67; Hudson 1988b: 201). As did Oldcastle in his preliminary investigation before Arundel, the text of which evidently contained a precis of his beliefs (Walsingham's *Historia Anglicana* in Riley 1863-4: ii. 293). Even if confiscation was likely, as it seems it was in Thorpe's case given that the text of Chrysostom was confiscated from his fellow suspect (1697-700), each author may still have had hidden about his person, perhaps in the folds of his clothes, rolls containing extracts from well-known authorities.

Clearly it was possible to write and disseminate heterodox texts whilst captive. The *Trial* intimates that Wyche was even supplied with the means to write by his captors. Or rather, that his captors were unconcerned about leaving him alone and unwatched overnight with paper and ink and a Bible, originally so that he might make a reply to Skirlaw's written declaration on the Eucharist (538). With regard to the question of the dissemination of such texts, both Wyche and Thorpe admit to having received visitors in prison: Thorpe writes: 'diuerse frendis, whiche haue herde þat I haue ben examyned bifore þe Erchebischoþ, haue come to me into prisoun' (30-1); Wyche writes of a Robert Herl who had visited and comforted him: 'ad istum venisset ad me visitandum et mecum sederet ad me confortandum' (542) ('and he had come to visit me and to sit with me to comfort me.'). (This is perhaps Robert Harle who was involved in the Oldcastle rising of 1414—see *CCR Henry V* 1413-19: 56-7; Jurkowski 1997: 666-7.) Arguably, Wyche and Thorpe's texts were smuggled out by such friends (see close of Wyche's letter (543-4), and Hudson 1993: p. xlvii).

## II

Both texts employ dramatic devices, and moreover, intertextuality, not purely for pedagogical purposes, but primarily to construct an authorial identity that is favourable and persuasive, an aspect of self-presentation that occurs in the *Testament* and the *Quair*. Although the *Trial* and the *Testimony* ostensibly offer a statement of a historical occurrence, both employ literary devices to create a biased and emotive version of events. These aspects are less manifest in the *Trial*, though they do exist, but are clearly and fully exploited in Thorpe's *Testimony*. Both texts contain a dramatic narrative-line, and while suspense may be an intrinsic element of any account of interrogation, at moments, and particularly in the *Testimony*, it appears deliberately deployed.

Furthermore, both texts are not simply a transcription of dialogue. They describe how the interrogators and their clerks freely enter and leave, or bring forward documents, or interject their own questions, all of which reiterate by contrast the author's own restricted freedom. The reader is also privy to the author's thoughts.<sup>18</sup> Moreover, the *Testimony*'s recounted dialogue is far from neutral, instead it is nestled within Thorpe's sententious comments and narrative exposition. When Arundel informs Thorpe that the men of Shrewsbury ask him to punish Thorpe by death, Thorpe writes that it seemed: 'as if þis askinge hadde plesid þe Archebischoþ' (654) (Kendall 1986: 64).

Given that the interrogation takes place within one stage-like room in which all the dramatis personae are assembled, both texts are reminiscent of drama. Within the *Trial*, each 'character' has his 'stage directions', increasing the theatrical sense, and occasionally this adds suspense: 'Et miles *surrexit*: Dicis tu, dixit, quod ego tractavi tecum in dolo?' (539) ('And the knight *rose*: "Are you saying," he said, "that I have dealt treacherously with you?"' (my emphasis)). Similarly, drama is created in the *Testimony* by a series

<sup>18</sup> Wyche writes: 'Et missus in carcerem fui per tres dies in magna tribulacione et afflictione spiritus super illo iuramento intoxicato, nesciens quodammodo quid facerem, si episcopus non teneret veritatem pacti in illo iuramento' (536). 'And I was sent to prison for three days in great sorrow and affliction of spirit about that poisoned oath, not knowing what I should do if the bishop should not hold the agreement made about the oath.' Similarly, Thorpe describes his emotions when caught off guard with a question: 'And I heerynge þese wordis þouȝte in myn herte þat þis was vnleeful askynge' (365–6).

of narratively embellished moves and countermoves—when Thorpe refuses to submit to Arundel, Arundel requests a document witnessing Thorpe's heresies, which is then ominously brought forward (621–4).

The interrogators' use of the third person in front of their prisoner as though he were not present also emphasizes suspense, and the suspect's vulnerability. It is possible that such accounts are based on fact, but their inclusion is, no doubt, due to their dramatic value. Wyche writes: 'Tunc cancellarius dixit episcopo: Domine, queratis ab eo, quando fuit ultimo confessus' (536) ('Then the Chancellor said to the Bishop, "Lord, ask from him when he was last confessed"'). Similarly, Thorpe has: 'And a clerke seide þanne to þe Archebisshop, "Sere, þe lengir þat 3e appose him, þe worse he is" . . . And þe Archebisshop seide to þis clerk, "Suffre a while, for I am nyȝ at an ende wiþ him"' (1621–7).

Stephen Greenblatt has described the ecclesiastical inquisitorial process as 'a kind of demonic theatre' (Greenblatt 1980: 77); indeed, the sixteenth-century cleric and dramatist John Bale, who knew Thorpe's text, was of the same opinion, recognizing that such inquisitions shared similarities with ecclesiastical drama, particularly the tyrant play: 'Aforetime hath not been seen such frantic outrage as is now; the judges, without all sober discretion, running to the rack, tugging, hauling, and pulling thereat, like tormentors in a play' (Christmas 1849: 241). The *Testimony* has a number of affinities with the tyrant play, suggesting Thorpe draws on this theatrical genre. Thorpe is a model of patience and reason, while Arundel is impatient, angry and capable of violent threats and abuse. He threatens to send Thorpe to be burnt, like the Lollard William Sawtry (406–9); in another instance, he smashes his fist against a cupboard (2070–7).<sup>19</sup> Arundel's tyrannical behaviour is emphasized not only by Thorpe's contrasting saintly patience, but by the sycophantic advice given to Arundel by his subordinates: 'Ser, it is forþ daies, and 3e haue ferre for to ride tonyȝt. Þefore, sere, make an ende wiþ him . . .' (2005–6).<sup>20</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Other examples of Arundel's outbursts and verbal abuse are at 918–22, 1179–80, and 1053–4. Thorpe also appears to have Arundel implicitly cast himself as a tyrant (741–50).

<sup>20</sup> Thorpe's *Testimony* is not the sole instance in which Arundel is cast as tyrannical: one manuscript was later to describe him as 'þe grettist enemy þat crist haþ in yngland'. BL MS Cotton Titus D. v., fo. 13<sup>v</sup>.

Both authors draw on traditions of hagiography in constructing their textual identities. Indeed, the *Testimony* is virtually a saint's life,<sup>21</sup> and becomes the 'displaced drama' of Christ's examination, with Thorpe 'cast' as Jesus, Arundel Caiaphas, and his clerks as the tyrant's servile favourites (Kendall 1986: 59). Thorpe's text is not without precedent in this. The Lollards saw the Bible's account of Christ's struggle against his temporal opponents as a version of his more primary universal struggle against evil; this enabled them similarly to proclaim their own struggle in the perceived discourse of 'Truth'.<sup>22</sup> Lollards often viewed themselves as a group of *pauperes sacerdotes*, *pauperculi sacerdotes*, and *pore men*, as opposed to the *false prechouris*, *false prestis*, and *anticristis clerkis* who were their opponents. They presented themselves as alike in apostolic poverty, fidelity, and simplicity, and their rhetorical emphasis was, therefore, on a collective state in which the 'essential' rather than the individual was privileged (von Nolcken 1997: 128–9). Within such essentialized discourse, their opponents were often identified with those of Christ. The 'Vae octuplex' is an example of such Lollard typology, it is a text that explicates Jesus' eightfold 'woe', his curse in Matt. 23: 13–33—'Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!'—in terms of anti-mendicant satire, for it identifies the Pharisees directly with the friars, and, therefore, becomes a polemic against the mendicant orders (Hanna 1996b: 247).

As Thomas J. Heffernan has argued, sacred biography is a fiction intended to shape a reader's understanding of what constitutes holiness (Heffernan 1988: 18–22). By consciously placing themselves in victimized isolation on the margins of orthodox society, both Wyche and Thorpe draw upon the conventional elements of sacred biography. Simultaneously, by drawing on hagiographic traditions they also construct themselves as exemplary, as spiritual representatives for an absent community, one akin in apostolic virtue. Wyche greets his absent community at the closure of his letter. Here also, the naming of friends, and the imitation of biblical language recall aspects of the more personal of St Paul's epistles,

<sup>21</sup> Hudson (1993: p. lvi) notes that although it lacks two essential elements—death and authenticating miracles after death—the first seems almost matched by Thorpe's refusal to compromise despite the possible consequences, and the second in the near miraculous way in which he appears to turn the tables on his opponents.

<sup>22</sup> In *De Veritate Sacrae Scripturae*, Wyclif had argued that the Bible was the ground of Truth, stating that scripture should provide a model for human speech (von Nolcken 1997: 146).

particularly the 'Captivity Epistles', and suggest that Wyche was consciously placing himself in the apostolic tradition of persecution.<sup>23</sup> As Rita Copeland writes 'empathy with the radicalism of the early church is central to the self-definition of later Christian radicalism' (Copeland 2001: 143). Like many Pauline epistles, the *Trial* appears to be both a considered statement of the author's thinking intended for wider circulation, and yet also a private, personal letter. The personal elements become a way of imbuing the author with hagiographic authority: at the *Trial*'s closure, for example, Wyche requests his books be brought to him (543), but even this has a precedent in Paul's second letter to Timothy (4: 13).

In depicting himself languishing in prison and asking for God's help, Wyche compares his tribulations to those of Daniel in the lions' den (536). The *Testimony* similarly demonstrates the deliberate authorial comparison with hagiographic figures. As persecuted, Thorpe compares himself to Susannah (Susanna 22 = Daniel 13: 22): 'I þouȝte how Susanne seide "Angwysschis ben to me on euery side", and forþi þat I stood stille musynge and spak not' (367–8).<sup>24</sup> And when pressed to qualify Chrysostom's text he portrays himself as lifting up his 'mynde to God' (1707–8), praying for grace, and again frames his situation in a biblical precedent, this time likening himself to Christ's disciples (Luke 2: 12–15): 'And anoon I þouȝte how Crist seide to hise disciplis "Whanne for my name ȝe schulen be brouȝt before iugis, I schal ȝeue to ȝou mouþ and wisdom, þat alle ȝoure aduersaries schulen not aȝenseie." And tristing feiþfulli to þe word of Crist, I seide . . .' (1707–12). A self-comparison to Christ permits Thorpe to defend his alleged troubling of 'þe comounte of Schrouesbirie' because 'alle þe comountee of þe citee of Ierusalem was troublid wiþ þe techynge of Cristis owne persone' (692–5). As Fiona Somerset writes, Thorpe's 'crucifixion' is through argument: 'as a tree leyde vpon anoþer tree ouerthwert on crosse wyse, so weren þe Archebischoþ and hise þree clerkis alwei contrarie to me and I to

<sup>23</sup> This can be viewed as a deliberate device with some certainty, as it was a technique (although one without the concept of persecution) later repeated in the pair of letters sent in 1410 by Wyche himself to Hus and by Oldcastle to the nobleman Woksa von Waldstein. See Hudson (1988b: 222) and (1993: p. lviii); von Nolcken (1997: 134); Copeland (2001: 143).

<sup>24</sup> Thorpe also appears to compare himself, and his community of fellow Lollards, to Abraham in receiving God's special grace, for he writes that persecution is a 'special grace of God' (149), and its reward is 'þe lord God himsilf' (152), for as he said to Abraham (Gen. 15: 1): "I am þi meede" (154).

hem' (2245–7) (Somerset 1996: 210). At moments, therefore, the *Testimony* becomes an *imitatio Christi*, particularly in the Christlike manner in which Thorpe portrays himself as suffering scorn and rebukes, but remaining silent, a silence that has a biblical precedent in Jesus before Caiaphas (Matt. 26: 29–31). Furthermore, his textual self displays a Christlike forgiveness when he discovers his Judas-like betrayal by the *agent provocateur*—he says: 'God forȝeue him if it be his wille þis treesoun, and I do wiþ al myn herte!' (1835–6).

Like many Lollard texts, Wyche and Thorpe present their persecution typologically; however, the auto-hagiographical emphasis, and use of fictional devices, particularly in the *Testimony*, do not easily accord with Wycliffite views on saints' lives.<sup>25</sup> These atypical elements may have been introduced to encourage the reader to continue reading, aiding the pedagogical aspect of the text. It is more likely, however, that they are introduced to recreate events politically in the author's favour as they underpin the construction of a persuasive specific textual identity.

Conjoined with elements of essentialized discourse, Wyche and Thorpe are specific about themselves and their opponents in terms of name and historical data, emphasizing an alleged concern with veracity. Both texts, therefore, straddle the realms of the specific or individualized and the exemplary or universal, in a manner similar to Augustine's *Confessions*. As Eugene Vance writes, what is really at work in Augustine's text is a poetics of selfhood that permits fragments of individual experience to codify the notation of authority. Vance states that the contingency of the deictic 'I' as a signifier, points 'to a logos born not of the speaking self but of the divine Other by whom we are originally spoken' (Vance 1973: 13). This particularly calls to mind Thorpe's self-presentation throughout the *Testimony* as an individual acting according to his conscience, and as a near-hagiographical figure, inspired by divine grace, through which the authority of his textual self is ensured. The concern with the individual—self-naming, consistent self-construction, and the simultaneous emphasis on personal history, alongside the typological, hagiographical devices—also appears an authenticating device. For while typically in hagiography an individualized identity is both

<sup>25</sup> See Hudson (1988b: 197, 302–3), and (1993: p. lvi) where Hudson writes, 'the vernacular sermon-cycle provides only a brief number of sermons for specified saints' days, almost all of them biblical figures, and achieves the remarkable feat of not mentioning the ostensible dedicatee in those provided for the feast of St Martin or the Seven Sleepers'.

affirmed and effaced simultaneously (Greenblatt 1980: 77), this circular, self-cancelling motion is not complete in these two texts, because the persistent emphasis upon individualized and specific concerns refuses such a process. Rather, the hagiographical and typological devices appear subordinate to the individualized elements and are exploited in a way that is atypical for both sacred biographies and Lollard writings. They aid the fashioning of an exemplary persona who is representative of the sect, while he is, moreover, specifically individualized, raising questions of political motivation.

Kathryn Kerby-Fulton has discussed—with respect to Langland—the ways in which medieval authors write themselves into their texts (Kerby-Fulton 1997: 67–143). A primary strategy, which she cites as emphasizing before the reader the author as a recognizable individual, is the revelation of authorial identity (ibid. 79). This aspect is present in both the *Trial* and the *Testimony*. Wyche specifically names himself: ‘Ego Richardus Vicz . . .’ (535) (‘I Richard Wyche . . .’). Although Wyche’s self-naming is part of a repetition of an oath he was coerced into swearing, the inclusion of this moment within the central section that narrates his trial—a section probably written with the circulation to a wider, unknown audience in mind—suggests he placed importance upon establishing his identity, as opposed to writing as an anonymous exemplary individual. This appears more clearly the case in the *Testimony* where Thorpe presents the text as a testimony of his own experience:

*Knowen be it to alle men þat reden or heeren þis writinge byneþforþ þat, on þe Sondai next aftir þe feste of seint Petir þat we clepen Lammasse, in þe 3eer of oure Lord a þousand foure hundrid and seuene, I, William of Thorp, beyng in þe prisoun in þe castel of Saltwode, was brouȝt bifore Tomas of Arnedel, Archebischoþ of Cauntirbirie and chaunceler þanne of Ynglond. (166–71, my emphasis)*

Not only does Thorpe name himself, but he constructs himself in relation to his unknown readers as a witness of Truth. Furthermore, and in keeping with another of Kerby-Fulton’s criteria, Thorpe refers to data from his curriculum vitae, in a way that might reaffirm his reputation. He describes at length (437–516) his education, how his family and friends wished him to be a priest, but that he did not desire such a career until he had conversed with various priests whom he had ‘herde to be losid [*praised*] or named of moost holi

lyuyngē' (460–1). He also traces his career in relation to some of the most famous (and infamous) of Wycliffite followers: Aston, Repington, Hereford, Purvey, and John Wyclif himself: 'And wiþ alle þese men I was ofte homli and I comownede wiþ hem long tyme and fele, and so bifore all opir men I chees wilfulli to be enformed bi hem and of hem, and speciali of Wiclef himsilf' (577–9). This is probably to resurrect—through strong identification with a lost intellectual community—a lineality that was arguably weakened and diminished by Arundel's *Constitutions* (Copeland 2001: 209).

One of the reasons authors present themselves in their texts in this way, particularly if the text ostensibly deals with personal experience, is because of the need for self-justification for past actions, or self-vindication from accusations—an attempt to re-enter a world of offended readers.<sup>26</sup> As discussed in Ch. 1, this is clearly a motivation for Usk's literary manœuvres in the *Testament*. In the *Trial*, which gives the details of Wyche's conversation with the knight who visits him and persuades him to take the oath, Wyche details his reservations, the knight's assurances, and how it is agreed that the oath Wyche swears will be limited in his heart:

Tunc dixit: Ricarde, potesne invenire in consciencia tua ad obediendum legi ecclesie catholice in quantum ad te pertinet? Eciam, dixi, quia scio quod lex Dei est lex ecclesie catholice et absit quin obedirem legi Dei nostri in quantum ad me pertinet. At ille: Tu bene dicis. Custodias istud in corde tuo et sit istud iuramentum tuum, et iures tu istud in corde tuo limitatum. (534)

('Then he said, "Richard, can you find it in your conscience to obey the law of the Christian church in so far as it pertains to you?" "Certainly," I said, "because I know that the law of God is the law of the Catholic church and God forbid that I should not obey the law of our God in so far as it pertains to me." And he said, "You say well. Keep that in your heart, and let that be your oath, and you shall swear as you have limited it in your heart."')

He then explains how he was tricked into swearing further oaths on his beliefs concerning the Eucharist and Confession, because he was now bound by the first oath, even though he had made it clear that the first oath had been limited in his heart when sworn.<sup>27</sup> From the

<sup>26</sup> As Kerby-Fulton and Justice (1997: 59–83) and Kerby-Fulton (1997: 70) have discussed in relation to poets such as Langland and Hoccleve.

<sup>27</sup> Copeland (2001: 166 ff.) discusses with reference to Wyche's oath and its implications how the oath ex officio empowered an episcopal court to extract a 'blanket promise' of truthful statements from defendants in advance of any specific investigations.



level of detail, it would seem that Wyche is anxious to clarify the facts and to preserve his reputation.

Wyche and Thorpe present themselves as unwavering in their views. Despite the ominously symbolic manner in which Wyche is led before the fire, when he is fetched from prison fifteen days after his previous questioning (539), he remains calm and constant in arguing his opinions. Similarly, Thorpe portrays himself as unwavering when urged to recant and to 'inform' on others of Wycliffite sympathies (349–87). He refuses to follow such turncoats as Purvey, Hereford, or Repingdon, for 'pei feynen, hiden and contrarien þe truþe which biforehonde þei tauȝten out pleyntli and trewli' (589–90). While condemning them, therefore, he simultaneously constructs himself as unwavering and his sect as followers of 'the Truth'. Thorpe defines himself in reference to these men: first, like them he is of their academic background and generation, and second, unlike them is he not inconstant—'And I seide, "Ser, as I bileue mysilf so I teche opere men"' (956). His textual identity is a literary attempt at establishing a counterpart to these recanting Lollards. To reinforce the point, and drawing once more on hagiographical traditions, Thorpe again portrays himself being urged to recant, only this time in terms reminiscent of the devil's temptation—where Arundel's threats and anger have failed, Malvern's persuasion may succeed: 'And þan, as if he hadde ben angrid, þe Archebisshop wente from þe copbord where he stood to a wyndowe. And þan Maluerne and anoper clerk camen nerhond to me, and þei spaken to me manye wordis ful plesyngeli . . . counseilynge me ful bisili to submytte me' (2076–80). Once again the examples of Repingdon, Hereford, and Purvey (2085–93) are used as leverage. And again Thorpe fashions himself in contrast to these men, as constant and without the desire for material rewards (2103–27), portraying himself as resisting the final temptation to recant, when Arundel announces that Thorpe's 'felowe' with whom he was arrested has submitted (2152–66).

Thorpe's main criticism of those who recant is the material they provide for the authorities' negative propaganda; their primary sin is that they would not 'streeche forþ her lyues, but bi ensauple eche of hem of oper, as her wordis and her werkis schewen, þei bisien hem þoruȝ her feynyng for to sclandre and to pursue Crist in his membris raþer þan þei wolde be pursued' (513–16). Thorpe appears to be reclaiming these men as a useful negative pedagogical example. In contrast, the positive example proposed is now Thorpe's own, for

to do otherwise and abjure would mean, as he fears for himself to: 'sle so manye folkis goostli þat I schulde neuere deserue to haue grace of God to edefien his chirche' (495–6).

In the *Testimony*'s prologue, Thorpe outlines and defends his reasons for writing the text, ensuring that he is understood as unconcerned with advancement,<sup>28</sup> but selflessly interested in exposing 'enemyes of trupe' (53), writing for the 'profit' (35) that his friends saw in recounting his interview with the Archbishop (18–51). Yet the text is not solely a manual for future 'interrogatees', nor is it strictly the inspirational evidence of God's grace to those who face persecution, despite the claims Thorpe makes (108–39). Rather, it is a highly embellished fictional account of an experience which may or may not have actually occurred, and within which the identity of the central character, the author himself, is reiterated and presented in favourable terms, to the extent that hagiographical devices are employed as subservient to the factual, specific identity of the protagonist.

