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THOMAS HOCCLEVE AND THE POETICS OF READING

by

Elon Meir Lang

A dissertation presented to the
Graduate School of Arts and Sciences
of Washington University in
partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree
of Doctor of Philosophy

August 2010

Saint Louis, Missouri

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Elon Meir Lang

August 2010

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Abbreviations

Frequently Cited Editions

- Ellis Thomas Hoccleve, *'My Compleinte' and Other Poems*, ed. Roger Ellis, Exeter Medieval Texts and Studies (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2001).
- Fenster/Erler *Poems of Cupid, God of Love*, eds. and trans. Thelma Fenster and Mary Carpenter Erler (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1990).
- Furnivall *Hoccleve's Works: The Minor Poems*, ed. Frederick J. Furnivall and Israel Gollancz, EETS e.s. 61 (1892) and 73 (1925), rev. print in one volume by Jerome Mitchell and A.I. Doyle (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970).
- Riverside Ch* *The Riverside Chaucer*, 3rd ed., ed. Larry Benson et al. (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1987).

Primary Source Titles

- C* Thomas Hoccleve, *Complaint*, in Ellis, 115-30.
- CT* Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Canterbury Tales*, in *Riverside Ch*, 23-328.
- D* Thomas Hoccleve, *Dialogue with a Friend*, in Ellis, 131-59.
- FIR* Thomas Hoccleve, *Fabula de Quadam Imperatrice Romana* (a.k.a., "The Tale of Jereslaus's Wife"), in Ellis, 160-95. Line numbers include the tale, a prologue to the tale's prose moralization, and the moralization.
- FMM* Thomas Hoccleve, *Fabula de Quadam Muliere Mala* (a.k.a. "The Tale of Jonathas"), in Ellis, 234-60. Line numbers include a prologue, the tale, the tale's prose moralization, and an envoi to the Countess of Westmoreland.
- HofF* Geoffrey Chaucer, *House of Fame*, in *Riverside Ch*, 347-73.
- LGW* Geoffrey Chaucer, *Legend of Good Women*, in *Riverside Ch*, 587-630.
- LMR* Thomas Hoccleve, *La Male Regle de T. Hoccleve*, in Ellis, 64-78.
- LtoD* Thomas Hoccleve, *Lerne to Dye* (a.k.a. "Ars Vtillissima Sciendi Mori"), in Ellis, 196-233. Line numbers include the "Sciendi Mori" text, a prologue to the *Joys of Heaven* (a.k.a. "De caelesti Jerusalem"), and the prose *Joys of Heaven* text.
- LofC* Thomas Hoccleve, *Letter of Cupid* (a.k.a. "L'epistre de Cupide"), in Ellis, 93-111.

<i>RofP</i>	Thomas Hoccleve, <i>The Regiment of Princes</i> , ed. Charles R. Blyth, TEAMS (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 1999).
<i>Series</i>	The sequence of texts: <i>C</i> , <i>D</i> , <i>FIR</i> , <i>LtoD</i> , and <i>FMM</i> , as they are assembled in Hoccleve's autograph manuscript and several others.
<i>Somer1</i> , <i>Somer2</i>	Thomas Hoccleve, two <i>Ballads to Sir Henry Somer</i> , in <i>Selections from Hoccleve</i> , ed. M.C. Seymour (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981), with separate sets of line numbers on pp. 25-6 and pp. 26-8.
<i>TC</i>	Geoffrey Chaucer, <i>Troilus and Criseyde</i> , in <i>Riverside Ch</i> , 471-585.