In comparison with the *Opus Arduum*, the specific authorial self-recreation in the *Trial* and the *Testimony* is telling. While the former is precisely dated (between Christmas 1389 and Easter 1390—see Bostick 1989: 76), and the author's imprisonment reiterated, unlike Wyche and Thorpe's texts, it is anonymous, the author appearing to have deliberately withheld his name, as surprisingly this does not appear at the many moments within the text where it would naturally and certainly be expected.<sup>29</sup> The text makes no attempt at the personal or individual, for the *Opus Arduum* is the text of a representative *fidelis predicator* (Hudson 1985: 54). This highlights the unusual nature of the personal element of self-revelation in the texts of Wyche and Thorpe: the author of the *Opus Arduum* uses the Apocalypse to introduce contemporary issues, where Wyche and Thorpe use personal experience.<sup>30</sup> As with many didactic texts,

<sup>28</sup> Late-medieval concerns with self-justification and self-advancement are often revealed in an author's defence of his reasons for writing, which are usually provided in a prologue or *envoi de quire* (Kerby-Fulton 1997: 80–2, 97–100). Thorpe is cautious to present his literary endeavour as due to a contrasting disinterested motivation.

<sup>29</sup> Such as the closure of his prologue, where the author compares his position with that of John in the Apocalypse, or in the concluding verses where the author recommends his text (Hudson 1985: 54).

<sup>30</sup> Furthermore, although the expositor forms his own interpretations and conclusions in deciphering the visions of the Apocalypse, he insists that this interpretation did not originate in his imagination and was not constructed by human artifice. See

the *Opus Arduum* author is representative and ‘essentializes’<sup>31</sup> his experience, comparing his situation typologically to that of John of the Apocalypse in the concluding section of his prologue (ibid.). While the texts of Wyche and Thorpe also contain a typological and representative facet, they are also highly personal and individualized and, therefore, travel in the opposite direction to that usually found in didactic writings, and notably seen here in the *Opus Arduum*. In the *Opus Arduum*, therefore, unlike the *Trial* and the *Testimony*, the views posited, and not the *holder* of the views, appear of primary importance. Of course, in withholding his name, the author of the *Opus Arduum* may imply an intimate, initiated audience, for whom there was simply no need for the author to name himself. If so, this would augment the possibility that Wyche and Thorpe wrote not only for a directly known or intended audience, but also possibly for a larger unknown one, indeed, that they hoped their texts would be ‘published’ in the modern sense of the word.

Paul Strohm has written that the medieval and pre-modern author more usually deploys the self, not as the ultimate focus of interest, but as an ‘imaginative exemplification of broader issues’ (Strohm 1998: 143). Such a statement highlights the difference in writing positions when comparing Wyche and Thorpe to Usk who deploys self-presentation primarily as a means to private ends. Although as prisoners Wyche and Thorpe also turn to the pen in an attempt to overcome events, both appear to have a less personal motivation behind their texts than simply an impressive persona, constructed textually for careerist or self-interested motives. Rather, and particularly in the case of Thorpe, their object appears a communal one. It is achieved by the author’s textual identity proffered as a dissenting archetype, as representative of an implied community with shared beliefs and political import, yet also as a specific individual Lollard recounting the historical record of his constancy in the face of persecution and imprisonment.

Bostick (1989: 80). ‘Non debetis vos, quibus his scribo, ymaginari quod hec voluntarie ex capite meo aut inventione humana procedunt’ (Brno University, MS Mk 28, fo. 127).

<sup>31</sup> This term is taken from von Nolcken (1997: 128) where she writes that of ‘the Lollards’ most characteristic texts, their authors very often prefer an essentializing to a particularizing rhetoric. They do this perhaps most markedly in relation to themselves. They present the struggle they are engaged in not so much as between particular persons at a particular time as between Christ and Antichrist’. However, it would seem that a representative, universal, and/or typological rhetoric is an aspect of most didactic writings.

## III

The political motives and reasons for such self-presentation which is simultaneously persuasive and factually specific are twofold: a reappropriation of authority, and secondly, and related to this, an attempt at counterpropaganda to the Church's negative propaganda. To take the first issue, a 'truth' larger than the specific historicity of the moment seems at stake in both texts, which also posit an assertion of 'the Truth' in theological terms, and present each author's own imprisoned and persecuted self as witness of this. As such, both Wyche and Thorpe engage with authority in a combative way. Each attempts to establish the authority of his own text and the authorial self it presents, by reappropriating the authority of the texts they cite, whether scripture or patristic writings. Repeatedly, Skirlaw and Arundel cite the Fathers to demonstrate the incorrectness of Wycliffite thought, yet Wyche and Thorpe counter by citing from a different text, one perhaps considered more authoritative, thereby 'winning' the argument. Wyche repeatedly emphasizes the importance of the text or law over the gloss, and in doing so he portrays himself as simultaneously confounding his opponents,<sup>32</sup> while Thorpe openly describes his examination in combative terms, praying to God to comfort and strengthen him 'aȝens hem þat þere weren aȝens þe truþe' (425–6). The text becomes Thorpe's description of his superior intellectual agility, knowledge and adherence to the truth, pitted against Arundel's inferior abilities, as like Wyche, Thorpe portrays himself as bringing his opponents to an impasse.<sup>33</sup>

Each text also constructs the sustained corruption and misguidedness of the examiners, which in turn imbues both the text and the author with an authority that overrides that claimed by their

<sup>32</sup> He defends, for example, his right to preach, because each priest is bound to do so, not only by canon law, but moreover by the law of God. To augment this, he cites St Gregory and other doctors of the Church (531).

<sup>33</sup> There are many examples in the *Testimony*: Thorpe cites St Paul against Arundel's view that music on pilgrimages lifts the spirits (1342–3); when Arundel cites David and the Psalms to counter Thorpe with the view that music plays a beneficial Christian role, Thorpe again cites St Paul (1350–61) and outwits Arundel. When attacking tithes, Thorpe takes as his authority St Paul, St Augustine, pseudo-Chrysostom, and Grosseteste (1441–70). Further, on the issue of tithes, Thorpe questions Arundel's understanding of St Paul's letter to the Hebrews (7: 9; 7: 12–14)—'Ser, I merueile þat ȝe vndirstonde þis pleyne tixt of Poul þus' (1546–7)—depicting Arundel as twisting the simple meaning to his advantage.

opponents, the official members of the Church. Thorpe portrays himself as submitting to a higher authority than Arundel, that of God: 'I dar not for þe drede of God submitte me to 3ou' (614 ff.). Both authors present themselves as 'authoritative', as knowing God's will, and as receiving God's grace to answer correctly—whether Thorpe's 'grace-given' ability to gloss (though unprepared) the text of Chrysostom (1706–31), or Wyche's 'God-given' realization in prison that he has acted without fault (536). Both texts, therefore, display an individualistic radical theological readjustment which in the eyes of the Church seditiously permits the constraints upon the individual to be dictated not from without, but from within. The authority by which one is to live becomes 'the self'.

A model for such authorizing selfhood existed for Wyche and Thorpe in the Lollard rejection of confession, and the Wycliffite belief in the importance of the individual's 'inner life', the extent of contrition and the state of his or her soul and, therefore, the importance of *self*-reliance and conscience, rather than a reliance upon outward forms of obedience, ritual, and worship.<sup>34</sup> Accordingly, Thorpe defers to his 'inner man' (421); he uses phrases to distinguish between his private inner thoughts and his outward behaviour such as 'neipir priuyli ne apeertli' (1060–1),<sup>35</sup> and emphasizes 'þe bileue þereof þat 3e owen to haue *in* 3oure soulis', as opposed to 'þe *outward* siȝt þerof'. (942–3, my emphasis). His inner thoughts, judgement, and conscience are presented to his readership whilst within the narrative these elements are portrayed as withheld from the audience of Arundel and his fellow ecclesiastics who wish to police this self-reliance—Arundel says he will not release Thorpe: 'til þat I wite þat þin hert and þi mouþ acorden fulli to be gouerned bi holi chirche' (894–5). The text asserts and preserves the inner thoughts of Thorpe's conscience as a method of countering disempowerment, the only means available when imprisoned and outwardly stripped of autonomy.

<sup>34</sup> At the Blackfriars Council of 1382, the fifth heresy condemned that 'si homo fuerit debite contritus, omnis confessio exterior est sibi superflua vel inutilis' (Hudson 1995: 43; 1988b: 249–99). Additionally, in a long 'sermon', Thorpe explicates the importance of an individual's conscience, and indicates that oral confession within the Church is unnecessary (1884–1925). He also cites St Augustine as an authority on the possibility of oral confession to a secular person, should the individual believe this is necessary (1920).

<sup>35</sup> The phrase is used similarly in Chaucer's *WBT* to distinguish between private and public behaviour and genuine virtue: 'Looke who that is moost vertuous alway, l Pryvee and apert . . .' (1114).

Similarly, Wyche sets down the difference between his inner conscience and his outer behaviour by delineating what he will swear and what he will believe in his heart at the same time (534). It is a distinction the authorities first pander to, when accommodating his sense of conscience in suggesting he swear the oath but limit it in his heart, but one that they wish to overrule, to cancel by ultimately ignoring any such niceties of distinction, in reiterating the external, actual importance of the oath. Wyche's *Trial* becomes, therefore, a record of his inner beliefs, and an outward witness of his conscience to counter the assumed external witness to this, recorded in his oath. His text 'answers' anticipated repercussions; it becomes of greater authority than anything written by his opponents on this matter, because Wyche's 'self' is the ultimate authority. His letter is, therefore, a re-enactment of a quasi-confession, one which he will readily supply to his readers, while at the same time, he refuses the necessity of official oral confession within the Church.<sup>36</sup> In both texts, therefore, the reader is deliberately constructed as witness to the declarations of truth and explanations of actions by individuals who ideologically represent the reader's community, whether the 'friends' who exhort Thorpe to write his 'experiences', or the associates to whom Wyche directs his letter, or a wider unknown Lollard audience.

In both the *Trial* and the *Testimony*, therefore, individual conscience becomes the touchstone of authority, while the Church as an established hierarchical organization, for all its historic external authority, is called into question. The Church that both texts delineate and advocate is not the external Church of Rome, but an unseen 'holi chirche' defined by, and composed of, individuals whose inner lives warrant their inclusion: the *congregatio predestinatorum* in Wycliffite terms.<sup>37</sup> Both texts, therefore, are concerned with a society of 'holi chirche'—the concept of a community, an exclusive homogeneous body, bound by a shared set of beliefs and sense of

<sup>36</sup> Hudson (1995: 46–7) views Wyche's text in terms of a 'private utterance, overtly addressed not to the whole world, but perhaps to a congregation of the sect', and in which 'confession is combined with preaching'. She notes that 'the writings of Wyche and Thorpe may be the most clearly confessional of the surviving Lollard writings'.

<sup>37</sup> Lollards were known to doubt the existing ecclesiastical hierarchy as forming part of the true church; indeed such a belief immediately opened suspicions of heresy. See Hudson (1988b: 21). Hudson (1988b: 168–71) also discusses the possibility that Lollards saw themselves as a separate group or 'sect' which constituted the true church.

order. This 'community' is implicit in the *Trial* in the 'community' Wyche ostensibly writes for, but also in the sympathetic readers at large whom the text 'constructs', as it anticipates a shared value-system and automatic sympathy. The outlining of such a 'community' is more explicit in Thorpe's *Testimony*. Arundel is increasingly portrayed as outside of 'holi chirche', particularly through his incorrect understanding and application of authority. When Thorpe has completed detailing his views that oral confession to a priest is unnecessary, Arundel exclaims: 'Holi chirche appreueþ not þis lore!', to which Thorpe replies: 'Holi chirche, [of] whiche Crist is heede in heuene and in erþe, mote nedis appreue þis sentence!' as it is taught in the gospel (1942–55—Thorpe also implies Arundel is outside 'holi chirche' in lines 1042–52). To Thorpe and his readers, authority resides in God, with access through the Bible and particularly the gospels, but not the 'lettre þat is touchid wiþ mannes honde . . . but þe sentence þat is verily bileued in mannes herte þat is þe gospel' (1773–4), in other words the individual's own understanding and conscience.<sup>38</sup>

While the legislation, vigilance, and persecution of orthodox powers, therefore, cannot command the individual's private assent, it can elicit public recantations and refutations of former heterodox beliefs, and therefore, books—as one of the most public means of proclaiming heresy—become 'the object of official destruction as well, or even in preference to the individual heretic' (Hudson 1994: 233). What is interesting with Wyche and Thorpe is that both—the book and the heretic—are amalgamated in their autobiographical texts. Their lives become textually recreated, and they themselves are external, 'real' manifestations of their written lives.<sup>39</sup> They have deliberately collapsed the boundary between the public proclamation of the book and their inner beliefs, their private assent, and in doing so subversively offer themselves as a model to be followed, as authority.

While both Wyche and Thorpe write as victims of persecution and imprisonment, which is arguably an inherently credible and persua-

<sup>38</sup> See Hudson (1988c: 137). See also lines 1994–2004, where Arundel accuses Thorpe and his sect of damaging 'holi chirche', and Thorpe counters that he and his sect are in fact protecting and promoting it.

<sup>39</sup> See de Man (1979: 919–30) for a discussion of the relationship between the implied and historical author of autobiography, and for a view that the autobiographical persona possibly determines the referent, rather than vice versa.

sive authorial stance, what is also apparent, however, is that each author writes ostensibly as victim and implicitly as victor; he is oppressed and yet almost miraculously immune and infallible in the face of such oppression. As such, Thorpe is last seen by his reader in prison thanking God for his spiritual deliverance, even if his physical one is yet to come (2238–45).

Writing as victim is an effective and persuasive textual strategy in attaining credibility and sympathy, and an empowering one in terms of propaganda value. Thorpe's persona of 'persecuted-but-constant-Lollard' is also a means of constructing within the text his 'community' of fellow Lollards. As Thomas Heffernan has demonstrated, one of the aspects of sacred biography, or texts written in and for a cultic function, is that they iterate a system of values with wide community acceptance, thereby promoting social cohesion; so that on one level the author of sacred biography is the community and the presented experience of the narrative voice is collective (Heffernan 1988: 18–19). This community is constructed from the very first page of the *Testimony*; it is the community on whose behalf Thorpe writes, those who 'heeren or knowen' of the 'pursuyng þat is now in þe chirche' and who, therefore, need to be 'moued' to act and stand by their beliefs (58–64). Thorpe's assumption of the mutual persecution such an 'implied' community shares with him as its individualized spokesman, is an attempt to override the intellectual and economic diversity of the members of such a community.<sup>40</sup> As Leigh Gilmore writes (though not in respect of Lollard writings) in a representational or legal culture of constraint, autobiographical texts at odds with the dominant ideology invite identification as a critical reading strategy—a reading practice that 'listens for another's voice, sees another's face even where sameness is sought, and searches not for the universal but for the specific' (Gilmore 1994: 24). Thorpe, therefore, appropriates in a democratic and egalitarian way, not only the audience's sympathy—whether Wycliffite priest or layman—but the audience's own feelings of victimization.

It has been argued that the position of the Lollard was always one of weakness rather than power (Strohm 1988: 34). While this may underestimate the threat the Lollards posed to the Church, a threat

<sup>40</sup> See Copeland (2001: 145 ff.) who discusses the disdain 'articulated paradoxically by the movement's own intellectual core' (academics, clergy) for 'the division of labor between intellectuals and "followers"'.



that the ecclesiastical authorities did indeed keenly perceive,<sup>41</sup> the possible acceptance of this as a rhetorical stance in penning a record of inquisition, or in any text of religious dissent, may be understood by the heretical/dissenting author as possessing intrinsic advantages. Biblical and hagiographical narratives provide precedents of the Christian ideal of strength in earthly powerlessness or weakness—God protects and, more importantly, chooses the weak.<sup>42</sup> Thorpe's presentation of his struggle as a real, specific persecution, and yet one simultaneously depicted in 'essentialized' discourse—his persecution sharing much with the persecutions expounded in sacred biographies—demonstrates a tacit assumption of righteousness, permitting a subtle shift in the balance of power particularly valuable in terms of counter-propaganda.

In terms of historical and political 'facts', it seems that Lollardy was at a disadvantage, for the records of their history were documented by the authorities; its events were chronicled by members of the very orders harshly criticized in Wyclif's teaching (Hudson 1985: 43). Recently, the value of the chronicler, Henry Knighton, as a witness of the Lollard movement has been re-emphasized, particularly in that he knew various Lollards such as Repingdon, personally (G. Martin 1997: 28–40). This does not, however, refute the fact that Knighton was biased against Lollardy. Rather, it may be that despite Repingdon's return to orthodoxy, Knighton's first-hand knowledge caused him to have greater antipathy towards what he felt was a dangerous movement (*ibid.* 36–7). The potential for the biased documenting of events is perhaps not surprising, for throughout history the dominant hierarchy has always had the prerogative of preserving records of events as it sees them, and primarily as it sees them deviating from, or politically infringing upon what it considers orthodox or correct. The anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss noted that the growth of writing in a culture correlates not with an increase in knowledge, but with the development of complex social hierarchies, and he argued that control of others is often the primary function of a culture's writing, particularly one where a section are illiterate (Claude Lévi-Strauss from *Tristes Tropiques*, cited in Crane 1992:

<sup>41</sup> McNiven (1987: 7–21, 101–5, 169–71, 190–7) provides a slightly different view of Lollardy in the reign of Henry IV to that of Strohm (1998: 128–52).

<sup>42</sup> St Paul's words that God chose the weak to confound the strong (1 Cor. 1: 27) are often invoked to explain female (and lay) mystical experience and authorship. See K. Wilson (1984: p. xvii); Barratt (1992: 5–12); Petroff (1986: 3–8).

205). As such the widespread burning of documents during the 1381 Peasants' Revolt, not only of manorial or court rolls, but also of miscellaneous books and papers, suggests that the rebels viewed the written words of officials as an innate instrument of oppression (Crane 1992: 205–6). Such action against writings appeared an aspect of the Revolt so salient to the chronicler Thomas Walsingham, that in his account of the event he subsumed the murder of various officials within a wider hostility to writing:

They strove to burn all old records; and they butchered anyone who might know or be able to commit to memory the contents of old or new documents. It was dangerous enough to be known as a clerk, but especially dangerous if an ink-pot should be found at one's elbow: such men scarcely or ever escaped from the hands of the rebels. (Thomas Walsingham, *Historia* 2.9, trans. in Dobson 1983: 364.)

Moreover, the rebels remain outside representation, they do not present themselves as individuals in textual records, but are reimagined by those who write chronicles, court records, charters, and poems.<sup>43</sup> Similarly, Strohm has argued that Lollards suffered not only persecution, but also rhetorical exploitation, particularly in contemporary chronicles and trial records (Strohm 1998: 32–62). Whether Wyche and Thorpe possessed first-hand knowledge of such records is uncertain, yet in adopting aspects of hagiographic narrative their texts subvert the rhetorical constraints of the authorities' textual portrayal of Lollards, even while both authors apparently adopt the role of subjection cast for them.

In contrast to the diversity of writings put out by the authorities, those produced by Lollard pens primarily witness theological argument, rather than historical moment, and as such, Lollard texts are mostly anonymous, undated, and unlocalized (Hudson 1985: 43). In the cases of Wyche and Thorpe the situation becomes, therefore, atypical. Neither text is anonymous or unlocalized, and Thorpe's text takes great care to highlight its date of 1407, in itself a crucial time. In that year, Arundel had drafted his *Constitutions*, the legislation for his oppressive measures aimed generally at controlling preachers, books, and universities (Hudson 1988b: 82), which had

<sup>43</sup> Crane (1992: 201, 208–9). Crane analyses how Gower, Froissart, Knighton, and Walsingham portray the rebels as irrational, animalistic, and satanic. See also Justice (1994: 193–254). Strohm (1992: 34) writes that reimagining becomes distortion in the chronicles, whose primary tactic is 'to discredit the social standing, judgement, and objectives of the rebels at every level of representation'.

forbidden the dissemination, ownership, teaching, or translating of scripture in the vernacular. (Such texts could be owned provided episcopal licence had first been received—Hudson 1994: 232; Watson 1995: 821–64). Wyche and Thorpe, however, are not unprecedented in showing an interest in both the theological *and* the topical. Such concerns do occur in Lollard texts, for example, references to the Despenser's Crusade, but generally speaking, these tend to be used polemically to show the abuses of the clergy,<sup>44</sup> such as the *Jack Upland* series, an extended series of clashes concerned with anti-mendicant/anti-fraternal questions, posed and counterposed over a period of years—probably 1382 to 1410 (Somerset 1998: 136). Fiona Somerset has demonstrated the concern of the series with specifics of kingship and treason—Jack Upland's and Friar Daw's respective Ricardian loyalty and Lancastrian royalism—yet she has also shown how this is underpinned by the Wycliffite essentializing interpretation of literal/historical biblical events (Somerset 1998: 147–8). Similarly, 'A Lollard Chronicle of the Papacy' discusses how secular rulers such as Charlemagne or King Alfred have often been righteous, whereas popes, such as Pope Boniface, have always been corrupt. Yet as von Nolcken writes, the 'essentialising perspective' remains; it 'marks the significance of the particular events it treats by quoting the Fathers and St Paul on how things will be in the last times . . . or on the duties of secular rulers at all times' (von Nolcken 1997: 130). Furthermore, both the *Testimony* and the *Trial* differ from Lollard tracts, such as the *Lanterne of Liȝt*, for while such texts posit polemical counter-attacks to those doled out by officials and, in doing so, extra-textually recreate the force of the law and authority, in contrast, Wyche and Thorpe reconstruct this official force within their texts in the personas of Skirlaw, Arundel, and other officials (Copeland 1996: 205). Where the *Testimony* and the *Trial* are unique is in demonstrating a *consistent* interest in the topical and contemporary by the deliberate development of a specific situation. The detail with which each text tries to reconstruct this is an attempt to establish and control their own versions of 'the truth' of events. In other words, they are *consciously and consistently* specific and topical, not only theological.

<sup>44</sup> Examples are *The Twelve Conclusions of the Lollards* (c.1395), which in its reforming zeal lists criticisms of the Church; *De Vae Octuplici*, which discusses the errors of the friars by comparing them to the Pharisees; and the *Epistola Sathanae ad Cleros*, an anti-clerical satire.

I would argue the concern with specific events, a concern obviously ‘published’ and, therefore, intended for a wide audience, is related to propaganda. It would seem that the *Trial* and more particularly the *Testimony*, are an attempt to counteract the ecclesiastical authorities’ recounts of Wycliffite history, notably the accounts of recantations by well-known Lollards. Such recantations were in themselves materially valuable to the authorities because of their propaganda value (Hudson 1988b: 160), a reality that Thorpe recognizes and, it would seem, hopes to overcome through his own ‘history’:

For bi þis vnfeifful doynge, and apostasie of hem specially þat ben greeete lettrid men and haue knowlecheide opinly þe treuþe, and now, eiþer for plesyng[e] or displesinge of tirauntis, haue take hire and temperal wagis to forsaken þe treuþe and to holde þeraʒens, sclaunderinge and pursuynge hem þat coueiten to suen Crist in þe weie of riʒtwesnesse, manye men and wymmen herfore ben now moued; but many *herafter* þoruʒ þe grace of God schulen be moued *herebi* for to lerne þe treuþe of God, and to don þeraftir, and to stonde boldeli þerbi. (2143–51, my emphasis).

The *Testimony*’s first references to the cases of other heretics and their recantations are initially raised by Thorpe rather than by Arundel (499 ff.). Christina von Nolcken (1997: 150) views this as evidence of Thorpe’s anxiety in the face of persecution, but this is too credulous. Thorpe introduces the cases of Hereford, Purvey, and others in his lengthy description of his early life and recent experiences; the only anxiety this would seem to reveal is an apprehension that the audience view his own life and reputation within the framework of these (in)famous figures—that the text contains here an implicit comparison, an ‘answer’ to such instances of abjuration.<sup>45</sup>

The texts of Wyche and Thorpe, therefore, join a textual struggle, waged with its public or audience in view. Other texts belonging to this conflict include the two confessions that Knighton attributes to Wyclif, particularly the second confession,<sup>46</sup> as well as the broad-

<sup>45</sup> Wyche similarly describes the revocation of Purvey being read to him to persuade him to abjure, but to no avail—Wyche remains constant (537). If Thorpe modelled his text upon Wyche’s, it is possible that this moment in the *Trial*, though not as self-consciously favourable as the implicit comparisons in the *Testimony*, inspired Thorpe to depict himself against the background of well-known, but inconstant Lollards.

<sup>46</sup> Both confessions are recorded in the two manuscripts of Knighton’s *Cronicon*: BL MS Cotton Tiberius C. vii., fos. 179<sup>v</sup>, 180<sup>v</sup>–181, and BL MS Cotton Claudius E. iii, fos. 271<sup>v</sup>–272. From the former manuscript Hudson (1978: 17–18) prints both confessions. On the possibility that the text is in fact Wyclif’s own, see Hudson (1978: 141–2) and (1988b: 201).

sheets and bill-posting of Lollards, such as those following the 1382 trial of Repingdon, Hereford, and Aston (Justice 1994: 29; Aston's bilingual broadside was countered by a Latin one produced by a member of the ecclesiastical hierarchy, Shirley 1858: 329–31). It includes the posted accusations against his former confrères on the doors of St Paul's in 1387 by the Lollard Peter Patteshull who was formerly an Austin friar (Hudson 1988b: 200–1; Justice 1994: 29). To an extent, it also includes the *Jack Upland* series.<sup>47</sup> The *Testimony* broadcasts an allegedly Lollard-representative view of events: William Sawtry was 'wrongfulli brent' (417); Repingdon, in his sharp persecution of Lollards, is the worst of the turncoats (601–7); and William Taylor will stand by his sermon—just one moment of many in a text that reveals, even admits to, a concern with reputation and 'audience':

I gesse þat he purposeþ to stonde styfly þerbi, and ellis he sclaudriþ foule himsilf and also many oþer þat haue gret trist þat he wol stonde bi þe trupe of þe gospel. For I woot wel þat his sermoun is writun boþe in Latyn and in Englisch, and many men haue it and þei setten gret priys þerbi. (1981–5)

The written text provides credence, authority, and, importantly for the dissenting lower classes, rationality, as literacy at this time came to be viewed as synonymous with rationality (Stock 1983: 31). In this respect, Susan Crane (1992: 211) has argued persuasively that the English letters of John Ball meant more to the 1381 rebels simply as documents than as invitations to revolt. Crane proposes that rather they were the rebels' own textual authority, providing those normally outside literate culture with documents of their own to pass from hand to hand (see also Justice 1994: 25–6; Astell 1999: 44; Scattergood 1971: 354). That they represented to illiterate laity, as Stephen Justice (1994: 30) has argued, 'a stake in the intellectual and political life of the church and realm'. It is similarly possible, therefore, that Lollard texts were viewed by the popular faction of the movement as important simply as a counter-attack—not solely as propaganda, but as authoritative documents that belonged to them, as important simply as documents *per se*. The avidity with which Lollards sought and consumed vernacular texts has been demon-

<sup>47</sup> Although, as Somerset has demonstrated, the series reveals no interest in the possibilities of vernacular audience, and no interest in the exemplary nature of its 'lewed' literary stance, it did, however, enjoy a wide circulation among lay readers critical of the clergy. Somerset (1998: 178).

strated, particularly the lengths attained in order to overcome the obstacles of illiteracy.<sup>48</sup> The authorities themselves in effect recognized the value the Lollards placed upon the written word, when they supplied the suspect with an indentured copy of his abjuration or submission (Hudson 1988b: 187). I would argue that it is within this textual environment that the texts of Wyche and Thorpe should be placed, as presenting the authority of the written text and a rare historical record of a named individual's constancy.<sup>49</sup>

It would appear that in the struggle, both sides begin to use the textual weapons that have been successful for the opposition. Not only in Arundel's decree that Nicholas Love's translation of the pseudo-Bonaventuran *Speculum vite Christi*, should be made public for the edification of its readers and the confounding of Lollards<sup>50</sup>—in effect a (radically) modified version of those very Lollard texts which Arundel banned.<sup>51</sup> But also, that Thorpe in his literary enterprise appropriates the techniques of the opponents of Lollardy. His is not the 'naked text', but an embellished narrative, almost a saint's life, even though he says his narration will be formed 'as nyȝ þe sentence and þe wordis as I can, boþe þat weren þere spoken to me and þat I spak' (36–7). Thorpe deploys the Lollard hermeneutic of the literal sense<sup>52</sup> in order to verify the truth of what he narrates, and yet, simultaneously, he deploys fictional and hagiographical devices, something censured by the movement. This Lollard view sits un-

<sup>48</sup> Aston (1977: 353–6). Aston discusses how illiterate Lollards would hear texts at secret night readings, how they might aurally learn texts by rote, or even learn in adulthood to read. John Claydon's copy of *The Lantern of Light* was read to him by his servant John Fuller. William Wakeham of Devizes admitted in 1434 that he 'with other heretics and Lollards was accustomed and used to hear in secret places, in nooks and corners, the reading of the Bible in English, and to their reading gave attendance by many years'. (Aston cites Bishop Neville's Register (Salisbury), fos. 52<sup>r-v</sup>, 57<sup>v</sup>).

<sup>49</sup> In court transcripts of Lollard trials the dissenter is usually granted only the first-person singular through the format of abjuration, in other words 'at the moment at which the dissenting subjectivity is erased through submission to ecclesiastical authority' Copeland (2001: 217).

<sup>50</sup> 'auctoritate sua metropolitica vtpote catholicum publice communicandum fore decreuit et mandauit ad fidelium edificacionem siue Lollardorum confutacionem'. CUL MS Add. 6578, fo. 2<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>51</sup> A further notable example of this is Reginold Pecock's recognition of the importance the vernacular held for Lollards, and as such he deploys it in order to launch his written attack upon their movement in his texts such as *Repressor of overmuch Blaming of the Clergy*, and *The Reule of Crysten Religioun*.

<sup>52</sup> As Copeland (1996: 204) states, fidelity to 'words and sentences' was a principle of classical and patristic translation theory that the prologue to the Wycliffite Bible alters to agree with the Lollard hermeneutic of the 'open' text.

comfortably with the textual saintliness Thorpe attempts (and the actual saintliness Wyche achieved, albeit after his death). Thorpe's *Testimony*, and to a much lesser degree, Wyche's *Trial*, therefore, reveal elements of textual transgression in the light of Wycliffite antipathy to hagiographic narratives, elements possibly justified by the pedagogical and propagandising objective of each.

The sanctity of the individual's inward thoughts and beliefs—a sanctity that the authorities attempted to police, while Lollards sought its reiteration—is manifest in a textual game, in which the attainment or avoidance of an oath of submission is the intent of the Church and Lollard respectively. This 'game' implies an audience, for not only did Wyche and Thorpe rely on an 'audience', but so did ecclesiastical authority, which was why oaths of submission, public recantations of former heretics, and anti-Lollard literature were so valued. Throughout the *Trial* and the *Testimony* this audience is present, as both these texts effect, indeed construct, the reader. In Wyche's text, this is through a disarming intimacy, a mode of confession to a reader assumed to be of his theological and political persuasion. The *Trial*'s rhetorical stance is an ingenious contrivance. It is a 'prison epistle' containing Wyche's secrets ('Ista sunt secreta mea' (541), 'These are my secrets'), ostensibly written for select friends, and yet is one possibly intended from the start for a wider audience, one who no doubt would be affected and persuaded by its private, revelatory, and confessional tone, a tone that reinforces the veracity of its contents. Similarly, Thorpe delineates an implied reader from the first paragraphs of the opening prologue, where he elects himself as the reader's mouthpiece against corruption and assurance for salvation, and where he assures the reader that he acts selflessly on his or her behalf. He portrays himself as undifferentiated from his community, continually using the pronoun 'us': 'þe Lord, if he wol not lese *us*, wol in dyuerse maneres moue tyrauntis aȝens *us*' (76–7, my emphasis). Yet simultaneously he implicitly defines himself as the community's ideal representative, an exemplary figure for those men and women 'þat louen truþe' and who will now respond and assume the roles he has assigned them, for they 'owen hereþoruȝ to be þe more moued in all her wittes' (58–64).

In both texts, the use of hagiographical devices, the careful self-presentation, and the tyrannical portraits of the Church officials who lead both examinations, mean that only one viewpoint is permitted. It is one which, as with Usk's *Testament*, coerces the reader's sym-

pathy; indeed, it ensures that the reader is constructed as having no choice but to sympathize. The situations described in each text are simply a case of 'good versus evil' as the whole dispute between Church and Lollard is distilled into the characters of Wyche and his interrogators, and Thorpe and his. Furthermore, as with Usk, it appears that Wyche and Thorpe are aware of the 'value' of portraying their imprisoned and persecuted situations; that to write as pious victim at once counterposits a tacit role as victor in a war of conflicting 'truths'.



## George Ashby and *A Prisoner's Reflections*

### I

George Ashby's poetry enlarges upon references to his life in historical records, pertaining to his service to the Lancastrian royal family and his work in the signet office (Otway-Ruthven 1939; Griffiths 1981). In his poetry, he narrates how he served Duke Humphrey of Gloucester, Henry VI, and also his queen, Margaret of Anjou, and that he worked in the signet office for over forty years, serving both in England and in France (*A Prisoner's Reflections*, 57–70). Indeed, Ashby had a fairly prominent administrative career. By 1437 he appears in records as one of the clerks of the king's signet (CCR *Henry VI* iii. 1435–41: 131; and CPR 1436–41: 150) and in 1439 he was sent to Calais where he held the post of clerk of the bills for aliens (Otway-Ruthven 1939: 120, 132). On 9 July 1441 he was granted as king's sergeant £10 yearly for life 'until he be recompensed by an office of the same or greater value' (CCR *Henry VI* iii. 1435–41: 419; CPR 1436–41: 550). Several years later, in 1444, Ashby was one of the embassy that brought Margaret of Anjou to England. By 1446 it appears Ashby was a clerk of the queen's signet (CCR *Henry VI* iv. 1441–7: 416); his favoured and high status at this time is suggested by Queen Margaret's writing to express her thanks to an unnamed lady for having held Ashby 'in right good faver and tendernesse' (Monro 1863: 114).

In June of the same year Ashby was made Steward of Warwick (CPR 1441–6: 433); at this point, he was already constable of the castle of Dynevor, having received this office in June 1438 (CPR 1436–41: 150), and this was regranted to him by Parliament in 1449 and 1452. By 1447, he had acquired the Breakspears estate in Harefield, Middlesex, and subsequently obtained more land there (Reynolds 1962: 245). Several years later he appears again in records, when on 8 October 1452 a royal request was sent from

Westminster to the abbot and convent of Glastonbury, that they admit Ashby to their house and that they should 'minister to him' a maintenance 'in consideration of his good and unpaid service with the queen on either side the sea' and because of which 'the king has sent him to them' (CCR Henry VI v. 1447-54: 451).

In 1463, Ashby appears to have suffered imprisonment, according to his poem *A Prisoner's Reflections*: 'Wretyn in pryson, in oure lordes date, | A thowsand foure hundryd syxty and thre' (337-8). He states that he is held within the Fleet (8), and that he has been so imprisoned 'a hoole yere and more' (30). Neither his imprisonment nor its reason is recorded (Otway-Ruthven 1939: 142), and, therefore, its implications are difficult to ascertain. He writes that his greatest pain is that he is 'put to vnpayable det' (44), and it may be that he was being held as a debtor. This is quite possible given the notorious difficulties and delays public servants faced in receiving their wages, and in view of the various mentions of Ashby's own 'good and unpaid services' (CCR Henry VI iii. 1435-41: 131; CCR Henry VI, v. 1447-54: 451. Debt was a common cause of imprisonment within the Fleet, although it was not strictly and solely a debtor's prison). Equally, rather than having been originally imprisoned for owing money, possibly he simply could not 'bail himself out' as he complains that his money and goods have been taken from him, and his houses have been pulled down (20-5). This was probably as punishment for his Lancastrian loyalties at a time when the Yorkists held power, and given that, although unprotected, Ashby stayed in England with his property when Henry and Margaret fled. Richard Firth Green, however, suggests it is likely that the Lancastrians' overwhelming and bloody defeat at Towton in 1461 led to Ashby's capture and imprisonment.<sup>1</sup>

Throughout his career, therefore, Ashby was a staunch Lancastrian supporter, witnessed also by his dedication of the *Active Policy* to Henry VI's son, Prince Edward. Though no record exists for Ashby's whereabouts or employment throughout the 1460s or early

<sup>1</sup> Green (1980: 148). The Lancastrian and Yorkist armies confronted each other at Towton (Yorkshire) on 29 March 1461. It was to be the largest and bloodiest engagement of the Wars of the Roses, fought in a snow blizzard, which greatly hampered the Lancastrian archers, and which in large part led to the Lancastrians suffering an overwhelming defeat. Henry, Margaret, and their son Prince Edward were at York during the battle, and this enabled them to make for the Scottish border and escape capture (Griffiths 1981: 874-5).

1470s, he had probably withdrawn from public life<sup>2</sup> given that during these years the Yorkists predominantly held power, and considering his great age. For Ashby states in the *Active Policy of a Prince* that he is 80 years old (64–5; all quotations from Ashby's poetic works will be taken from Bateson (1899) citing line numbers). Based, therefore, on arguments for a composition date of 1463, John Scattergood (1996: 267) estimates that Ashby was born shortly before 1385. If, however, the *Active Policy* was composed during the temporary Lancastrian successes of 1470, as Mary Bateson, the text's editor, and Margaret Kekewich have suggested, then Ashby was born in 1390 (Bateson 1899: p. vi; Kekewich 1987: 105–6). Ashby died on 20 February 1475 and was buried at Harefield; the inscription on a brass to his memory in the church at Harefield reveals that he was married and left a son, John.<sup>3</sup>

Three texts of Ashby's survive: *A Prisoner's Reflections*, allegedly composed in the Fleet prison in 1463, and two advisory texts, the *Active Policy of a Prince*, and the *Dicta & Opiniones Diversorum Philosophorum*. The supposition that the *Active Policy* and the *Dicta* are separate texts is questionable however, rather it seems more likely that they were in fact one long work, the *Dicta* forming an appendix. This would account for the fact that the *Dicta* does not appear satisfactorily to represent a work in its own right.<sup>4</sup>

The *Active Policy* and the *Dicta* are extant in Cambridge University Library, MS Mm IV 42, a fifteenth-century manuscript, Ashby's poems comprising folios 1<sup>v</sup>–19<sup>f</sup> and 19<sup>r</sup>–84<sup>v</sup>, respectively. (For a description of the manuscript, see *A Catalogue of the*

<sup>2</sup> Wedgewood (1936: 22) states that soon after his imprisonment Ashby 'was in France with the Queen directing the education of Prince Edward'. However, he cites no evidence for his view.

<sup>3</sup> His son John died in 1496. Ashby's grandson, George, was also to be a clerk of the signet, this time to Henry VII and Henry VIII; he died on 5 March 1514–15. Stephen and Lee (1908: 637).

<sup>4</sup> Scattergood (1971: 285–6; 1990: 168, 171–2). Scattergood bases his argument upon analysis of the layout of the manuscript, which suggests that the copyist did not feel that the *Active Policy* and the *Dicta* constituted two separate works. Though the manuscript was never rubricated, space was left for decorated capitals equivalent to seven lines at the start of each new item, but the *Dicta* begins halfway down fo. 19<sup>f</sup> and rather than the seven-line space for a large decorated capital, suggestive of a new work, instead a smaller capital-space has been left. Furthermore, the *Active Policy* has no formal explicit, and the Latin prologue mentions the *Dicta* but does not appear to suggest that this is a separate work. See also Kekewich (1987: 128–34). The end of the MS of the *Dicta* is missing so it is impossible to judge how much more was originally produced, or whether Ashby provided an explanation for the work in an epilogue.

*Manuscripts preserved in the Library of the University of Cambridge* (1861), iv. 299.) *A Prisoner's Reflections* is extant in Trinity College, Cambridge, MS R. 3. 19, fos. 41<sup>r</sup>–45<sup>v</sup>. The manuscript is described as 'not far from 1500' in the catalogue of manuscripts in Trinity College (James 1901: 69). The *Reflections* is the second of two works—the first being the tale of 'Guyscard and Seiesmonde'<sup>5</sup>—that comprise the section made up of fos. 26<sup>r</sup>–48<sup>v</sup>, with 46<sup>r</sup>–48<sup>v</sup> left blank after the *Reflections* which finishes on fo. 45<sup>v</sup>. The section is composed of three eight-folio gatherings, the third lacking a leaf between what are now marked as fos. 46 and 47. It is tempting to speculate that perhaps originally the *Active Policy* and the *Dicta* were planned to follow the *Reflections*.

A composition date of c.1470 for the *Active Policy* and the *Dicta* has been suggested, when Henry VI was briefly returned to the throne (Bateson 1899: p. vi; and Kekewich 1987: 105–6, who points out that there is no suggestion within the advisory poetry that the royal family were not in control of England). Scattergood (1990: 168–71) however, has questioned a composition date as late as this, and more convincingly proposes a date of c.1463 instead, possibly when Ashby was imprisoned. His argument is primarily based upon topical references in the *Active Policy* that appear to equate with contemporary events of 1463—the advice on the need for reviving the cloth-making industry and also the necessity for sumptuary laws, may refer to specific parliamentary legislation during 1463.<sup>6</sup>

In the *Active Policy*, Ashby states that he had little access to books as he wrote, something that appears to be evinced by the first part of the poem, entitled *In tempore preterito*—dealing with the past. The Holy Scripture and chronicles that he mentions in his Latin prologue,

<sup>5</sup> This is an anonymous English version in rhyme royal of a tale from Boccaccio's *Decameron* IV. i. (IMEV 3258). It is extant only in Trinity College, Cambridge MS R. 3. 19, 26<sup>r</sup>–40<sup>v</sup>. It has been printed in Wright (1937: 38–98) who suggests a date of 1485.

<sup>6</sup> The Commons were anxious about the state of the cloth-making industry in 1463 and petitioned Edward IV on this matter, proposing the regulation of the home cloth-making industry, in order to guarantee a better product, as well as a number of restrictions that would result in the reduction of importation of foreign cloth. These concerns appear very similar to Ashby's view in lines 527–33 of the *Active Policy*. Scattergood (1990: 169) also notes the similarities in wording between Ashby's verse on the subject and the petition sent to Edward IV. Similarly, in 1463, the Commons also petitioned Edward IV seeking the passing of sumptuary legislation. Ashby's stanza on cloth-making (527–33) is followed by a stanza (534–40) that exhorts the regulation of the array of the Commons. Again Scattergood (1990: 170–1) argues that echoes of the original petition's wording appear here in Ashby's stanza.

are only sparsely to be found throughout this section (Kekewich 1987: 111), augmenting the possibility that he wrote the text without access to such sources and was indeed in prison. Ashby brings this part of his poem to an end by imputing his advice to scripture and the chronicles though he has in fact not used such sources (204–10) (ibid. 113). However, the following two sections show a more conventional reliance upon textual authority, respectively: Plato, Pictagoras, and Hermes; and Socrates, Hermes, Gregory, Pictagoras, and Homer, and including a reference to the Epistle of St Peter. All three texts, therefore, may have been written *c.* 1463, but it would seem that only the *Reflections* was wholly written whilst Ashby was a prisoner.