Journals and Other Resources

<i>BLCIM</i>	<i>British Library Catalog of Illuminated Manuscripts</i> (London, n.d.) http://www.bl.uk/catalogues/illuminatedmanuscripts/welcome.htm
<i>CHMEL</i>	<i>The Cambridge History of Medieval Literature</i> , ed. David Wallace (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).
<i>EEBO</i>	<i>Early English Books Online</i> , http://eebo.chadwyck.com/ .
<i>EETS</i>	Early English Text Society; o.s. Original Series, e.s. Extra Series, s.s. Supplementary Series
<i>ELH</i>	<i>English Literary History</i>
<i>Hoccl Facs</i>	John A. Burrow and A.I. Doyle, eds., <i>Thomas Hoccleve, A Facsimile of the Autograph Verse Manuscripts</i> , EETS s.s 19 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).
<i>MED</i>	<i>Middle English Dictionary</i>
<i>MS(S)</i>	Manuscript(s)
<i>NLH</i>	<i>New Literary History</i>
<i>NQ</i>	<i>Notes and Queries</i>
<i>OED</i>	<i>Oxford English Dictionary</i>
<i>PMLA</i>	<i>Proceedings of the Modern Language Association</i>
<i>SAC</i>	<i>Studies in the Age of Chaucer</i>
<i>SELIM</i>	<i>Journal of the Spanish Society for Mediaeval English Language and Literature</i>
<i>STC</i>	Numbered reference in Alfred W. Pollard, <i>A Short-title catalogue of books printed in England, Scotland, and Ireland, and of English books printed abroad, 1475-1640</i> (London: Bibliographical Society, 1986).

Introduction: Casting the Reader's Shadow

"The reader casts his shadow over the poem.

What did you actually say: *The vase is here* or
The sky is blue?

All possibilities bloom in language
the mind hears but what it wants to
or what it fears.

The deaf man laments. ..."
– Doris Kareva¹ (translated from Estonian by Tiina Aleman)

In the early 1420s, Thomas Hoccleve, a poet, scribe, and clerk of the Privy Seal nearing the end of his careers, framed three verse translations of contemporary Latin texts into a narrative collection we know today simply as his *Series*. The narrative frame for the *Series* comprises moralizing and prefatory texts between each of the translations. After a complaint poem about Hoccleve's inability to regain social standing following a period of insanity, the frame takes shape in a second and longer original poem called *The Dialogue with a Friend*. In this *Dialogue* and throughout the rest of the frame-narrative, a speaker, a writer named "Thomas," recounts conversations he has with a comrade who reads drafts of his work and helps him structure the *Series* compilation. In a short excursus between the first translation and the prose moralization that follows it, the friend questions the material quality of the source text the narrator is using to complete his work. Thomas' friend is pleased with the first translation, but notices something missing:

"Thomas it is wel vnto my lykyng
But is ther aght þat thow purposist seye
More on this tale?" "Nay, my freend nothyng."
"Thomas, heer is a greet substance aweye.

¹ Excerpt from Doris Kareva, "The reader casts his shadow over the poem," trans. Tiina Aleman, *Words without Borders: The Online Magazine for International Literature* (November 2007), <http://wordswithoutborders.org>. The italicized phrases in the second sentence are phonetically much more similar in the original language: "...*Vaas on siin vōi / Taevas on sinine?*"

Wher is the moralizynge, Y yow preye,
Bycome hereof? Was ther noon in the book
Out of the which þat thow this tale took?"

"No certes, freend, therin ne was ther noon."
"Sikerly, Thomas, thereof I meruaille.
Hoom wole Y walke and retourne anoon –
Nat spare wole Y for so smal trauaille –
And looke in my book. Ther Y shal nat faille
To fynde it. Of þat tale it is parcel,
For Y seen haue it ofte, and knowe it wel."

He cam therwith, and it vnto me redde,
Leuyng it with me and hoom wente again.
And to this moralyzynge I me spedde² (FIR 960-78)

This discussion of the incompleteness of the text the translator presents in his manuscript draws attention to the text's status as an object that can take on multiple and variant material forms. The friend has to notice the physical absence of the text, recall the version with which he is familiar, argue for Thomas to accept the possibility of additional absent text, expend the physical effort to walk home and back to retrieve his own differing physical copy, read it to Thomas, and then lend Thomas that copy so that he can complete his work. This passage thus also draws attention to a reader's agency that arises from the text's materiality: showing that he plays a constitutive role in the production and design of Hoccleve's poem.

Deferring to a reader like this allows Hoccleve to transfer to the audience some of the authority and responsibility he claims over the text. The passage emphasizes that readers and writers may hold different perspectives as to what makes up the "whole" of a text, and that a writer ultimately has little control over his audience's response, even

² In Furnivall, 174, the 28-line prologue to the moralization of the *Tale of Jereslaus' Wife* is numbered separately from the *Tale*, so these lines are numbered 8-24.

when his audience is standing right next to him.³ As a rhetorical move local to the *Series*, this passage also sets up competing interpretations of the moralization that follows it.