Ashby's poetry has largely been neglected and remains so today. The Early English Text Society edition of his works gives only a very brief introduction and virtually no analysis of his poetry (Bateson 1899: pp. v–vii). In literary criticism, if Ashby is mentioned it is usually only in passing with respect to the tradition of 'mirrors for princes' of the mid-to-late fifteenth century, where greater focus is frequently given to John Fortescue, Ashby's contemporary. The most detailed and sustained work on Ashby is by Kekewich in her study of fifteenth-century books of advice for princes, where she devotes a chapter to Ashby's advisory poetry, the *Active Policy* and the *Dicta* (Kekewich 1987: 103–38). However, the *Reflections* receives scant analysis. Equally, Scattergood (1971) gives Ashby only sporadic and brief discussion, but does, however, provide a more focused analysis in two later articles. One of these is devoted to the dating of all three of Ashby's texts (Scattergood 1990), in which, again, the *Reflections* is given only scant consideration as its date is unproblematic. The second article, in contrast, is specifically concerned with the *Reflections*, and notably the virtue of patience, a principal theme (Scattergood 1996). Other than the above, Ashby's poetry, and in particular his *Reflections*, has largely been ignored.

In the *Reflections* Ashby's concerns appear primarily pedagogical, yet he also creates an autobiographical textual identity. To complement and construct this identity Ashby, like those authors of the texts previously discussed, deploys intertextuality. His poem is a Boethian one, and the presentation of an imprisoned lamenting autobiographical identity whose sufferings are introduced as a departure point for didactic concerns, the Boethian *gradus* of ascendance, and the incorporation of Boethian philosophical maxims, invite a read-

ing of Ashby's persona as a latter-day Boethius. Furthermore, I argue that Ashby also incorporates allusions to *Lament of a Prisoner against Fortune*, then thought of as Chaucer's and as forming part of Chaucer's *Purse*. Such allusions suggest the construction of a Chaucerian persona, a public servant and poet beset by debt and—given that Usk's *Testament* was then attributed to Chaucer—also imprisonment. The Boethian and Chaucerian models present a means of authorizing Ashby's persona. To augment such *auctoritas* Ashby also presents his identity in implied comparison to hagiographic figures, notably Job, paired in medieval commentaries with Boethius at this time. The generalized, exemplary, and spiritually representative aspect of Ashby's persona is underpinned by such hagiographic comparisons, while the individualistic, mendicant, and autobiographical facet is in part founded on the implied comparisons to Boethius and Chaucer as imprisoned and impecunious public servants and respected authors. This double aspect, the spiritual/universal and the individual/specific, is also played out linguistically in the *Reflections*, as Ashby adopts the language of law, keeping divine and forensic aspects of such language simultaneously in play. While Ashby's *Reflections* is, therefore, a didactic and representative text, the personal and specific element coexists. This personal aspect was arguably invoked in the hope of reward or aid from his Lancastrian masters, especially given Ashby's advice throughout his texts on the necessity of patience in rulers, the caution that a ruler should choose servants possessing this virtue, and his corresponding self-presentation in the *Reflections* as an exemplar of this very virtue.

The *Reflections* contains a number of details specific to Ashby, which appear to iterate an autobiographical veracity, and invite a reading that conflates narrator and author. References to the act of composition, for example, which occur in the *Envoi*, where the narrator refers to the material nature of the text ('Goo forth, lytyll boke' (309), and 'my makynge' (341)), and where he considers his reasons for taking 'opon me labour of thys werk' (318), and formally provides the date of composition: 'Wretyn in pryson, in oure lordes date, | A thowsand foure hundryd syxty and thre' (337–8). The construction of an autobiographical identity is also suggested by the fact that Ashby names himself in the text, and supplies allegedly autobiographical data:

George Asshby ys my name, that ys greued  
 By emprysonment a hoole yere and more,  
 Knowyng no meane there to be releued,  
 Whyche greveth myne hert heuily and sore. (29–32)

He states that he is held within the Fleet (8), that the year is 1463 (338), that his incarceration was at the 'gret commaundment of a lord' (9), and that he has been stripped of his possessions, his houses demolished (20–1). He also details his past: his upbringing was in the:

... hyghest court that I coude fynd,  
 With the kyng, quene, and theyr vncle also,  
 The duk of Gloucetre, god hem rest do,  
 With whome I haue be cherysshid ryght well. (59–62)

And he served in the 'sygnet full fourty yere | Aswell beyond the see as on thys syde' (64–5). The specificity of the account and the non-ironic tone suggest that what is presented is historical fact. Furthermore, there is the accordance of intertextual information: the autobiographical data in Ashby's other poetry—his career details in the Latin Prologue to the *Active Policy*,<sup>7</sup> and his self-naming in the text proper (22).

In late-medieval texts, the construction of a representative and onomastic textual identity is frequently invoked in the hope of winning patronage, or 're-entry' to an offended readership, or the persuasion of readers for a political end (Kerby-Fulton 1997: 79), as discussed in relation to Usk, James I, and Wyche and Thorpe. The motivation for Ashby's self-naming in his imprisoned lament, together with the enunciation of his Lancastrian sympathies, therefore, seems utilitarian—seeking aid or patronage amongst other Lancastrians, as Ashby may well have had an intended readership, who knew of his past history and his present predicament. Additionally, the *Envoi* displays authorial anxiety over the text's reception, as Ashby emphasizes that he has not written the poem with a view to 'worldly glory' (319). The lengthy reiteration (three stanzas) of his hope that he has not 'offendyd in [his] lewdnesse' (333), of his desire to 'conforme graciously' to the correction of those

<sup>7</sup> 'extractus et anglicatus in Balade per Georgium Asshby, nuper Clericum Signeti Supreme domine nostre Margarete, dei gratia Regine Anglie, etc. . . .' (Bateson 1899: 12).

who have greater 'connyng' (326-7), and of his wish that they do not 'arect [*impute*]' any 'default' to him (328-39), extends beyond the traditional rhetorical mock-modesty topos and instead appears genuine concern. This further intimates an intended audience, and suggests Ashby's corresponding concern that he be viewed favourably and as sincere.

The *Reflections* does not create ironic discrepancies in the presentation of the authorial voice. Rather this is characterized as stable with authorial representation remaining at a level of ostensible 'sincerity' and veracity. Ashby achieves such an authorial stance because he does not introduce humour, textual games, or an ironic distance between the first-person narrator and author characteristic of pseudo-autobiographical texts, such as d'Orléans's *English Book*, for essentially the *Reflections* is a didactic poem. The text's pedagogic value is ostensible; the sufferings of Ashby's textual identity are portrayed as resulting in the author's own moral lesson, which in turn is proffered to the reader. Stanzas 1 to 18 delineate Ashby's sufferings, and thereby contain autobiographical detail; stanzas 18 onwards turn outwards, addressing the reader in a form of sermon.

As the poem progresses, the prime importance of the individual and his specific experience appears at times negated, thematically submerged below a concern for the representational, particularly through the central section from stanza 18 to the *Envoi*. As such, the specifics of Ashby's personal detail, as Scattergood suggests, are possibly filtered through the received concepts of Christian literature, particularly texts concerned with patience, a primary topic throughout the *Reflections*. Chaucer's *Parson's Tale*, for example, cites several types of assault that earthly life may bring, and against which each person must have patience: 'The first grevance is of wikkede wordes . . . That oother grevance outward is to have damage of thy catel . . . The thridde grevance is a man to have harm of his body . . .' (*Pars* T I. 662-7). The first 'grevance' of 'wikkede wordes' corresponds with the 'vnfytytyng langage' (74) of those who have imprisoned Ashby, while the second, loss of 'catel', accords with the confiscation of his money and goods (20-4). And although Ashby does not complain of physical harm (the third 'grevance'), he does state that he has had to bear false imputations 'on my ruge [*back*]' (27) (Scattergood 1996: 270-2). The particular blends into the generally received, becoming subservient to a greater theme, Christian patience or fortitude, of which Ashby's textual self is an



exemplum. Ashby makes the movement from autobiographical to pedagogical concerns explicit. He moves from:

What may I do? to whom shall I compleyn?  
Or shew my trouble, or myne heuynes?  
Beyng in pryson, wrongfully certeyn (50-2)

to:

Knowyng in serteyn that my punysshynge  
Is other-whyle for my soule profytable (106-7)

finally to:

Wherefore I counseyll aftyr wordes thyse,  
Euery man to be lernyd on thys wyse (118-19)

The didactic and representative appear finally of greater importance than the autobiographical, yet the fact remains that Ashby specifically constructs a textual identity incorporating autocitation and the provision of other personal detail. And as with Usk, James, Wyche, and Thorpe, Ashby deploys intertextuality in the service of such construction. It is to this that I now turn.

## II

Neither Boethius nor the *Consolation of Philosophy* is mentioned in the *Reflections*, yet the latter is undoubtedly a Boethian poem and, I would argue, would have been read as such given the popularity and pervasive influence of the *Consolation* at this time.<sup>8</sup> Ashby's text is imbued with Boethian influences, most notably in the presentation of an imprisoned autobiographical identity gradually left behind as personal misfortune is reconfigured towards the pursuit of didactic and more metaphysical concerns. Linked also to this is the poem's Boethian formal and thematic *gradus* of ascendance. Furthermore, while not referring to the *Consolation*, Ashby recounts philosophical maxims taken specifically from the text's *contemptus mundi* philosophy, evincing the influence of Boethius's text upon his own. Philosophy, for example, discusses the vagaries of fortune; one man,

<sup>8</sup> As discussed in the Introduction, more than a hundred manuscripts survive testifying to the text's inordinate popularity (Gibson, Smith and Ziegler 1995: 22-3; Cherniss 1987: 1-7).

she says, may find his children his tormentors, the childless man, therefore, may after all be fortunate in his misfortune: 'it hath ben seyde that [...] children han ben fownden tormentours to here fadris [...] In this approve I the sentence of my disciple Euripidis, that seide that he that hath no children is weleful by infortune' (Bo. III. pr. vii.15-25). Similarly, she questions:

what man is so sad or of so parfite welefulnesse, that he ne stryvethe and pleyneth on some halfe ayen the qualite of his estat? . . . For som man hath gret rychesse, but he is aschamed of his ungentil lynage; and som man is renomyd of noblesse of kynrede, but he is enclosed in so greet angwyssche of nede of thynges that hym were levere that he were unknowe . . . and som man is wel and zelily ymarried, but he hath no children, and norissbeth his rychesse to the eyres of straunge folk; and som man is gladed with children, but he wepeth ful sory for the trespas of his sone or of his daughter. (Bo. II. pr. iv.72-91)

Equally, in the *Reflections*, Ashby introduces the subject of children within his own discussion of 'contraries', a discussion recalling the above section of the *Consolation*:

In all thy lyfe there ys contraryte;  
 Yef thou be ryche thou hast aduersyte,  
 Yef thou haue a feyre wyfe and gret plente,  
 Moche sorow peraventur ys sent the . . .  
 Yef thou be weddyd, without any stryf,  
 Thou lakkest chyl dren, to be thyne heyres, . . .  
 Yef thou haue chyl dren ryght plenteuously,  
 Haply suche may be theyr gouernaunce  
 That they woll dysplese ryght greuously . . . (165-78)

The inclusion of Boethian philosophical allusions and, moreover, the fact that Ashby, like Boethius, is imprisoned, suggests that Ashby's textual identity should be read in the light of Boethius's own. For like the *Consolation*, Ashby begins the *Reflections* with a recapitulation of autobiographical detail, lamenting the misfortune of his imprisonment, before using this to move to more didactic concerns. As with the *Consolation*, therefore, the autobiographical element is outwardly subordinate to the dramatic function of contrasting former good fortune with bad, for the purposes of providing an exemplum.

In the fifteenth century, the *Boece* was one of Chaucer's most popular compositions, praised by both Lydgate and Caxton (Minnis

and Machan 1993: 167). It survives in ten manuscripts (some fragmentary) and two early editions, each of the latter derives in part from a manuscript that is no longer extant. Furthermore, Walton's verse translation enjoyed an even greater popularity—at least twenty manuscripts survive, and a further manuscript has been discovered that is a revision of the original translation (Johnson 1987: 139; Kaylor 1983: 122). Part of the *Consolation's* popularity and lasting appeal was the personal human aspect of the Boethian persona, a persona that, as Harold Kaylor has shown, the Middle Ages tended to read literally, viewing the Boethius figure of the *Consolation* and the historical Boethius as one and the same (Kaylor 1983: 125 ff.). Seth Lerer has demonstrated that Boethius consciously invited such a reading of 'himself', and encouraged this by constructing a consistent persona across his works, one 'beset by the impediments of cultural decline and the hindrances of a hostile audience'.<sup>9</sup>

Ashby, like Boethius, also creates a recognizable identity that spans his texts, as he carves for himself a consistent advisory role. Furthermore, in both the *Reflections* and the *Active Policy*, details concerning his work in the signet office are reiterated, so that just as Boethius recounts his service to 'the State', so Ashby inscribes his own public and state service, notably to the Lancastrian royal family:

With the kyng, quene, and theyr vnclle also,  
The duk of Gloucetre, god hem rest do . . .  
Wrytyng to theyr sygnet full fourty yere,  
Aswell beyond the see as on thys syde,  
Doyng my seruyce aswell there as here,  
Nat sparyng for to go ne for to ryde . . . (60–7)

Like Boethius, therefore, Ashby presents himself as an imprisoned selfless public servant whose experiences are redeployed for the philosophical pedagogical benefit of his readers. And similarly, Ashby's text is also presented as the creation of his imprisonment and political predicament.

The self-won sapience and pious virtue Ashby tacitly claims for himself throughout the *Reflections* corresponds with the late-

<sup>9</sup> Lerer (1985: 3). Boethius's self-persona, for example, in his commentary on Aristotle's *Perihermeneias*, develops the Latin trope of the harried official longing for the refuge of his books, a trope to which medieval poets such as Chaucer and Hoccleve were highly responsive (ibid. 21–2).

medieval view of Boethius as an exemplary Christian individual. This Christianizing element is particularly elaborated in the medieval explication of the 'laddres' (*Bo.* I. pr. i.35) depicted on Philosophy's robe, which join the Greek letter Pi on the bottom of her hem to the Greek letter Theta at the top, and which Chaucer's *Boece* explicates as respectively the active and contemplative life (ibid. 30–3). This is notably extended in the version in Bodl. MS Auct. F.3.5: 'The furste degre is that he enforme his owne soule to goode lyf and honest. The secunde set to travayle be goode ensample and techynge to profite thy neybore. The thrydde w<sup>t</sup>drawe frele men with lawful blamyng fro vycyous lyf, and w<sup>t</sup> vertuous governaunce demeene hem and stable hem in vertuous levyng' (fo. 202<sup>r</sup>). The three steps exhorted here—self-correction, an exemplary self, and exhortations to fellow Christians to reform—are mirrored respectively by Ashby's persona. Self-correction, for example, is evident in lines 106–12 where Ashby philosophizes that his imprisonment is 'profytable' for his soul, and that the punishments of God are 'other-whyle good' and should be accepted patiently. His exemplary self-portrayal is evinced in lines 99–105, where he speaks of his desire to lead the 'best lyfe' and 'obey hym that ys eternall, | And to chaung my lyf to god greable'. His exhortation to fellow Christians comes at the close of the autobiographical opening section, lines 118–19, where he writes that he hopes to 'counseyll . . . | Euery man to be lernyd on thys wyse'. Given also the allusions to philosophical maxims from the *Consolation*, Ashby's persona is thus presented in an exemplary vein corresponding to that in which Boethius was contemporarily received and textually recast. The Auct manuscript dates from the third quarter of the fifteenth century (Liddell 1896: 200), and while there is no evidence to suggest Ashby knew this particular version of Book 1 of the *Boece* (or the lengthy *vita auctoris* in its prologue), that such a text was being copied contemporaneously evinces a continued focus upon the Boethian figure himself and his virtues.

The *gradus* of ascendance constructed through the narrative progress of the *Consolation* is also reflected formally and thematically in the *Reflections*.<sup>10</sup> In the *Consolation*, Philosophy leads

<sup>10</sup> The word *gradus* is a commonplace metaphor for the struggle through life or education, but in the *Consolation* it comes to signify more specifically the progress towards reason and belief effected by dialectical argument. Lerer (1985: 98 ff.) summarizes briefly the history of the concept, its usage and metaphorical implications, particularly in the works of Cicero and Augustine.

Boethius away from forensic, dramatic, and dialectical forms of expression towards a purely philosophical mode of discourse. Ashby responds to this aspect of the *Consolation*, his textual persona ascends from purely literal and earthly concerns—forensic and dramatic—in the opening autobiographical section of the *Reflections*, to a philosophical explication of earthly suffering and its ability to purify the soul. From lamenting his imprisonment (50–2), he moves to a Christianized understanding of his incarceration: 'Knowyng in serteyn that my punysshynge | Is other-whyle for my soule profytable' (106–7), leading him to counsel others: 'Wherfore I counseyll aftyr wordes thyse, | Euery man to be lernyd on thys wyse' (118–19). He subsequently compares the purification of the soul through earthly tribulation to the purification of gold (141–7).

Lerer has analysed the mode in which Boethius manipulates the reader, charting his progress during the reading process by 'rewriting' earlier portions of the text into fresh contexts to measure that progress. The Boethian figure, therefore, provides a guide for the audience of the *Consolation*; they may measure themselves against the progress of the prisoner. In the process of 'ascendance' and the movement towards demonstration as opposed to dialectic, the relationship between the Boethian prisoner as reader and writer within the text, and the implied reader outside the text, undergoes a transformation, as the reader inside the text and the reader outside merge into one (Lerer 1985: 3–4, 164). Ashby's text embraces a similar conflation. The movement from prologue to text proper expresses more clearly the ascending concerns of the author-protagonist: Ashby assumes the role of Philosophy, recasting the role of the Boethian-prisoner as the implied reader, for having reached solace in the opening autobiographical section, the 'I' voice of the *Reflections* then turns and directly offers consolation to his readers. While the *Consolation*, therefore, defines an 'implied reader',<sup>11</sup> Ashby's text moves a step further, delineating an inscribed reader, one who is explicitly posited, and who thereby embodies a form of presence within the text. The reader is so inscribed by direct questioning: 'Who may haue more heuynes & sorow | Then to be welthy and aftyr nedeful?' (155–6), or by the use of the second person:

<sup>11</sup> See *ibid.* (29–32), and Stock (1983: 366–72). Lerer (1985: 32) argues, along with Stock, that Boethius conceives 'of an imaginary audience, outside the circle of friends or students for whom the text was written' and 'engage[s] a future imaginary audience' who is 'in constant colloquy' with the author.

'Thow canst nat be so pryve ne secret | But god ys there present and knoweth all thyng' (211-12). Moreover, Ashby's literary identity assumes an authority because of his antithetical relation to the inscribed-reader who is tacitly prescribed as needing to learn from Ashby's 'self'.

The *Reflections* was also influenced, I would argue, by the poem *Lament of a Prisoner against Fortune* (all quotations will be taken from Hammond 1909). Both poems complain of wrongful imprisonment—the *Lament* author writes: 'That wrongfully I lye thus in prison' (34), while Ashby writes that he is 'in pryson, wrongfully certeyn' (52)—and both portray this as a form of just punishment for earthly sins, urging the value of patience in response. The *Lament* has:

Wenest though þat god chastith þe for nought  
 Though þou be giltles I graunt wele of this vyce  
 Hit is for synnes þat thou hast foredrought  
 That now peraunter full litel are in thi thought  
 Therefore be glad for it is writen thus  
*Maxima etenim morum semper paciencia virtus* (37-42)

Similarly, in the *Reflections*, Ashby directs his readers:

Yef thow to pryson or trouble be broght,  
 Haply by gret wrong and nat of desert,  
 Suffryng iniury and ryght peynfull smert,  
 Kepe pacience and wyte hyt thyne offence,  
 Nat for that sylf thyng but of iust sentence. (122-6)

Both poets attest their willingness to embrace their imprisonment and sufferings as for the 'soule profytable' (*Reflections*, 107) or of 'mede encresing' (*Lament*, 116). Moreover, on occasion the *Reflections* appears to possess a similar wording to the *Lament*, suggestive of more than coincidence. In the contrast of former good fortune with present misfortune, the *Lament* has:

Whan I was fre and in bounchief at ese  
 In company ouer all where I went  
*No man* seid þan þt I did hem *displese* (78-80)

While the *Reflections* has:

That before was well in goodes and rest,  
 And *no man* was ayenst me *dysplesyd* (78-9)

Both poets complain of the worst 'of all' their sufferings. The *Lament* author writes: 'The worste of all that grevith me sore | Is that my fame is lost & all my good los' (71-2), while Ashby writes: 'The grettest peyne that I suffyr of all | Is that I am put to vnpayable det' (43-4). Furthermore, both poems present their protagonists languishing in prison without the 'comfort' of visitors. The *Lament* has: 'I haue no ffrende þat will me now visite | In prison here to comfort me of care' (92-3), while the *Reflections* has: 'Oon thyng among other greueth me sore | That myne old acqueintaunce disdeyned me | To vysyte . . . | Ne yeuyng me comfort' (36-9). Lawton argues that Ashby's sufferings, particularly the desertion by his friends, are 'all but a direct quotation from Hoccleve's account of his nervous breakdown in his *Complaint*' (Lawton 1987: 773), yet it seems in this respect that a closer and more immediate source for Ashby's *Reflections* is to be found in the *Lament*.

At the time Ashby was writing, the *Lament* was thought to have been composed by Chaucer. The poem exists in three manuscripts approximately contemporary with Ashby's *Reflections*: BL MS Harley 7333, fos. 30<sup>v</sup>-31<sup>r</sup>, copied from lost collections of John Shirley<sup>12</sup> (from the second half of the fifteenth century), BL MS Harley 2251, fos. 298<sup>r</sup>-300<sup>r</sup>; and BL MS Add. 34360, fos. 19<sup>r</sup>-21<sup>v</sup>. The latter two manuscripts have been dated specifically as from the reign of Edward IV (Hammond 1905: 3, 6—dates for the manuscripts are also given in Pace and David 1982: 124). In these two manuscripts, the *Lament* is continuous with Chaucer's *Purse* (*Lenvoy de Chaucer* is omitted in both) with absolutely no indication that *Purse* is, or was, a separate poem. Furthermore, in the Additional MS, John Stow has written 'Chaucer' at the top of the page on which *Purse* begins.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Hammond (1905: 1-2, 6, 25-7) and (1909: 481) first noted this provenance. See also Boffey and Thompson (1989: 287, 307).

<sup>13</sup> A marginal note next to the last stanza of *Purse* has assigned the poem instead to Hoccleve: 'Thus farr is printed in chaucer fol. 320 under ye name of Tho.Occleeue' (referring to Speght's 1602 edition of Chaucer's works) and has drawn a fine line across the page in order to separate the two texts. However, this hand is much later, and Hammond describes it as a Jacobean hand. The insertion of this marginalia is probably due to the fact that by 1602, *Purse* was printed as Hoccleve's, probably because its mendicant nature was felt to be more typical of Hoccleve than of Chaucer. Hammond argues that at the time of his printed 1561 edition, Stow was unaware of the *Lament* or 'continuation' of *Purse*, otherwise he would have printed it, but he knew of it later and communicated this to Speght. But as by 1602 *Purse* itself was attributed to Hoccleve, this probably explains why, in the 1602 edition, the 'continuation' (i.e. the *Lament*) is not printed (Hammond 1909: 482).

Accordingly, in Speght's 1598 edition of Chaucer's works the *Lament* is appended to Chaucer's *Complaint unto his Purse*. Speght declares that the *Lament* comes from John Stow's library, and he writes that 'ten times more is adioined [to Chaucer's *Purse*] than is in print' and that Chaucer makes a 'great lamentation for his wrongfull imprisonment' which Speght says accords with Chaucer's *Testament of Love*,<sup>14</sup> now known to be Usk's. This and the manuscript evidence reveals that by the mid-fifteenth century the *Lament* was thought to be Chaucer's, and also thought to augment his autobiographical description and imprisonment in the *Testament*. For the type of manuscript on which William Thynne based his copy of the *Testament*—a manuscript in 16s—was quite rare and usually contained collections of Chauceriana, thereby suggesting that the canonization of the *Testament* as Chaucer's occurred early in the fifteenth century (Dane 1998: 92–3). The Chaucerian attribution of both texts may also have been underpinned by the fact that the *Lament* contains the *Troilus*-like line 'Wille Lachesis my threde no longer twyne' (62), which is also reminiscent of a line by Usk in his *Testament* 'to dwel in this pynande prison tyl Lachases my threde no lenger wolde twyne' (I.6.563) taken from *Troilus* (V.7).

Both Harley 2251 and Add. 34360 are in the hand of the prolific 'Hammond scribe', who had access to John Shirley's surviving collection.<sup>15</sup> John Shirley was a loyal Lancastrian and dedicated several works to Henry VI, his version of the *Secretum Secretorum* (which he entitled *The Governance of Kings and of Princes*, and which also contained his *Cronycle of the Dethe of James Stewarde*) was dedicated to Henry VI. Furthermore, like Ashby, he had Warwickshire origins, and was still connected with the area, even after he became based primarily in the capital.<sup>16</sup> It is likely that Ashby and Shirley knew each other, indeed, the manuscript evidence does point to some

<sup>14</sup> See *ibid.* (481). Skeat (1900: 136–7) did not notice this fact, and in his Chapter 8, 'Additions by Speght', he writes accordingly: 'In the edition of 1598, Speght added but three more pieces, all spurious', namely, Chaucer's *Dream*, *A Ballad*, and *The Flower and the Leaf*, thereby omitting the *Lament*.

<sup>15</sup> It has been suggested that he was the stationer John Multon (Christianson 1989a: 99, 101, 106, 107; 1989b: 136). The many manuscripts of the 'Hammond scribe', his London base, and his access to John Shirley's surviving collection are discussed by Connolly (1998: 178–82).

<sup>16</sup> Shirley served Richard Beauchamp, Earl of Warwick, and was a permanent member of the Warwick affinity. Though he later settled in the capital, Shirley continued to 'maintain links with men from the Beauchamp household and remained in close contact with the aristocratic milieu' (Connolly 1998: 5, 10–26).



form of connection, given that the scribe of Ashby's *Reflections* in MS R. 3. 19 collaborated with the 'Hammond scribe', who copied so many of Shirley's books, and notably two of the manuscripts which contain the *Lament*. (Both scribes worked together in collaboration on Trinity College, Cambridge, R. 3. 21. See Boffey and Thompson 1989: 288–90.) Ashby, therefore, possibly knew the *Lament*—attributed to Chaucer as part of Chaucer's *Purse*—through Shirley's collection.

Ashby's allusions to the *Lament* mean that possibly he saw himself presenting his situation according to a literary pattern laid down by his 'maister', which is how he addresses Chaucer in the opening to his *Active Policy* (1). Such Chaucerian allusions would have maximized the text's literary authority, but might also have been a means of presenting Ashby's textual identity in favourable terms. Chaucer, as an imprisoned and impecunious but reputable poet and civil servant penning a petitionary poem (*Purse* as it existed with the *Lament* appended) could be invoked by Ashby to augment the petitionary aspect of his own 'prison-poem' and the 'vnpayable det'(44) of which he laments. If so, this would suggest that the 'Chaucer' of *Purse* and the *Testament* (then thought to be Chaucer's) was read autobiographically, and differed from the understanding of Chaucer's self-ironic narrators in more playful texts, such as the *House of Fame*.

In addition to allusions to the *Lament* and the *Consolation*, Ashby recalls the lives of saints: 'allmyghty Ihesu' (225), 'Mary the quene of heuyn' (232), 'Iohn the Euaungelist' (239), 'Of many martyrs and eke confessours' (240), and, in particular, the most well known of such exemplary figures of patient suffering, Job:

Of Iob to suffyr take thow example,  
Whyche pacyently suffred hys gret smert,  
Who had in thys world of losse more ample? (246–8).

Job was frequently paralleled with Boethius in medieval texts, and medieval readers tended to interpret Boethius's prosimetric work not in isolation, but rather, paired with the Book of Job as 'its authoritative biblical analogue and complementary scriptural "other speaking"' (Astell 1994: pp. x, 91–6). The similarities between them are explicitly highlighted in St Thomas Aquinas's thirteenth-century Joban commentary. Aquinas writes: 'So too Boethius in the beginning of *On the Consolation of Philosophy* disclosed his sadness to

show how to mitigate it with reason, and so Job disclosed his sadness by speaking' (Damico and Yaffe 1989: 100). Both Boethius and Job are examples of an innocent sufferer who addresses the problem of evil in the form of complaint and questions, set within a philosophical dialogue-framework. Boethius's dialogue with Philosophy resembles the dialogues between Job and his consolers and God. Both works affirm the existence and benevolence of providential purpose. Furthermore, Boethius's philosophical journey parallels the psychological and philosophical progress that prepares Job for a divine epiphany (Astell 1994: 12).

In the *Reflections*, therefore, Ashby amalgamates his sufferings with such precedents, representing his textual self through the literary consumption of other suffering identities. The typological aspect created by such intertextual reference suggests that Ashby's text, like that of Usk or Thorpe, demonstrates a concomitant individualizing and generalizing propensity. Ashby's persona proffers a representative personality, who despite the exigencies of his situation, in larger terms shares the fate of his fellow men—earthly suffering and its acceptance, and a concern with 'perfectibility'. Yet, Ashby's status as an individual refuses self-cancellation for his text declares itself as the product of his specific experience, whether of imprisonment or of reading and writing. His past and its recollection in the present calls for an active reflection that attempts to synthesize the whole in order to project an ideal future mode of thought and action. As Carr (1986: 76) argues, the most notable instances invoking such reflections are usually religious or political conversions, 'in which a new view of life, of oneself, and of one's future . . . requires a break with and reinterpretation of one's past'.

Imprisonment is presented as having elicited such an active reflection in Ashby, one constructed upon three principles: significance, value, and purpose. Significance proceeds from recollection, through reviewing the past, selecting significant moments that comprise a pattern. Value equates with the present, linking either positively or negatively with the actuality in which one is enclosed. Lastly, purpose embraces the future, the anticipated actualization of values. (For this threefold scheme—though not with respect to the medieval texts here discussed—see Carr 1986: 76). The threefold concern of past, present, and future connects with the structuring principle of Ashby's *Active Policy*, derived from Cicero's *De Inventione* (Kekewich 1987: 109); here it is the pedagogic means by which

Christian and secular 'perfectibility' may be achieved, and which Ashby takes care to delineate in his Latin prologue, as well as within the poem itself:

Besides whiche thre thinges I wolde meve  
 Your high estate to haue in Remembrance,  
 Keping [*sic*] theim in youre breste and neuer leue,  
 For any busynesse or attendance,  
 Puttyng youre high estate in assurance,  
 That is tyme Passed present and future,  
 Kepyng thees three tymes with due mesure. (120–6)

Ashby's *Reflections*, therefore, appears a self-enactment of such advice, implicitly strengthening his advisory role.

Yet joined in the *Reflections* with individualistic concerns is the concomitant universalized appeal of Ashby's textual self, proffered as a representative of communal values. While the literal level of the *Reflections* consists of the data of Ashby's life and his present imprisonment, imprisonment itself allegorically comes to represent the difficulties of earthly suffering:

Yef thow to pryson or trouble be broght,  
 Haply by gret wrong and nat of desert, . . .  
 Kepe pacience and wyte hyt thyne offence,  
 Nat for that sylf thyng but of iust sentence. (122–6)

Equally, Ashby's tacit appropriation of exemplars of analogous suffering, notably Job, signals a tropological comparison with his own suffering identity, while the exhortation to think that: 'thy lyfe here ys but pilgremage | Towardes the hygh place celestiall' (204–5) introduces an anagogical concept of life as a journey towards the heavenly city. The text re-encapsulates this journey from incarceration to liberty—a moral deliverance of the soul from the bondage of sin, or a prefiguration of the soul passing from this life into eternal paradise. Ashby presents himself as Everyman; his prison situation is dehistoricized, repackaged as a Platonic metaphor, and comes to mean in Christian *contemptus mundi* terms the prison-house of the soul in earthly and corporeal existence. These aspects may be overlooked on the first 'heuristic' reading, but become apparent during the second, 'retroactive' or 'hermeneutic' reading.

In this respect, when Ashby's textual persona laments that the greatest of his afflictions is that he is 'put to vnpayable det' (44), such a statement assumes an added significance during the retroactive

reading. Initially, it appears the Chaucerian complaint of so much medieval petitionary verse, apparently referring to a monetary debt. In the second, hermeneutic reading, however, and as imprisonment evolves into an allegorical representation of earthly sufferings justly deserved as a purification from sin, 'debt' assumes an added meaning, particularly as Ashby writes that 'Without goddes grace' he is likely to remain in debt and a 'wrechyd thrall' (44–7). It is possible that Ashby refers to the theological metaphor whereby sin and penance—by which one compensates for sin—are considered debts to be discharged by God.<sup>17</sup>

The word 'debt' in Middle English has a much broader semantic range than in modern English (see 'dette' meanings 1–4 in *MED*), and Ashby's readers would undoubtedly have been aware of the sin 'branch' of its semantic tree. Furthermore, it had many current literary representations—Langland's *Piers Plowman*, Holcot's *Commentary of Wisdom*,<sup>18</sup> and the *Lay Folks' Catechism*, which comments on the *Paternoster* that was known by every child (Adams 1984: 91): 'These dettys þat we owe to god ar seruyse þat we owe to hym. And as ofte as we fayle we renne in to dette of peyne' (Simmons and Nolloth 1901: 10). The concept of Christian debt was also widely known though vernacular homilies,<sup>19</sup> and Latin encyclopedias.<sup>20</sup> 'Debt' and its associations with sin were pervasive. It is likely, therefore, that given the spiritual significance with which the *Reflections* is imbued, the 'vnpayable det' of which Ashby complains would also have been read in this Christian vein.

<sup>17</sup> As St Augustine writes in *De Libero Arbitrio* (3.15). 'No one overcomes the laws of the Almighty Creator. Every soul must pay back what it owes, either by using well what it received, or by losing what it was unwilling to use well. If it does not pay its debt by doing justice, it will pay its debt by suffering misery' (Williams 1993: 101).

<sup>18</sup> The commonplace: 'redde quod debes' is repeatedly presented in *Piers Plowman*; see Adams (1983: 410–71; 1984: 90). Holcot's *Commentary* is discussed in Adams (1984: 91) who highlights how widely read was Holcot's text.

<sup>19</sup> 'euery man is dettour to God; and ziff a man be so þan I may seye þoo wordes þat I take to my prechyng, 'zelde þat þow owest,' as I seid at þe begynnynge. Of þin goodes þou muste ȝeue almus dede . . . Of þi bodie also þou arte bonden to zelde þi goode dette, to traveyll in þe serveyce of God, preyinge and fastynge and pilgrymage goinge' (Woodburn 1940: 42–3).

<sup>20</sup> 'Magnam bonitatem facit deus peccatori quando pro modica penitentia a pena eterna eum absoluit. Sicut si creditor debitori suo pro modico obolo quitaret mille libras.' (God does the sinner a great kindness when, in exchange for a modest penance, He absolves him of eternal punishment. It is as if the creditor were to forgive his debtor a debt of a thousand pounds in exchange for a mere pittance.) From Nicholas of Byard, *Dictionarius pauperum*, cited in Adams (1984: 91).

The conflation of the spiritual and the legalistic suggested by the semantic range of 'debt' in Ashby's autobiographical prologue was perhaps to augment the text's *auctoritas*. Ashby deploys legal language in this opening section; he states that he is imprisoned against 'ryght and reason' (7) a phrase specifically associated with equitable law.<sup>21</sup> Of his imprisonment he writes: 'Though I cannat therto sadly acord, | Yet I must hyt for a lesson record,' (11–12). 'Accord' also has legal connotations, meaning to arrive at a settlement or compromise, or to be reconciled within a legal dispute, while similarly, 'record' also possesses a legal meaning either as a testimony, or to cite evidence and/or to call to witness (Alford 1988: 1, 127). Similarly, several lines later, Ashby laments that he is of 'grace forsakyn' (18). The word 'grace', like 'debt', had a wide semantic range at the time, intimating divine grace, but also meaning legally a favour or indulgence as opposed to a right, as well as specifically referring to the freeing of prisoners by 'mainprise' or by payment of a fine or ransom—prisoners who were freed by ransom were said to be 'saved' or 'redeemed', while those denied the possibility were said to be 'without redemption or grace' (ibid. 66, 139). The conflation of the theological and the forensic is augmented when Ashby writes several lines later: 'Besechyng god I may take my dysease | In dew pacience, our lord god to please' (34–5). Here, therefore, is the currency in which Ashby will pay his 'debt': in 'dew pacience', for 'dew' in legal terminology specifically refers to a debt owed or payable (ibid. 49).

The legal language and forensic concern of Ashby's presentation of his imprisoned situation, therefore, appears to embrace an allegorical spiritual significance, particularly in the light of the inseparability of divine, natural, and positive law at this time (Alford 1977: 942; Barr 1992: 49 ff.). Yet equally, the authority Ashby claims in the *Reflections* is not only imparted by the interrelated theological import of the legal language, but in the utilization of such language as a discourse, in the Foucauldian sense, as a specialized and exclusive form of language and register (a discourse being that which

<sup>21</sup> Alford (1988: 137). Alford (1988: 82) quotes, e.g. from *Select Cases in Chancery*, ed. William Paley Baildon, Seldon Society 10 (London, 1896): 'Thomas Stones . . . hath disseised them . . . forcibly and without any right or reason or process of law'. See *MED*, meaning 2(a), that which is just, justice, equity; also, the virtue of justice, and (b), a right cause, just cause, the right side in a dispute, citing the phrases 'right and resoun', 'right and god resoun', and 'nor right nor no resoun'.

'makes possible disciplines and institutions, which in turn, sustain and distribute those discourses' (Bové 1990: 57)). Ashby's language bears a set of pre-agreed signs by which it secures recognition as a discourse, as specialized language, in which the overt system of the specialized idiolect is primary, while the system of ordinary language from which it incorporates its diction is latent. The original meaning of an 'ordinary' word is dissolved in what Pierre Bourdieu (1991: 139–43) has termed a 'transubstantiation'. Bourdieu (1991: 152–3) asserts that such discourse introduces an elevated style, declaring itself to be '*authorised*, invested, by virtue of its very conformity, with the authority of a body of people especially mandated to exercise a kind of conceptual magistrature (predominantly logical or moral depending on the authors and the eras)'. The imposition of such a form 'protects the text from trivialisation', reserving it on one level for a 'closed group of professional readers'.

Appropriation of such a discourse suggests that Ashby hoped to influence the reception of his textual identity. For in the deployment of a discourse with such a wide inclusiveness and as many applications as medieval legal discourse possessed, Ashby's persona can be read in a favourably flexible manner. His textual self expresses and embodies the authority and collective value of a heteronomous discourse, the widely known theological language, permitting a communal and inclusive consumption. At the same time, however, the creative appropriation of such a discourse—the concomitant reincorporation of temporal legal meaning, the reception of which is delimited to a closed and elite group initiated into the specificity of his legal language—preserves the autonomy and individuality of Ashby's status both as an author and a textual persona. As such, the *Reflections* presents an outward renunciation of individuality and a textual strategy of sameness and solidarity with his community of readers, while simultaneously the poem claims an authorial uniqueness, and implicitly celebrates one 'George Assheby'. Possibly, therefore, Ashby hoped the work might come amongst a more secular-minded or legally empowered reader, for whom George Ashby is not simply Everyman.

## III

A 'dialogic' relationship frequently exists between a late-medieval poet's different works. The works of Gower, for example, exemplify a dialogic relationship as they may be viewed as one long continuous work or triptych, suggested by the colophon added to the *Confessio Amantis* (see Macaulay 1901: ii. 479–80; Fisher 1965: 135). Poets also often constructed a consistent authorial persona that spanned their texts, such as Hoccleve's *Series*, in which the authorial persona is the linchpin holding a variety of texts together, and which in turn reflect upon the writing persona and the process of writing itself. It seems, therefore, erroneous to overlook the possible interdependence between the *Reflections* and Ashby's advisory texts. If, as Scattergood has suggested, Ashby's advisory texts were written contemporaneously with the *Reflections*, there is possibly a political connection between its authorial self-presentation and that of the *Active Policy* and the *Dicta*. In the *Reflections*, Ashby cautiously delineates his authorial role, his *auctoritas*, his personal virtue, and his exemplary status. The political relevance of these aspects may be suggested by the authority Ashby cautiously assumes in the *Active Policy*, which is largely an original and topical text with Ashby analysing the problems of ruling England in the fifteenth century and which perhaps explains the appendage of the *Dicta* as a collection of moralized 'pièces justificatives' (Kekewich 1987: 128–31). Ashby's 'prison-poem' possibly provided an authorising context for the *Active Policy*, establishing Ashby's personal virtue and right to advise.

Ashby's *Active Policy* not only negotiates the difficulties of presenting the treasonous and covetous examples of recent history as pedagogically valuable, but also places emphasis upon the individual as much as, if not more than, the conceptual, defining good government as dependent upon the individual and his moral life:

Such as ye be, so shall ye be taken,  
 Youre dedys & werkes shal prove al thing,  
 Wele or evyl thei shalbe awaken,  
 In cronicles youre Rule rehersyng,  
 Either in preisyng either in blamyng.  
 Now here ye may chese wherto ye wol drawe,  
 Best is to confourme you to goddys lawe. (232–8)

Implicitly, however, the worth of advice and adviser equate with one another, raising questions concerning the moral life of the poet, and his right to claim *auctoritas*.

This equation appears pre-empted by Ashby, for possibly he was influenced by current scholastic attitudes towards authorship and *auctoritas*, and the legacy of scholasticism's growing interest since the thirteenth century in human *auctores*, expressed most commonly in the *vita auctoris* of the academic prologue to the work of an *auctor*. For given the recent reconsideration of the education received, and the degree of learning possessed, by 'civil servants' at this time (see Sandler 1996: 7–8, 13, 23–9; and Kerby-Fulton and Justice 1997: 66) it is likely that Ashby was aware of scholastic attitudes. Indeed, Ashby's Latin prologue to the *Active Policy* may have been influenced by the academic 'Type C' prologue. The prologue is much defaced in its unique extant form—CUL MS Mm. IV. 42 (leaf 2a)—but sufficient survives to be read and understood. The prologue appears to possess a similar structure to the 'Type C' prologue: *vita auctoris*, *ordo libri*, *modus agendi*, *intentio auctoris*, the work's *utilitas*, and the *materia libri* (see Minnis 1988: 18–39). Furthermore, Ashby's awareness of the scholastic-commentary tradition is suggested early in the *Active Policy* in his concern that he has not read or seen sufficient textual authorities, particularly commentaries ('the gloses sure' (52)).