In the moralization text, various elements of the preceding translation, an excerpt from the *Gesta Romanorum* often referred to in English as *The Tale of Jereslaus' Wife*, are taken to correspond with Christian symbolism and biblical moral lessons. The physical effort the friend expends in the fictional world to make sure the moralization is included in Thomas's translation encourages the reader to attach significance to that text, as well as to the more general act by which tales derived from secular or pagan sources can be authorized by Christian interpretations. However, Thomas's narrative posture—that he is not aware of the existing moralization and attempts to translate a fair copy of the tale from a source without the moralization—also preserves for the reader the somewhat subversive sense that the tale has an authority of its own, independent from the provided Christian moral exegesis. Since *The Tale of Jereslaus' Wife* alone would address the main motivation for writing that Thomas describes at the end of the *Dialogue* (to appease Hoccleve's female readers' desires for a text that portrays women favorably), the prologue to the moralization shows how an exegetical interpretation is supplementary and must be superimposed onto the text *by a reader*.

Like Kareva's reader in my epigraph, the prologue to the moralization of *The Tale of Jereslaus' Wife* shows Hoccleve's awareness that a reader always casts a shadow over

³David Watt claims, in "Exemplars and Exemplarity: Compilation as Narrative in Thomas Hoccleve's *Series*" (paper presented at the Fifteenth Biennial Congress of the New Chaucer Society, Fordham University, New York, July, 2006), 7, that this moment in the narrative shows Hoccleve exploring booklet production as a way to "imagine and represent memory." Watt interprets the absence of the moralization for the *Tale of Jereslaus' Wife* as being symbolic of a type of exemplar or mnemonic aid that Hoccleve envisions being able to be inserted into a text to supplement a reader's or writer's knowledge of the text in his memory.

a poem with his or her own interpretive desires, whims, and attentiveness. But while Kareva's reader appraises the poem once its language has been fully articulated (even if that language becomes unclear in the transition between written and oral/aural modes, sprouting unexpected verbal flora), Hoccleve's friend-figure enters the production process at an earlier stage. Thomas's friend not only casts his shadow on the compilation of the *Series*, but also outlines Thomas's own readerly silhouette in the text's form. The friend depicts the narrating Thomas as an unwary reader of an incomplete book, and seeks to improve Thomas' reading by turning him into *his* audience—by physically delivering his own copy of the moralized *Gesta Romanorum* tale to Thomas and by reciting the *Tale*'s exegesis to him.

This redundancy in lines 976-77, which casts Thomas as the receiver of both a material and oral version of the same text, is my concern in this dissertation. The recitation seems superfluous: since the friend seems intent to leave his book for Thomas to use as an exemplar, it is certainly not necessary for the friend to read it aloud. Yet the friend *does* read the text to Thomas *and* leave the book for him, and Hoccleve casually represents the whole exchange in two half-lines. While such a terse mention of the recitation could be dismissed as verbal filler, used to eke out the lines and the rhyme with “spedde” in line 978—by which he commits to writing the moralization text, I think the very casualness of the exchange is emblematic of a fundamental characteristic of Hoccleve's poetics. Hoccleve writes with an awareness that the activities of reading, writing, and performing/reciting must come together in order to navigate the multiple forms any one text could take, and then to transmit that text again to multiple audiences. Were Kareva's deaf man looking over Thomas's shoulder in this scene, he would indeed

lament; not for being unable to take in the moralization text, which he could read in the manuscript or its exemplar, but for being unable to hear Thomas's and his friend's oral and aural collaboration that *makes* the text. The scene transforms an editorial process into an actively negotiated performance in which *The Tale of Jereslaus' Wife* and the rest of the *Series* get repositioned for future readers whose interests might extend beyond those of the female audience mentioned in the *Dialogue*. Perhaps these audiences would be interested in expanding the repertoire of English ecclesiastical anecdotes or would be interested—as I am—in depictions of medieval composition and compilation processes.