Ashby's anxiety regarding his authorial role in the *Active Policy* is witnessed in the subtle negotiation with which he defines this. He refers to the telling of the work as a 'rehersall' (54), an implicit disavowal of his status as author, for 'rehearse' was an expression often used by medieval poets in order to represent themselves as mere compilers or reporters.<sup>22</sup> Primarily he presents himself in the *Active Policy* as merely an instrumental *causa efficiens* in relation to God as primary *causa efficiens*. He beseeches God for 'support' (29), and 'gracious instruction' (30), that he:

... may confourme me aftur the report  
Of vertuous and sad [*serious*] construccion,  
Without minisshyng or addicion,  
Principally in thentent and substance  
Of my matere, with all the obseruance. (29–35)

<sup>22</sup> The *auctor* was supposed to 'assert' or 'affirm', while a compiler 'repeated' or 'reported' what others had said or done (Minnis 1988: 100–2, 193). Minnis (1988: 198) terms this a 'disavowal of responsibility' trope.



Given the originality and topicality of the *Active Policy*, Ashby had every right to be anxious regarding his status as *auctor*. His apprehension perhaps explains why he appended the *Dicta*—a text where his role as *auctor* is switched for one more readily conceived of as compiler and translator. Presenting the *Active Policy* as the text of God, the primary *auctor*, mediated charges of assuming too great an authority in opposition to an earthly prince.

In the *Reflections*, Ashby seems more bold in claiming *auctoritas*, possibly because his *materia libri* is his imprisonment—his own experience of suffering and loss of good fortune. Ostensibly, like the *Active Policy*, there seems a concern in the *Reflections* with presenting God as the 'primary efficient cause', as Ashby creates the idea of the *duplex causa efficiens* (see Minnis 1988: 171–7 for this term), referring to the act of writing in the *Reflections* as a 'rehersall' (113). Moreover, he seeks guidance both morally and 'artistically' or aesthetically from God:

I beseche the, god, of thy worthynes,  
Yeue me grace, comfort and assistance,  
Good wyll, good werkes, good thought and eloquence, (304–7)

Yet in a subtle modification of his authorial role as merely 'operative cause', Ashby assumes a degree of credit when he later writes:

Besechyng the, our lord god in trynnye,  
To take my makynge in plesure and gre,  
And therto hau mannys benyuolence,  
To thyne owne preysyng, laude and reuerence. (340–3)

By proffering his work as a gift, he appears to reascribe the divine role from one of primary *auctor* to one of primary reader, thereby implicitly reappropriating a greater individual responsibility. Moreover, suggestions of Ashby's role as an *auctor* are present in his repetition of the phrase 'I counseyll' (118, 129) and in the manner in which his self-understanding and virtuous overcoming of misfortune are tacitly measured against the advice he proffers, signalling a personal accountability.

Ashby's writing self is ostensibly apprehensive in assuming *auctoritas*, but with careful negotiation *auctoritas* is in fact what he claims; indeed, it becomes evident in the closing *Envoi*:

Besechyng all folk, though I am no Clerk,  
For to vnderstand that I nat presume

To take opon me labour of thys werk  
 For worldly glory and thank to assume,  
 But vertu to encrese and lewdnes consume,  
 And namely to take trowble in suffraunce  
 Paciently to deseruyd penaunce. (316–22)

Ashby's concern here with the reception of his text signals a desire to influence its interpretation. This exceeds apprehending the understanding of his pedagogic message, and incorporates the mode in which 'he' is understood, in other words, that his persona is read as disinterested, as subject to a higher cause than personal motivation. Moreover, the *vita auctoris* he supplies in the *Reflections*—an expression of his patience, and Christian virtue more generally—appears to authenticate the 'moral' of his text and his presumption in making it. If Scattergood is correct, and the *Active Policy* and *Dicta* were written in 1463, Ashby's *Reflections* may have been in part motivated by a desire to augment the *auctoritas* he claims in his political advisory writing.

The main theme of Ashby's *Reflections* is the virtue and value of patience. Indeed, the virtue of patience—or *patientia*—was extolled by the Latin tradition, and particularly by Boethius. As Burnley (1979: 76) writes 'If *tranquillitas* and *firmitas* are the marks of the philosopher to Seneca and Cicero, to Boethius *patientia* is outstanding.' To the Middle Ages who inherited this tradition, patience was the quality that enabled the individual to 'maken vertu of necessitee' and ideally to bear persecution and suffering without complaint. In addition to the clear spiritual import of patience in the Later Middle Ages, it was also felt to be of prime importance to rulers and indeed, indivisible from this, as part of self-rule affecting Everyman, but especially the king or prince, as the texts of Lydgate, Gower, and Chaucer exemplify.<sup>23</sup> By the fifteenth century, therefore, patience

<sup>23</sup> See Lydgate's *Troy Book* (Bk. II. 5313). See Bergen (1906–35). The third book of Gower's *Confessio Amantis* is devoted to providing a positive exemplum of patience, particularly in King Solomon (CA III. 613 ff.), and Bk. VII specifically links patience with imprisonment, when Pompeius takes pity on the King of Armenia, having witnessed his exemplary patience in bearing his imprisonment (CA VII. 3223–30). See Macaulay (1901). Patience and its value in avoiding the problems unleashed by vengeance and anger is the topic of Chaucer's *Melibee*. See *Mel.* 2185–90; 2695–2700, 725–30. Both Gower's *Confessio* and Chaucer's *Melibee* are advisory texts, and may be said to belong to the genre of 'advice-to-princes' literature. Middleton (1978) discusses the advisory, public value of the *Confessio Amantis*. Astell (1999: 101 ff.) and Strohm (1990: 108–9) have suggested that the *Melibee* was a form of 'mirror for princes' particularly for Richard II.

was not simply a private Christian virtue, but had a history of textual representation as a necessary virtue in rulers, and was perceived generally as possessing a social value. This appears to be Ashby's concern when he advises Prince Edward as future king against tyranny in the *Active Policy*:

That ye must nedis doo bi rightwisenesse,  
Bi trouthe, goode conscience or Iuggement,  
Do it with pite & pacientnesse,  
With no vengeance in youre commandement,  
For that longithe to god omnipotent . . . (324–8)

Furthermore, Ashby not only exhorts patience as a virtue in his advisory texts for Prince Edward, but also discusses the overriding importance of virtuous servants who will aid their master in achieving good governance free of recrimination:

And euer drawe to youre noble seruice  
The mooste vertuos folkes and cunnyng,  
That may youre entencion accomplyce,  
Youre high estate and grete honnour sauynge . . . (*Active Policy*, 260–4)  
A seruant shold nat be euen equal  
To his lorde, but in thre thynges trewly,  
That is, in feithe, wytte, & pacience al . . . (*Dicta*, 911–13)

The poetic guidance Ashby offers in choosing servants appears to possess an element of self-interest. In the *Active Policy* he cautions knowledge of the first loyalties and early education of those servants employed:

Also chese your servantes of goode draught,  
That wol attente and be seruiable,  
Remembryng with whom thei haue be vpbraught,  
For to suche their shalbe appliable. (471–4)

This recalls Ashby's own claims concerning his upbringing in the *Reflections*:

My bryngyng vp from chylthod hedyrto,  
In the hyghest court that I coude fynd,  
With the kyng, queene, and theyr vncle also. (58–60)

Moreover, the patience Ashby exhorts in Prince Edward is tacitly exemplified by his own textual identity—in both the *Reflections* and

the *Active Policy*, Ashby fashions himself as patient, sapient, educated, and aged, prerequisites in good servants, or so Ashby advises:

Loke that youre counseil be rather godly set,  
Wele aged, of goode disposicion, (*Active Policy*, 814–15)

A kynge sholde take seruantes famulere;  
First knowe their maners & thair gouernance,  
How thay reulen their howse withoute dere,  
And to thair feliship in assurance,  
Yf thei be wele named in substance,  
Wele demeaned, & of lawe a keper,  
Pacient, take thaim for feithful louer. (*Dicta*, 442–8)

Nestled, therefore, amongst Ashby's arguments for choosing servants well, there appears a subtle petitionary element, augmenting the suggestion of self-interest:

And euer remembre olde Sarueyeres,  
Hauyng suche persounes in tendernesse  
That hathe be feithfull & trewe welewyllers  
To thair ligeance withoute feintnesse,  
Suffryng therfore grete peine & butternesse [*sic*] (*Active Policy*, 422–6)

Ashby writes as a loyal member of the Lancastrian faction, and as a royal servant. His praise and flattery of royalty, constructed within his autobiographical self-presentation as a 'Boethian' and possibly Chaucerian prisoner and loyal Lancastrian, is less overtly personally motivated than Usk's similar textual self-representation as a desirable servant—largely because of the disinterested pedagogical emphasis of Ashby's verse and the absence of apparent self-justification. However, despite such emphasis, the *Reflections*—taken together with the *Active Policy* and the *Dicta*—reiterates Ashby's status as an individual, and his value as an ideal servant, suggesting that the *Reflections* was composed with the hope of reward, or aid in his imprisonment in mind.

# Epilogue

## I

The close of the fifteenth century brought with it one of the last works of the English Middle Ages which presents 'the writer in prison', *Le Morte Darthur*. Although the text has been much studied, the author's self-presentation is rarely considered in itself, no doubt because autobiographical concerns appear minimal in the text, and as such Malory's Arthuriad is beyond the scope of this study. However, the narrative does possess a first-person narrator, together with authorial addresses to the reader in the colophons, which possess elements of self-definition, and present an imprisoned author. Before I conclude, therefore, I give space here to a brief discussion of these facets of the *Morte*.

The author of the *Morte* was a 'knyght presoner' (180.70<sup>v</sup>),<sup>1</sup> Sir Thomas Malory, but which fifteenth-century Thomas Malory wrote the work has been a matter for much dispute. William Matthews (1966) first proposed Thomas Malory of Hutton Conyers in Yorkshire as author, yet his claims have been convincingly refuted by Angus McIntosh (1968: 346–8), and more recently by P. J. C. Field. Field (1993: 11–22) refutes the historical arguments of Matthews, principally on grounds of rank—the Hutton Thomas was almost certainly not a knight. Two likely candidates, therefore, remain: Thomas Malory of Newbold Revel, Warwickshire, favoured by Field, and Thomas of Papworth St Agnes, Cambridgeshire, favoured by Richard R. Griffith. (See Field 1993: 7–10; 1996: 115–30; Griffith 1981: 159–77.)

Sir Thomas of Newbold has principally been viewed as the *Morte*'s author, because he was certainly a knight, and was known to have been imprisoned repeatedly. Field cites a number of further arguments in his favour, such as a knowledge witnessed in the *Morte*

<sup>1</sup> All quotations will be taken from Vinaver and Field (1990) providing page numbers.

of the principalities of south-west France around Armagnac, an area with which the Newbold Malory alone is known to have had a connection, as well as an indirect reference within the text (1257) to Edward IV's sieges in 1462 of the northern castles of Alnwick and Bamburgh, in which Field (1993: 25–30, 86–7) alleges the Newbold Malory participated. However, the principal objections to Thomas of Newbold's authorship are the 'library question',<sup>2</sup> his age at the time of composition,<sup>3</sup> and a discrepancy in moral character between what is professed by the *Morte's* author, and what is known of Thomas of Newbold and his lawless behaviour.<sup>4</sup> Finally, there is no evidence to suggest that Thomas of Newbold was ever imprisoned at the time of his exclusions from Edward IV's pardons (1468 and 1470), which, given the many records of his earlier incarcerations throughout the 1450s, there surely would have been, had he been imprisoned. The biographical information of the colophons and Sir Thomas of Newbold do coincide in that the latter was certainly a knight, but there is no evidence to suggest that he was a prisoner at the time that the final colophon alleges the text was completed: 'this booke was ended the ninth yere of the reygne of Kyng Edward the Fourth', the year which began on 4 March 1469.

In contrast to Field, Griffith favours Thomas of Papworth on a number of grounds. He reconsiders the information provided by John Leland and Bishop John Bale and concludes that Leland discovered that Malory, author of the *Morte*, came from the area of Maelor, on the Welsh borders in the vicinity of North West Shropshire, and that the only man of the name known to be associated with this area is Thomas of Papworth (Griffith 1981: 160–3—

<sup>2</sup> If this Malory was in Newgate as is generally supposed from his burial place (Jacob 1968: 354; Matthews 1966: 51–3) the sources for the *Morte* would have been unavailable (Matthews 1966: 51–60; Lumiansky 1987: 881). Field (1993: 144–5) briefly posits that Malory may have used Anthony Wydville's library, while Barber (1993: 133–9, 150–2) suggests that the Newbold Thomas Malory was perhaps at court during the 1460s (before his final imprisonment), where books were borrowed and circulated.

<sup>3</sup> He is thought to have been in his seventies at the time. Field (1993: 56–64) however, argues for a later birth date (c. 1415–18) and a younger Thomas of Newbold than is commonly supposed.

<sup>4</sup> It is difficult to equate an author who clearly glorified chivalric virtues with the man who led a life of violence, even rape. Although Cannon (2000: 183) concludes that the *Morte* 'depicts the chivalrous knight as the criminal knight and thereby demonstrates that there is no way to separate the activities that constitute the Order of Knighthood from the activities of crime'.

Sir William Malory of Papworth St Agnes acquired property at Moreton Corbet, Shropshire, only nine miles south-east of Maelor, and it was here that his son Thomas was born). He also argues for the Papworth Malory on the basis of dialect, and suggests that he was also possibly a prisoner during 1469–70, placed under house-arrest by Warwick, who executed many of Edward's supporters without trial or conviction. Griffith (1981: 165) also argues that it is clear from the arrangements of Thomas's Will that, although only 45 years old, he clearly expected to die quite soon. Griffith (1981: 168, 172–3) has also broached the library question: Thomas of Papworth was acquainted with Anthony Wydville through property and family connections, and as such may have had access to the Wydvilles's extensive library.

Finally, Griffith turns to the deciding question of whether or not Thomas of Papworth was a knight. He suggests that Thomas acquired the title during his last days and possibly due to his involvement in events that led to his death, namely the possibility that he aided Anthony Wydville's escape and was rewarded with a knighthood from Wydville, but was subsequently punished and executed by Warwick. Griffith (1981: 173) argues that there is some significance in the fact that Thomas of Papworth made his will four days after the deaths of Earl Richard and Sir John Wydville, and that two weeks later, by 1 September, he was dead. Griffith admits that this appears conjecture, but he presents documentary evidence that Thomas of Papworth was possibly a knight after all. He argues that a report of a 1471 inquisition, which attempted to establish whether Thomas Malory had owned land at Sudborough in Northamptonshire, refers to the Papworth Malory. Moreover, the enrolment of the Crown's writ to Northamptonshire, the writ itself, and the report of the inquisition jury all describe the alleged property holder as 'Thomas Malory, Miles' (*ibid.* 175). However, Thomas of Papworth was never recorded as a prisoner, and Field (1993: 10) writes that on almost 'every occasion when he is given a rank he calls himself or is called esquire, both during his life (including in his will) and after his death'. The most persuasive evidence is a Chancery petition by his daughter Alice and her husband Christopher Carlisle, and Alice's epitaph, most probably composed by her husband. Christopher Carlisle was one of the country's senior heralds, and thereby in part earned his living by distinguishing social ranks. Field argues that in such a position, Malory's son-in-law would not have been mistaken

over his father-in-law's rank. Which Thomas Malory wrote the *Morte*, therefore, remains uncertain.

Despite such questions of authorship, various historical influences and political allegiances have been imputed to Malory as author of the *Morte*, reconstructed from the alterations made by him to his sources. The *Morte*, therefore, may be said to hint at the time of civil war in which it was created; written in prison during the worst political crisis since the Norman conquest, the narrative is ultimately one of empire and civil war, which Malory inherited and invested with new meanings (see Pochoda 1971; Cooper 1996: 198; Riddy 1996: 55, 64; Grimm 1995a: 5–15; 1992: 1–14). But to what extent does the text possess an autobiographical facet? And accordingly, are the concerns within the narrative relevant to the author's self-definition, particularly in the colophons, and is this related to an underlying political agenda linked to the author's imprisonment?

Dr W. F. Oakeshott discovered in June 1934 what is now referred to as the Winchester manuscript (BL MS Add. 59678), dated c.1469–75. Previously, Caxton's printed edition (published 31 July 1485) was the only extant version. The Winchester manuscript's discovery presented an earlier witness than Caxton's edition, and one that differed in content. Moreover, it contained a number of colophons at the end of several tales either not found or suppressed in Caxton—although the author's name was known from the final colophon of Caxton, missing from Winchester with its final folios (Vinaver and Field 1990: p. cii; Meale 1996: 6–7).

Scholarly discussion of the colophons is usually focused upon whether or not Malory intended his work to be a whole book (Vinaver and Field 1990: pp. xxxv–li; Lumiansky 1964; Painter 1976: 148; Brewer 1963: 41–63; Clough 1986: 139–56; Meale 1996: 3–17). Their secondary interest resides in the biographical information they supply. The manuscript's discovery meant that Malory was found not merely to be a knight praying for 'good delyveraunce' in the spiritual sense that God should deliver him from evil, but that he also wished deliverance from prison. To read Caxton's edition is to read a 'book . . . reduced in to Englysshe by syr Thomas Malory knyght' (Caxton 600); to read the Winchester manuscript is to read the work of an imprisoned and possibly condemned man (compare Appendix 1 and 8; all references to Caxton will be from Matthews and Spisak 1983, quoting page numbers). Yet despite the omission of



the colophons from Caxton, as well as their predominant use of the third person, which could suggest a scribal provenance, their authorial nature has not been questioned (Field 1993: 5 e.g., writes of their 'patent sincerity'). While Caxton's printed edition may greatly differ from what flowed from Malory's pen, the difference between Caxton and Winchester may not simply be that of an editor's version against a manuscript closer to the author's original, especially given, first, the possibility of Winchester's scribes' alteration of their copy; second, the possible variations occurring in the dissemination of Winchester's archetypes; and third, that Caxton had reasons to print from a separate and different 'copye' to Winchester, only consulting the latter (Hellenga 1977: 91-133 demonstrates that Caxton had access to Winchester).<sup>5</sup> Possibly the colophons were interspersed by the scribes of Winchester or those of its archetype, the biographical elements created from a final authorial *explicit*. The first colophon, for example (see App. 1) could be scribal and, just as it now seems to, perhaps did once signal the end of what would be copied from Malory's text, possibly owing to mounting production costs, which were subsequently overcome. Meale (1996: 10) has detailed the expense of creating such a rubricated manuscript, for while rubrication was a common feature of manuscripts, the manner of Winchester's production—inserting names in red *as* the text was written, as opposed to the filling of spaces at the finish—is less usual. Equally it is possible that Winchester was copied from several separate tales, each individually ending with a colophon, which again would explain the first colophon's sense of finality.<sup>6</sup> While this is speculative, it does illustrate the need to avoid assumptions concerning the authorship of each *explicit*, especially given that not all of the colophons carry the same weight. The second and third appear

<sup>5</sup> For arguments supporting the superiority of either Caxton or Winchester, as well as discussion regarding the editing of Malory's original, and the archetype(s) of Winchester and Caxton, see Vinaver and Field (1990: p. cvi); Matthews and Spisak (1983: 618-20; Spisak 1984: 27-30); Moorman (1987: 99-113; 1995: 31-62); Simko (1957); Nakao (1987: 93-109); Noguchi (1977: 72-84); Takamiya (1993: 143-51); Griffith (1990: 75-85); Van Ostade (1995); Meale (1996); Mukai (2000: 24-40); Field (2001: 226-39).

<sup>6</sup> Vinaver and Field (1990: pp. xxxv-xxxvi) argue that Caxton's 'copye' had consisted of several separate tales. Winchester, therefore, possibly regrouped tales that were transcribed individually, just as many of Chaucer's CT were so copied (see Benson and Robinson 1988: 1118-19), as were separate books of Gower's CA (e.g. the Findern manuscript, CUL Ff.1.6, which contains excerpts from Books I, IV, V, and VIII. See Beadle and Owen 1977).

merely to direct the reader (see App. 2 and 3), and although the fourth appears more personal in that it contains a prayer for the author, the wording referring to him in the third person could be scribal (see App. 4). The scribe could simply have taken ‘God send hym good delyveraunce’ from the final colophon, where the author himself requests the reader to pray ‘That God send me good delyveraunce’.

The fifth colophon announces the end of ‘The secunde boke off Syr Trystram’, but that ‘Here is no rehersall of the thirde booke’ (845.346<sup>v</sup>). The word ‘rehersall’ had a wide semantic range at this time, ‘to rehearse’ encompassed ‘to translate’, as well as ‘to tell’, or ‘to narrate’ (Minnis 1988: 100–2, 193). Here, therefore, it could mean that the author confesses that he has not translated (‘rehearsed’) the matter of the third book of the French Prose Tristan, or that the scribe informs the reader that the third book is not to be ‘rehearsed’ or retold here. These words may have been added to Winchester by the scribes after awaiting receipt of such material, for two blank leaves (fos. 347–8) follow before the second scribe begins the Grail Quest on a new quire, suggesting that room was perhaps deliberately left.

Similarly, the fifth colophon again refers to Malory in the third person, as does the sixth, and in the seventh colophon, although it appears Malory himself has written the first part expressed in the first person describing his method of composition (see App. 7), it is odd that the third person is resumed in naming the author and the ensuing tale. In summary, what appears, therefore, to be repeated autocitation might in fact be scribal attribution.

In counter-argument, however, there are a number of factors that suggest that the majority of the colophons are authorial. The first *explicit* (see App. 1) is suggestive of an author referring directly to his source, the manner of its divisions, and, therefore, the manner of his own.<sup>7</sup> And rather than suggesting closure in advising readers to seek other books of Arthur and Lancelot, Malory could merely be signalling that he is moving on to a new source, highlighting the division and ensuing new section within the work (Rumble 1956: 564–6).

Additionally, the first *explicit* contains biographical information,

<sup>7</sup> Malory also uses the phrase: ‘as the Freynshe book seyth’ found in the first colophon a number of times throughout the narrative (533, 540, 555, 1069, 1112, 1123).

that could not have been taken from the authorial final *explicit*, for it alone states that Malory was a 'knyght presoner'. (While colophons 4 and 8 mention the author's desire for deliverance, without the knowledge that Malory was imprisoned, this could simply refer to deliverance from sin.) Although the information that Malory was a prisoner could have been added by a copyist who personally knew Malory's predicament, this seems unlikely. A more probable explanation is that Malory wrote these words himself, and if so, it would seem that he wrote those of colophons 5 and 6, for they, like the first *explicit*, specifically contain the word 'drawyn' for the process of translation and composition. Both the *MED* and *OED* have late-medieval entries for the use of 'drauen' for the process of translation or 'drauer' as a translator; however, the usage of the word (or phrase 'drawyn out of') specifically for translation as opposed to extraction from sources or authorities does not appear to be a common one. Furthermore, following the advice to the reader to seek other books of Lancelot and Arthur, the first *explicit* has: 'For this was drawyn by a knyght presoner . . .' (180.70<sup>v</sup>)—the word 'for' seems explanatory, apologetic even, suggesting that Malory wrote these words, and that while he was writing them he believed he could not continue. If so, then the third-person references to 'Thomas Malleorré, Knyght' throughout the colophons are a formal means of authorial signature. In this respect, although the fifth colophon is written in the formal third person, its prayer: 'Blessed Lorde, have on thy knyght mercy' (845–6.346<sup>v</sup>) presents the sense of direct address to God, suggested by the use of 'thy', the deictic 'you', for grammatically 'you' tacitly invokes 'I' and vice versa (Barthes 1996: 56). Moreover, the information in this colophon that the third book of Tristram will not be 'rehearsed' also appears authorial. For this appears to be Malory's indication that he will not translate the third book of the French prose *Tristan*, because it contained a version of the *Quest* combined with further adventures of Tristram which he did not wish to use. Instead he favoured the French *Queste del Saint Graal* for his version of the Grail story (Vinaver and Field 1990: 1443–4). Furthermore, the break in the seventh colophon between the first-person and third-person address need not indicate scribal intervention when considering that the eighth, and most likely authorial colophon, has the same format (see App.). Indeed, the third-person wording of the seventh colophon does not seem to represent the words of Winchester's scribe because the wording has: 'And here on the othir syde folowyth

the most pyteuous tale' (1154.449<sup>r</sup>), yet the next tale continues on the same page (fo. 449<sup>r</sup>). This suggests the Winchester scribe here blindly copying the colophon (either authorial or scribal) of his archetype, or perhaps overriding its indications for pagination. Either way the wording of the colophon does not match the layout of the manuscript.

I would argue, therefore, that the first, fourth, fifth, sixth, seventh, and eighth colophons are the author's own, and these are the colophons that also contain (auto)biographical expression, albeit in varying degrees. Yet for one of the *Morte's* early readers, Caxton, this aspect did not seem important as part of the work's literary or thematic conception, for his edition omits all the *explicits* except the last. Caxton makes more generally applicable the personal reference of Winchester's: 'Therefore on all synfull, Blyssed Lorde, have on thy knyght mercy' (845–6.346<sup>v</sup>) in the fifth colophon, with: 'Therfor on al synful souls, blessid lord haue Thou mercy' (Caxton 426). Of course, Caxton's main exemplar may have differed from Winchester and not had the colophons, except for the final one, in accordance with which Caxton printed his edition. It is sometimes suggested that Caxton suppressed the majority of the colophons, and the biographical information contained therein, out of a concern to reduce the visibility of Malory's authorship, perhaps for political or 'moral' reasons (Blake 1976: 272–85; Field 1993: 137). But if so, one wonders why Caxton was content to leave extant the final colophon detailing Malory's name and the date of composition, even adding to it his own augmentation of the text's authorship (he writes that the 'book was reduced in to Englysshe by Syr Thomas Malory, knyght as afore is sayd' (Caxton 600)), and why he was also happy to refer to Sir Thomas in the preface (Caxton 2). If Caxton suppressed anything through a deliberate political intention, rather than merely an editorial one, he suppressed the author's situation—that the *Morte* was penned by a prisoner. Either way, it would certainly seem that the autobiographical aspect of the *Morte*, and any possible connection between the narrating 'voice' of the text proper and the 'voice' of the colophons was not considered important.

If the colophons may be said to be authorial, is it, therefore, correct to assume (as Caxton seems to have done) that there is no thematic, autobiographical, or political relation between them and the main narrative? The *Morte's* narrator has received very little discussion; the sparse scholarship that exists is primarily concerned

with issues of *style*, the *mode* of narration (Field 1971: 144–5; Lambert 1975: 24, 179; Grimm 1995b: 63–75). Indeed, critics do not generally speak of the *Morte* as possessing a distinct narrator (Pochoda 1971: 18). Yet the text may be said to contain a speaking personality: the narrative voice frequently becomes a *narratorial* voice (Lawton 1985: pp. x, xi, xii); it is possible to differentiate between a persona and—in Bakhtinian terms—a voice, particularly a displaced voice. A displaced voice is usually classed as the utterance of a ‘hidden’ narrating agent or presence, particularly one that ‘knows’ something for, on behalf of, or more than, the characters (Kimmelman 1996: 15). The *Morte* frequently evokes such a displaced voice in the use of phrases such as ‘as if’. When the text states of Sir Bors: ‘And anone he harde a grete noyse and a grete cry *as* all the fyndys of helle had bene aboute hym’ (966), it suggests the omniscience of a narrating agent or presence, who knows how the sound seemed to Sir Bors, even if that agent does not refer directly and self-consciously to himself, or to the reader. Yet in addition the text projects a narrator who speaks directly to the reader. Such addresses may be in the second person: ‘Now shall ye here . . .’ (490), or in the first person: ‘Now leve we here . . .’ (481). Furthermore, the words: ‘and at the day assigned, as the romaynes me tellys . . .’ (245) extend beyond simple reference to a source by a displaced voice, for the personal pronoun ‘me’ emphasizes the presence of a narrating subject.<sup>8</sup> The ‘I’ also addresses itself to the reader relaying personal opinion: ‘nowadayes men can nat love sevennyght but they muste have all their desyres’ (1119). Such commentary and evaluation reiterates that a person possessing a value-system, rather than merely a displaced voice, speaks. He communicates opinion, not merely description.

The narrator, therefore, is not simply a narrative agent, the ‘linguistic subject or function which expresses itself in the language that constitutes the text’ (Bal 1997: 16), but rather ‘a *person* who narrates’ (Wales 1989: 316), an ‘external narrator’, one who does not belong in the fictional world of his characters, who clarifies the motives of the figures he describes, usually only partially—through implied *witness*, particularly sight-witness. Furthermore, the narra-

<sup>8</sup> The text, therefore, appears diegetic, as opposed to mimetic: the former linked to the authenticating presence of the narrator leads to perceiving the fictional world as being uttered; the latter minimizes the function of the speech situation, and renders the discourse as transparent—the reader conceives it as ‘real’ (Lorrigio 1996: 148).

tor may ostensibly be read as the author, particularly given his frequent references to his source material. Moreover, the personal engagement in the *fabula* with the concerns of rank and imprisonment reflect the manner in which Malory defines himself in the first colophon as a 'knyght' and a 'presoner'.

His repeated self-labelling as a knight appears linked to latent ideological concerns with social status and rank throughout the *fabula* (Riddy 1987: 84–112) reflected in the narrator's direct address: 'Wherefore, as me semyth, all jantyllumen that beryth olde armys ought of ryght to honoure sir Trystrams for the goodly teamys that jantyllumen have and use and shall do unto the Day of Dome, that thereby in a maner all men of worshyp may discever a jantylluman frome a yoman and a yoman frome a vylayne' (375). The interest here lies not merely in the way the text reflects fifteenth-century social concerns, but that Malory specifically invokes his own opinion, making this explicit by the words: 'as me semyth'. It is more than a case of Malory asserting the relevance of the text to the world of the reader, it also implies he belongs to that group of 'jantyllumen' that bear old arms, defining himself in terms of this ideal and idealized community.

His self-definition as a prisoner connects with the narratorial interjection on the nature of being ill whilst in prison, which seems to possess self-reference: 'So sir Trystram endured there grete payne, for syknes had undirtake hym, and that ys the grettist payne a presoner may have. For all the whyle a presonere may have hys helth of body, he may endure undir the mercy of God and in hope of good delyveraunce; but whan syknes towchith a presoners body, than may a presonere say all welth ys hym berauffte' (540). The specific use of the words 'good delyveraunce' also suggest a conflation between cited-author and narrator, for these words are used in the *explicit*s themselves, notably the fourth (363) and the last (1260). Furthermore, the phrase 'knyght presoner' from the first *explicit* (180) is used similarly within the narrative (256 and 469) possibly implying an identification with those knights imprisoned throughout the *fabula*. The above instances suggest a continuation of expression between the voice of the *explicit*s and that of the narrative. They exist in a dialogic relationship.

The *explicit*s, therefore, occasionally collapse the boundaries between the worlds of the text, narrator-author, and reader. The suggestion is that Malory cites himself not as a literary character but

as the author proper. Consequently he exists for the reader beyond the linguistic code of the story—he subsists as an extra-textual sign, for while there is clearly a personality speaking, a textual projection of Malory himself, the narrator is not consciously personified externally. He differs, for example, from ‘Geffrey’ the fictional character who somewhat resembles his author and who ‘incarnates himself’ in *The House of Fame* (Owen 1986: 179), and as such, there is no deliberate ironic gap created between narrator and author. This is largely because of the role he claims for himself as a chronicler or historian (Field 1971: 144–5). Malory’s chronicle-style, as Grimm (1995b: 63) has noted, lends an ‘aura of authenticity to the whole narrative . . . an important element in the voice of the historian’. This authenticity lends a sense of credibility, meaning that what Malory utters of himself elsewhere, whether in the narrative itself or in the colophons, is read without irony. The *Morte*, therefore, contains in its narration, subjective language that defines a *speaking* subject, and this subject is tacitly presented as Sir Thomas Malory.

In the *explicit*s the reader is party to Malory’s prayers as he reveals his anxiety over his imprisoned situation, and the state of his sinful soul. I disagree with Field when he states that there ‘is a propriety to be observed here, and especially in prayer, which prohibits any degree of intimacy with the reader’, and when he writes ‘Malory has no personal relationship with the reader in the *explicit*s’ (Field 1971: 155). It appears rather, that the reader voyeuristically ‘sees’ and colludes in the intimate moment. Felicity Riddy has noted a solipsistic element when Malory speaks in the *explicit*s that may be connected with his situation of imprisonment, that he seems to imagine an audience ‘out there’. She notes the ambiguous syntax in the wording of: ‘For this was drawyn by a knyght presoner, sir Thomas Malleorré, that God send hym good recover. Amen’ (180.70<sup>v</sup>), and argues that this may suggest that the work was ‘undertaken to earn deliverance, as if the writing itself was an act of supplication’ (Riddy 1987: 44). The use of the third person means that Malory appears to proffer himself objectively to the reader, not only augmenting the keen sense of isolation, but creating the sense that he sees himself—his role as author, his predicament as knight-prisoner—from the outside, as the implied audience view this.

The text, therefore, possesses authorial self-presentation, and this extends beyond putting a name to a text simply in terms of allocation of authorship. Rather, textual naming appears to serve an extra-

textual role. But what is this? First, it is critical to note how central naming, or the clarification of identity, is to Malory's ideology throughout the text. Critics have noted Malory's tendency to cut sources and give names to those characters remaining (Pochoda 1971: 10). In this respect, Andrew Lynch (1997: 4) writes: 'this habit ensured that a name became in Malory's text an index of power and prestige, something seen as good in itself' and that the unnamed fall into a mass or blur of 'squires, dwarves, churls, and a predictably large number of anonymous ladies, damsels and gentlewomen'. Lynch also notes the preoccupation with naming and therefore, irrevocably with status, inside the *fabula*—a name is deferred to, in order to determine behaviour. The scribes of Winchester, or whoever commissioned it, understood the importance of naming, demonstrated by the trouble taken to render each name in red ink. Naming was obviously felt to be of consequence, and as with the identities of his characters, Malory's name in the *explicit*s is also written in red, and in the display script used for the names in the *fabula*.

At the time of the *Morte*'s composition, names held great social importance. There was a need to be of good name in a society of growing class-consciousness, subsequent to the fluidity and instability of class-divisions in the late-fourteenth and fifteenth centuries (Du Boulay 1970: 73). Class-consciousness took a different form in the gentry: while the gentry's betters were differentiated by title and name, as a member of the gentry one's name was still important, because the expansion of this class created a desire among its members to assert an internal hierarchy. This was expressed by the names and reputations of its members, one's name carried with it notions of lifestyle and wealth, the emphasis was on being *known* as a gentleman (Starkey 1981: 227; A. Lynch 1997: 9–10).

Malory's reiterated autocitation in part appears a response to current values placed upon name and status. The potential impact Malory hoped his identity might elicit upon an audience, or even his captors, is revealed by the fact that Balin a 'poore knyght' (62) imprisoned at Arthur's court, is freed from prison on the basis of his name and reputation: 'Balyne . . . delyverde oute of preson, for he was a good man named of his body, and he was borne in Northeumbirlande' (63). I disagree, therefore, with Field when he states that Malory's third-person reiteration of his own title and status, is merely 'for the sake of dignity'; I also differ from Field when he writes that the colophons are not integral to the text, but are



merely part of the *Morte* in the way in which a dedication is part of a modern book, 'a curtain-call' (Field 1971: 154–5). In the manuscript the colophons are not presented as separate from the text in the way they are in modern editions; rather they flow on directly from the narrative, as though integral to it. If the manuscript can reveal very little in this respect as to authorial intention, it does at least display the attitude of the scribes as primary readers. For them it appears that the first-person speaker throughout the narration and in the *explicits* occupied the same textual level, and that the latter were considered an integral element of the text.

Malory's self-naming appears bound up with how he desires his status to be perceived by his readership, his community, against which he defines himself, in the repetition of his name and status, by his self-definition as 'knyght presoner' (180), and pursuant oblique references to his imprisoned status. The references relate him to his audience, as, through notions of membership and exclusion, he defines his role in society while simultaneously he presents himself as excluded, cut off through imprisonment. In this respect, Riddy has highlighted that the description of knight-prisoners in the *fabula* affects how we read Malory as author and his predicament. The fact that such knight-prisoners are kept in abject circumstances is an affront to their rank. The outrage lies in the suggested contrast between their previous status, an honourable one as knights, and their loss of this through imprisonment. Malory's self-description as a knight-prisoner similarly pulls in both directions (Riddy 1987: 94–5).

If Malory sought to assert his status by reiterating his title and knighthood, why did he mention that he was a prisoner? For while critics such as Riddy have speculated on the reasons for Malory's self-definition as 'knight', the reasons for his self-representation as 'prisoner' have not been discussed. Was this to impact in some way upon his predicament, that he believed penning such a work would elicit a change in his situation?

Field argues that since there are references to imprisonment 'scattered throughout' the colophons, the whole work 'must have been written in prison' (Field 1993: 131). Griffith, however, suggests that Malory wrote most of the work when at liberty, completing it during a period of house-arrest in 1469. He argues that the colophons were added after the completion of the whole work, a situation that accounts for the imprisoned situation suggested in the

first and fourth *explicit*s, and implied in the author's expressed need for mercy in the fifth, sixth, and seventh colophons, as well as that of the final colophon (Griffith 1981: 169). What does seem certain is that Malory was in prison at the completion of the work, suggested by the final colophon. But it is also possible that he suffered intermittent imprisonment, for there appears a preoccupation with imprisonment quite early on in the story of Balin (62–3) and again in the middle of the work, as seen above, in the tale of Tristram, both of which appear almost personally concerned with loss of reputation and financial status.

Malory's presentation of imprisonment in the narrative and his repeated autocitation and allusions to his own incarceration beg the question as to whether there was a political/utilitarian motivation behind his literary endeavour. Yet while the text conveys a view of Malory as a man writing out of and during the experience of suffering imprisonment, these elements do not seem sufficiently central, elaborated, or petitionary to suggest a political self-presentation.

As mentioned above, the *Morte* reveals a preoccupation with rank, possibly reflective of Malory's own situation, as a knight above many of his contemporaries, even readers, and yet as a prisoner, possibly without wealth in a society where ownership conferred status (Riddy 1987: 96). Yet a further facet is introduced in Malory's defining himself in relation to God: the subject of equality and sameness. Lee Patterson has noted in expressions of late-medieval selfhood the 'dialectic between an inward subjectivity and an external world that alienates it from both itself and its divine source', a conception of selfhood 'typically understood as a dialectic between the Christian subject and this objectified historical identity' (Patterson 1991: 8). It appears Malory's self-definition in the *explicit*s reflects this dialectic. He defines himself in horizontal comparison to and differentiation from others through status (a historical individual). Yet he also defines himself in a vertical relation to God through his desire not just for physical deliverance from prison, but deliverance from sin, iterating a sense of *communitas* (a Christian subject). As such, there appears a possible conflation of literal imprisonment and the Platonic notion of the imprisonment of sin and corporeal existence, seen particularly in the ambiguity of 'delyveraunce' in the fourth and last colophons (see App.).

Malory's self-definition, therefore, incorporates an 'autobiographical axiology' (Vitz 1989: 1) of self-definition—a horizontal

axis of comparison (resulting socially in hierarchy) and a vertical axis of defining oneself in relation to God (resulting socially in sameness, community, and equality). In the coexistence of these axes in late-medieval subjectivity, there is also a tension between exaltation and abasement, for as abasement was so tied to humility, humiliation on one axis can be directly tied to exaltation on another. Malory's almost oxymoronic self-definition of prestige *and* abasement/humility ('knyght presoner') possibly should be read as a social and yet also spiritual exaltation—as a man of rank, and yet as one who also humbly and nobly suffers misfortune.<sup>9</sup>

Whether or not Malory consciously created such a rhetorical claim for himself is perhaps uncertain. However, it does seem that studying the relationship between the self-utterance and autocitation in the colophons and the expressed ideology in the text reveals Malory's motivation for repeatedly citing his name and invoking his identity. The connection comes in the tale of Tristram, where Malory states: 'For, as bookis reporte, of sir Trystram cam all the good termys of venery and of huntyng . . . and many other blastis and termys, that all maner jantylnen hath cause to the worldes ende to prayse sir Trystram and to pray for his soule. AMEN, SAYDE SIR THOMAS MALLEORRÉ' (682–83). The connection, therefore, seems both secularly status-conscious and also eschatological; not simply a desire to be remembered as a 'jantylman', but to be remembered after death, a textual immortality like Tristram's own, the claim Malory openly and simply makes in his final colophon: 'I praye you all jentylmen and jentylwymmen that redeth this book . . . pray for me whyle I am on lyve that God sende me good delyveraunce. And whan I am deed, I praye you all praye for my soule' (1260). It may simply be that imprisoned Malory hoped for 're-entry' into the community of gentry against which he defines himself, while at the same time, and possibly also facing death, the *explicit*s belong to an earlier era's breaking of authorial anonymity: that if an author finally chose to give his name, he did so 'to gain forgiveness of his sins through the intercession of his hearers and readers' (Curtius 1990: 515).

Many critics, however, have sought to find in the text a political interest. While Malory's source material was certainly refracted through the prism of his own experience of living through the Wars

<sup>9</sup> For a different reading to mine of 'knyght presoner' see Cannon (2000: 160, 162) who reads 'knyght' primarily as a chivalric term, rather than a social one of rank, and 'presoner' as specifically a criminal.

of the Roses—that he saw similarities between the Arthurian tale of civil war and the contemporary one witnessed around him—it possibly does not justify readings of the *Morte* as a social indictment, a political allegory, or a *roman à clef*. However, critics have discussed the nature of Malory's own political allegiance, whether Lancastrian or Yorkist, and have argued that the author has deliberately altered his sources in order to display his political loyalty. To the suggestions of the *Morte*'s pro-Lancastrian allusions suggested by critics earlier this century,<sup>10</sup> Eugène Vinaver has forwarded further arguments; Malory's occasional introduction of place-names, for example, has been used to reconstruct the author's affiliations and personal understanding of historical events.<sup>11</sup>

More recently, however, several critics have questioned such alleged pro-Lancastrian allusions, arguing instead for a Yorkist sympathy.<sup>12</sup> Griffith, for example, argues that Arthur possesses a greater resemblance to Edward IV than to Henry VI (Griffith 1974: 375). Ann Astell (1999: 138–41, 158) concurs, stating that Edward was being heralded as the new Arthur at the time, and she argues, therefore, along with Griffiths, that the Yorkist allusions imply that the man who wrote the text was Thomas Malory of Papworth St Agnes, and this accords with their views regarding the *Morte*'s authorship. For both critics the work provides a window through which to view the historical Thomas Malory; it evinces his personal opinion, his political allegiance, his response to contemporary propaganda and historic occurrence. However, their argument runs: because Thomas Malory of Papworth was a Yorkist, the book must display a Yorkist bias; because the book displays a Yorkist bias, it must have issued from the pen of Thomas of Papworth. Equally, and for the same circular reasons, it has been argued by others that the *Morte* contains the personal and political slant of Sir Thomas Malory of Newbold Revel.

<sup>10</sup> See Schofield (1912: 92–3); Aurner (1933: 362–91); Stewart (1935: 204–5).

<sup>11</sup> Vinaver and Field (1990: pp. xxv–xxvi, 1368, 1396–8, and 1649 ff.). Others have also posited a Lancastrian bias. E. D. Kennedy (1970), for example, has posited that Malory's treatment of Arthur's marriage to Guenevere is a Lancastrian comment on Edward IV's marriage to Elizabeth Wydeville.

<sup>12</sup> Field (1995); Griffith (1974); Astell (1999). B. Kennedy (1985: 55) posits that Arthur may be modelled on Edward IV. Indeed, B. Kennedy (1985: 345) concludes her book by finding in 'Malory's triumvirate of types—Arthur, Gawain and Lancelot—a reflection of the triumvirate which dominated the Yorkist court: King Edward IV, his brother Richard, Duke of York, and his brother-in-law, Anthony Wydeville, Earl Rivers'.

A political reading is, therefore, unstable, subjectively predetermined by decisions as to authorship. Such knowledge does not reside in textual reiteration. Even the lament regarding the changing loyalty of the English towards their monarchs is sufficiently open to refuse specific reference: 'Lo ye all Englysshemen, se ye nat what a myschyff here was? For he that was the moste kynge and nobelyst knyght of the worlde . . . and yet myght nat thes Englyshemen holde them contente with hym . . . Alas! thys ys a greate defaughte of us Englysshemen, for there may no thyng us please no terme' (1229).<sup>13</sup> Rather, this moment appears more clearly concerned with human mutability, connecting with the *Morte's* wider theme of transience—a theme perhaps best captured in the much-cited lament at the changing nature of love (1119–20), in Ector's elegiac lament for Lancelot on Lancelot's death (1259), and again in the overwhelming loss at the narrative's close for the passing of not just a ruler but also a civilization.

Given such a thematic repetition and consistency, one that appears clearer than any political or topical import the book might contain, I would argue that Malory's self-definition does not appear a politicized one. Rather, Malory's named textual identity as 'a writer in prison', as a knight without status, and as a man aware of the transience of his own life, appears more than a literary trope, but rather a harsh reality. It is one that reflects the larger themes of the *fabula*: the transience and vicissitudes of life, the passing of historical identities, and yet a 'dehistoricized' concern with Christian eternity and remembrance. It appears his self-definition is formed not only in relation to his audience and their perception, but in relation to his characters throughout the narrative. In the *explicit*s, Malory's concern with endings, as well as the seemingly autobiographical interest in mutability, and in deliverance from sin as well as from prison, may, therefore, be read as operating in a dialogic relationship with the narrative.

<sup>13</sup> Critics have stated that this refers to the overthrow of Henry VI. Griffith (1981: 381–2) argues it refers to the growing dissatisfaction with Edward IV and the resurgence of Lancastrian power.

## II

*Conclusions*

The texts I have discussed were composed during a time when ecclesiastical concerns were rooted within secular politics, and political affiliation was defined by personal motives, yet outwardly based upon conventions of knighthood and loyalty, which operated as common ideals and ethics for knights, magnates, civil servants, and the Court. These ideals conveyed suppositions of personal loyalty that affected not only history, but also literature.

These ideals were never so formalized as in the reign of Richard II (Mathew 1968: 114); they formed an ethical system that gave predominance to personal interactions built on loyalty. Usk uses this ethical system, incorporating it into his text in his development of an autobiographical identity whose values comply with the moral integrity preached and required by the philosophy of his work. The *Testament* is a conspicuously derivative text, the curious blend of which appears founded upon the political situation of the author. The impetus behind the text's creation is more than purely philosophical; an additional motivation can be found in Usk's hope of manipulating literary convention to personal advantage, in the construction of a favourable literary identity, the desired effect of which is to persuade the reader of his worth, loyalty, allegiance, and commitment to the 'common good', and also to justify his actions against Northampton. All these aspects are affiliated to Usk's imprisonment, as a literal situation he seeks to negotiate, and as a figurative trope enabling him to express his sense of separation from the Margarine, and, thereby, his commitment to an ideal.

Similarly, James I places his textual identity in the *Quair* within gleanings from traditional discourse and literary convention, notably the writings of Boethius, Chaucer, and Gower, to construct his identity. The *Quair* also reveals a concern with presenting its author's autobiographical identity in a favourable light akin to the *Testament*, but whereas the *Testament* displays an emphasis on those qualities that best become a servant, notably fidelity and the willingness to serve regardless of reward, the *Quair* places value on those that best suit a ruler or king: fidelity, maturity, self-governance, and the willingness to heed wise counsel. Like Usk, James develops

these qualities within the presented situation of having suffered imprisonment and its morally refining effects, and also within the realm of love (both earthly and divine) explicating the social and ethical importance of serving such love. In doing so, as with Usk's text, the public and political relevance of private, seemingly solipsistic, feeling is foregrounded.

In contrast, Charles d'Orléans's *English Book* displays a pseudo-autobiographical, playful exploitation of the space between narrator and author. There appears no authorial identity constructed for political gain in the face of incarceration. The relationship between Charles's captivity and the images of incarceration is apolitically and primarily thematic. The author's actual imprisonment appears redeployed metaphorically to convey the narrator-lover's sense of loss and separation.

The texts of Thorpe and Wyche manifest similar motivations to the *Testament* and the *Quair*, in that each presents a politically advantageous portrayal of its persecuted and imprisoned author. Both Lollard texts also deploy intertextuality to present their respective authors as exemplary and representative, yet also as politically individualized. While the influence of Boethius's legacy of the writer in prison is not relevant to these texts, other hagiographic textual figures are, as are the Pauline 'captivity epistles' for Wyche's imprisoned self-presentation, which in turn probably influenced Thorpe's *Testimony*. The construction by Wyche and Thorpe of such literary personas seems motivated by the desire to persuade their envisaged audience. Moreover, the persuasiveness of their steadfast imprisoned identities may have had a considerable impact in terms of counter-propaganda to that of the ecclesiastical authorities, namely in the Church's publicizing of Lollard recantations.

Ashby's textual self-construction in the *Reflections* demonstrates a similar Boethian influence to that of the *Testament* and the *Quair* in terms of a credible and persuasive imprisoned author. Added to the tacit influence of the Boethian figure, Ashby also carves an authoritative textual identity through the careful negotiation of his authorial role. The presentation of his imprisoned identity may also be authoritatively underpinned by allusions to the anonymous *Lament*, then thought to have been by Chaucer. The authority with which Ashby imbues his prisoner-self within the *Reflections* is exploited in terms of his Lancastrian affiliations, for the *Reflections* arguably formed an authoritative 'prologue' to his political advisory

texts. Furthermore, in the *Reflections*, Ashby exhorts the value of patience and presents himself as a model of this virtue, one that he subsequently discusses in his advisory works as prerequisite in rulers and servants alike.

Lastly, although Malory's self-presentation is not elaborated and does not professedly draw upon literary precedent or authority, nevertheless the presentation of an imprisoned and autobiographical identity in the colophons, though not necessarily related to political affiliations or concerns, may have had a utilitarian motivation in terms of audience persuasion. Malory's subjectivity not only mirrors the concerns of his *fabula*—recollection of the historically specific, and yet overriding this, earthly mutability—his repeated auto-citation and his self-definition as 'knyght presoner' are possibly also attempts to elicit his readers' sympathy, and anticipate their remembrance of him. His self-definition simultaneously invokes social hierarchy and Christian *communitas*; through his reiterated identity as knight he attempts 're-entry' into the former, and through his repeated desire for 'delyveraunce' from imprisonment, earthly suffering, and sin, he establishes his place in the latter.

Each of the chapters here largely stands alone as an exploration shaped by the examination of the author's situation at the time of literary creation, rather than advancing collectively a 'grand narrative' of self-representation within late-medieval literature of imprisonment. However, the similarities between these 'prison texts' and the emergent shared issues determine that the texts are worthy of study as a group.

Each of the texts discussed here, with the exception of the *English Book*, shares a fundamental similarity: the construction of an autobiographical identity elicited by the author's experience of imprisonment and primarily constructed with the persuasion in view of an intended audience. Examining each text from the predominant perspective of 'the writer in prison' allows a fresh analysis of the relationship between the author and implied audience. It also reveals that, within the conjoining of imprisonment and literature, late-medieval prison texts with an individualized first-person narrator are invariably autobiographical. For aside from Charles's pseudo-autobiographical narrator, the texts invite autobiographical readings, creating, without irony, a historicized, often self-named self-identity. Such authorial self-construction appears to possess, in varying degrees, a political or self-interested motivation related to



the situation of imprisonment each author suffers, in order to impact upon extra-textual concerns.

Furthermore, the authors appear to exploit to a differing extent the fact that writing from prison is an inherently credible writing stance, made so by literary precedent (whether Boethius's *Consolation* or St Paul's *Epistles*), or simply by association with penitence, confession, and truth-telling. The author is able to depict himself as loyal, trustworthy, self-governed, and steadfast in the face of oppression—a self-portrayal of having learnt that adversity is a better teacher than prosperity, and that ill-fortune, in this instance imprisonment, has been educational. Furthermore, even in the *English Book*, arguably a pseudo-autobiographical and apolitical text, the use of imprisonment as a favourable rhetorical stance is employed within the presented lover-narrator's situation to augment and express his separation and suffering. Within the other texts, however, the presentation of an imprisoned 'self' appears to have been deployed in an attempt to accentuate authorial sincerity and also to stake a claim for the author's exemplary standing, notably through expressions of patient suffering and constancy of allegiance in the face of opposition, operating as a textual strategy of political self-promotion. Prison suffering persuasively conveys an admirable spiritual humility, and the redeployment of this for political ends suggests a fresh slant upon the examination of early literary self-fashioning, and a new aspect to the discussion of late-medieval petitionary verse. The author's identity is designed to be persuasive, either to override the negative reputation caused by his imprisonment and promulgated by those who have imprisoned him, or to persuade his 'captors' or 'opponents' themselves.

The discussion of the texts as a group reveals similarities in each author's expression of imprisonment as embracing literal incarceration, as well as metaphorical meanings. James presents himself as comprehending through Christian love the responsibility attached to human free will and, therefore, the true nature of liberation. Charles equates his incarceration with a self-definition as a prisoner of love. Both Christian and courtly elements are present in the *Testament's* figurative use of imprisonment, where on one level it expresses the constraints preventing Usk's love-service to the Margarite-pearl, and yet on another, suggests the vicissitudes of earthly suffering. The latter appears an aspect similarly embraced by Malory in his equal concern to be delivered from sin as well as from prison, an aspect

gaining fullest expression in Ashby's *Reflections*, where imprisonment appears most clearly separated into differing levels of representation: literal, allegorical, and tropological. Similarly, for the Lollards Wyche and Thorpe, the experience of imprisonment becomes a means of expressing a typological persecution. Yet such expressions of imprisonment do not relinquish the author's literal claims to imprisonment and the literary presentation of this.

The intertextuality of each text is arguably related to the construction of the latter and the author's textual identity. The deployment of contemporary discourse, whether legal language, or the rhetoric of fidelity, as well as the invocation of textual traditions (Boethius, Chaucer, Gower), or hagiographic narratives, is less rooted in concerns with aesthetics or literary conventions than in the politicized construction of a self-justifying or self-validating identity. This is particularly the case with the *Testament*, the *Quair*, and the *Reflections*, in the similar usage of Boethius's *Consolation*. For Usk this is a favourable self-equation with Boethius as an exemplary figure. Similarly, in the *Quair*, the poet's interest in the *Consolation* is as much to be found in identification with the Boethian prisoner as with responding to the philosophy Boethius's text expounds. In the *Reflections*, Ashby's development of an onomastic imprisoned persona as an exemplary, pedagogical figure and his reiteration of maxims from the *Consolation* similarly recall the Boethian prisoner. These chapters reveal, therefore, a previously unexamined medieval reading, or 'use', of Boethius's *Consolation*: the influence is from the imprisoned Boethian figure and the medieval view of him, as much as, if not more than, the text's philosophy. The authors redeploy the *Consolation* as an autobiographical model, motivated to do so in varying degrees by political interests, primarily to persuade the audience of their moral worth, and also in Ashby's case, to claim authority.

Given the emergent similarities between these texts, should a new genre of late-medieval prison-writing be recognized? Particularly given that from the late-fourteenth century onwards there newly appears a peppering of texts claiming to have been written from prison. Certainly the period saw a coinciding historical 'flowering' of imprisonment (E. M. Peters 1995: 34–5), and possibly this led to a new growth in such literature. However, it may be argued that the texts share as many discrepancies as they do similarities, with other genres predominating.

The difficulty of allotting such texts to one genre of 'prison-writing' given their intrinsic diversities recalls the questionable categorization of a variety of poems within the genre of late-medieval dream-visions, and the problem for 'scholars attempting a unified survey or description of the genre'.<sup>14</sup> J. Stephen Russell stipulates that 'to be a dream vision (or to be a poem of any predefined kind), a poem must *both* contain certain motifs *and* be the product of a poet's intention to follow a tradition or imitate a generic model' (Russell 1988: 2-5). Yet his reading of the genre, or genres in general, seems naïvely to follow an understanding of types of literature as 'pre-defined', an approach that overlooks the role of reader-response in ascribing genre, as well as the complex and multifarious reasons for late-medieval intertextuality and literary allusion, which may frequently be revisionist. The difficulties of ascertaining a dominant principle of generic unity are large, therefore, for as A. C. Spearing writes, 'the dream-framework may be used for a number of different purposes, and in some cases, no doubt, it is no more than a literary convention, taken over through sheer inertia on the poet's part' (Spearing 1976: 4).

However, there are some crucial similarities between vision poems which do not appear to exist within late-medieval prison writing. For not only do such vision poems share similar precedents, such as Macrobius's *Commentarium in Somnium Scipionis*, the Revelations of St John, *Le Roman de la Rose*, and even Dante's *Divine Comedy*,<sup>15</sup> but also there is an apparent continuation between them demonstrated through direct or indirect allusion, a continuation even readily witnessed in one of the texts discussed here: the effect, for example, of Chaucer's dream-poetry upon Lydgate's *Temple of Glass*, and subsequently the influence of both poets' texts upon the *Quair*, all of which contain the dream vision and may be classed accordingly. In contrast, it is difficult to trace similar links and allusions between late-medieval prison texts—they do not strictly form a cumulative tradition in which each may be said to redefine or develop the thought or concerns of its predecessors. None of the

<sup>14</sup> K. L. Lynch (1988: 1-2, 4, 7). The diversity of dream poetry leads to Lynch herself resorting to the delineation of a subgenre for the purposes of discussion. She differentiates, therefore, between the philosophical vision, the subject of her study, and the courtly love vision.

<sup>15</sup> For discussion see Russell (1988: 82-114), and K. L. Lynch (1988: 13-14, 49, 51, 66, 74 ff., 113-45, 190-5).

prison texts that are the subject of study here demonstrate a conclusive or clear knowledge of each other. The commonality which may be said to exist between several of the texts, such as between those of Usk, James I, and Ashby in the political redeployment of the trope of the Boethian-prisoner, arguably testifies to the pervasive and lasting influence of Boethius's *Consolation*, as opposed to the construction of a new genre. In other words, they share a common source in the *Consolation*, but they do not significantly comment on each other.

Despite such reservations, however, within recent genre criticism it is generally accepted that genres have a conventional rather than an intrinsic justification and that the attribution of genre is seen as the provenance of the interpretative community (Hawthorn (1994: 141); genres are not absolute, immutable, or timeless a priori classes of literature, but evolve slowly over time (K. L. Lynch 1988: 5). As Joe Foley (1995: 174) writes: 'Genres are dynamic, responding to the dynamics of other parts of social systems. Hence genres change historically, and new genres emerge over time so that what appears as 'the same' generic form at one level has recognisably distinct forms in different social groups according to the dominant ideology of that group.' In other words, genre categorization is founded in reader-response and in the ideological influences of the reader/reading group. This is appropriately demonstrated by a recent essay by Spearing concerned with the *Quair*, in which Spearing revises his earlier classification of the text as 'an unsuccessful Chaucerian dream-poem'. He writes: 'I now believe I was mistaken both to read *The Kingis Quair* as a dream-poem and to see James as having an uncertain grasp of the dream-poem conventions established by Chaucer . . . [James] does indeed depend on these conventions but, far from lacking mastery over them, he adapts them creatively to a somewhat different purpose' (Spearing 2000: 126 revising his earlier argument in Spearing 1976: 182-3). Whereas the texts here studied, therefore, would have been generically grouped in separate categories by critics of preceding decades—Usk's *Testament* and James I's *Quair*, for example, were discussed specifically as Chaucerian texts—today with the emphasis upon new historical and political readings, critics will find greater reason to delineate new genres. As de Looze argues, reception (and with this, conception) of genre is an institutional affair, 'matters of political hegemony and social control are at play, however implicitly, in any interpretation . . . Other periods of peoples may read a work differently, and with

equal validity' (de Looze 1997: 17). Defining genres, therefore, forces us to recognize the historicity of any interpretation.

Furthermore, perception of a genre is enabled only at the cost of excluding those elements that do not 'conform' to the generic group. As de Looze writes, eliminate enough characteristics and any two objects, no matter how disparate, can be said to resemble one another, a nettlesome topical area of philosophical debate for the fourteenth century, witnessed in the writings of William of Ockham concerned with universals, and containing his attack upon the genericity of genres (ibid. 19). Definitions of genre, therefore, repeatedly negotiate between what Hans Robert Jauss terms 'the Scylla of nominalist skepticism . . . and the Charybdis of regression into timeless typologies' (Jauss 1982: 78). As such, therefore, generic categories will always be evolving, a transition in understanding that has led from the nineteenth-century explication of genre in the creation of stable taxonomies, to the more recent analysis of generic modes of reception, and from there to the notion of genre no longer as essentially static, but as dynamic (de Looze 1997: 19; Foley 1995: 174). Given this position in genre theory, therefore, together with the fact that, despite their disparities, a number of similar concerns are evident in these 'prison texts', they may indeed be categorized as a genre. Or perhaps more accurately they may be grouped as an 'interpretant' genre (Eco 1981: 180–98), a genre comprised of those elements that transgress other more traditional categories and which mediate the reader's reception of the prevailing genre. In each text not only are there—as Usk writes—many 'thinges wimpled and folde' (III.ix.1105), but the ascription of meanings and the attribution of genre remain subject to individual readings. Arguably this is something recognized by Usk in his expressed 'desyre' for 'a good reder' (III.ix.1114) and a 'sleight [*insightful*] inseeer' (III.i.104).

## Appendix

1. Here endyth this tale, as the Freynshe booke seyth, fro the maryage of kynge Uther unto Kyng Arthure that regned aftir him and ded many batayles.

And this booke endyth whereas sir Launcelot and sir Trystrams com to courte. Who that woll make ony more lette him seke other bookis of kynge Arthure or of sir Launcelot or sir Trystrams; for this was drawyn by a knyght presoner, sir Thomas Malleorré, that God sende hym good recover. Amen.

Explicit

(180) (fo. 70<sup>v</sup>)

2. Here endyth the tale of the noble kynge Arthure that was Emperoure hymself thorow dygnyte of his hondys.

And here folowyth aftir many noble talys of sir Launcelot de Lake.

Explycit the Noble Tale betwyxt

Kynge Arthure and Lucius the Emperour of Rome.

(247) (fo. 96<sup>r</sup>)

3. Explicit a Noble Tale of Sir Launcelot du Lake. Here folowyth sir Garethis tale of Orkeney that was callyd Bewmaynes by sir Kay.

(287, 293) (fo. 113<sup>r</sup>)

4. And I pray you all that redyth this tale to pray for hym that this wrote, that God send hym good delyveraunce sone and hastely. Amen.

(363) (fol. 148<sup>r</sup>)

Here endyth The Tale of Sir Gareth of Orkeney. Here begynnyth the first boke of syr Trystrams de Lyones, and who was his fadir and hys modyr, and how he was borne and fostyrd, and how he was made knyght of kyng Marke of Cornuayle.

(371) (fo. 148<sup>v</sup>)

5. Here endyth the secunde boke off syr Trystram de Lyones, whyche drawyn was oute of freynshe by Sir Thomas Malleorré, knyght, as Jesu be hys helpe. Amen.

But here ys no rehersall of the thirde booke.

But here folowyth the noble tale off the Sankegreall, whyche called ys the holy vessell and the sygnyfycacion of blyssed bloode off oure Lorde Jesu Cryste, whyche was brought into thys londe by Joseph off Aramathye.

Therefore on all synfull, blyssed Lorde, have on thy knyght mercy. Amen.

(845–6) (fo. 346<sup>v</sup>)

6. Thus endith the tale of the Sankgreal that was breffly drawy[n] oute of Freynshe—which ys a tale cronycled for one of the trewyst and of the holyst that ys in thys worlde—by sir Thomas Maleoré, knyght.

O Blessed Jesu helpe hym thorow Hys myght! Amen.

(1037) (409<sup>r</sup>)

7. And bycause I have loste the very mater of Shevalere de Charyot I departe frome the tale of sir Launcelot; and here I go unto the morte Arthur, and that caused sir Aggrayne.

And here on the othir syde folowyth The Moste Pyteuous Tale of the Morte Arthure Saunz Gwerdon par le Shyvalere Sir Thomas Malleoré, Knyght.

Jesu, ayede ly pur voutre bone mercy! Amen.

(1154) (fo. 449<sup>r</sup>)

8. Here is the ende of the hoole book of kyng Arthur and of his noble knyghtes of the Rounde Table, that whan they were holé togyders there was ever an hondred and forty. And here is the ende of The Deth of Arthur.

I praye you all jentylmen and jentylwymmen that redeth this book of Arthur and his knyghtes from the begynnnyng to the endynge, praye for me whyle I am on lyve that God sende me good delyveraunce. And whan I am deed, I praye you all praye for my soule.

For this booke was ended the ninth yere of the reygne of Kyng Edward the Fourth, by Syr Thomas Maleoré, Knyght, as Jesu helpe hym for Hys grete myght, as he is the servaunt of Jesu bothe day and nyght.

(1260) (last folios missing from Winchester manuscript)

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