I am not merely interested, however, in the devices Hoccleve uses to represent his writing process in his narratives. Hoccleve's depiction of the interaction between the narrator and his friend perpetuates the fictional premise of the *Series* by serving as a segue into the moralization text, which in turn continues the compilation of the material text itself in Hoccleve's reality.⁴ His real writing about fictional writing begets fictional reading that becomes a performance, which in turn begets more fictional writing. But this sequence engenders real reading out in the world. The short return to the narrative frame at this juncture in the *Series* suggests that Hoccleve wants to emphasize for his readers that material circumstances influence the nature of books and the substance of texts. Even more importantly, Hoccleve seems to emphasize that a text's meaning and form depend upon the people who encounter it while writing, reading, or hearing it, as well as their relationships, their memories, and their interpretations of the text that are necessarily variant and idiosyncratically motivated. In the context of the *Series*, this emphasis

⁴ As John A. Burrow claims, in "Hoccleve's *Series*: Experience and Books," in *Fifteenth-Century Studies: Recent Essays*, ed. by Robert F. Yeager (Hamden, CT: Archon Books, 1984), 266: "the reader must ... understand the double nature of the book he is reading. It not only describes the making of a book, but also *is* that book."

distributes responsibility for the moralization text, and for the *Series* as a whole, among the various agents that come into contact with its source materials. The prologue to the moralization also illustrates the interdependence of variant material texts with reading performances (beginning with the friend's initial perusal of Thomas's translation of the *Tale*, and ending when he exits the scene after reciting the moralization text to Thomas). These performances show how a reader's response to a text is unpredictable, but that the response must join with a writer's efforts to form the text.

In this dissertation, I explore the implications of Hoccleve's understanding of reading as a performance process and his positioning of readers as collaborators in his texts. To do so I not only offer a detailed consideration of his thematic attention to reading and the material production of books in his poems, but I also consider the surviving manuscript record of his texts for evidence of how actual readers of his poems—especially the scribes who helped them circulate—performed their role in constituting his works. Since Hoccleve personally contributed to the record of his verse in three surviving manuscripts, Hoccleve presents a unique opportunity in late medieval English literature to investigate how a poet of this era responded to the demands of his real-life readers while also modeling those demands in his own readings and rereadings of his work. In this sense, I seek to show how Hoccleve's poetics are fundamentally influenced by the real social and material consequences of reading in his culture.

Reading, Manuscripts, and Performance

The exchange in the *Series* between Hoccleve's narrator and his friend depicts a condition of late medieval culture that has become well known to scholars. In the words of Jocelyn Wogan-Browne, et al, this is a condition in which "the consumption and production of texts is ... an overlapping process, in which there are roles for a range of reading and audience activities, neither strictly demarcated as between author and audience or as between the literate and those without Latin."⁵ As Wogan-Browne, et al, show in their anthology of Middle English literary theory, numerous writers working in almost all available genres depict scenes in which their personae, like Hoccleve's, find their readers and circulate their texts in a collaborative environment. Although these scenes may indeed reveal writers' impressions about the performed and overlapping nature of composition and reading processes in their culture, the scenes should still be understood as literary figures in the fictions writers created. Material evidence that writer-audience collaboration actually occurred and influenced writers as they produced and circulated their texts has generally been indirect.

We have plenty of material evidence, for example, that readers actively shaped the forms of texts in their histories of circulation in medieval manuscripts. As Ralph Hanna has shown in numerous studies throughout his career, books were usually "bespoke" and produced for book buyers as custom-made compilations—sembled either from scratch or from selections of premade booklets.⁶ Additionally, as Barry

⁵ Jocelyn Wogan-Browne, Nicholas Watson, Andrew Taylor, and Ruth Evans, eds., *Idea of the Vernacular: An Anthology of Middle English Literary Theory, 1280-1520* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999), 110.

⁶ Ralph Hanna III, "Miscellaneity and Vernacularity: Conditions of Literary Production in Late Medieval England," in *The Whole Book: Cultural Perspectives on the Medieval Miscellany*, eds. Stephen Nichols and

Windeatt and others have demonstrated in analyses of scribal variation in and between manuscripts, we can witness scribes working as critical readers and editors of the texts they copied.⁷ Showing possible responses to this scribal activity, we have evidence, mostly in the content of epistolary verse, lyrics, and a few autograph manuscripts that can be compared to scribal variants, that some writers in the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries sought to control the circulation and dissemination of manuscripts of their texts.⁸ We also have indirect material evidence from modern editorial studies that writers responded to and anticipated reading circumstances and audiences that changed over time for their works, including the most prominent figures in the Middle English canon: Chaucer, Langland, and Gower.⁹

Siegfried Wenzel (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997), 37-51, and “Booklets in Medieval Manuscripts: Further Considerations,” in his *Pursuing History: Middle English Manuscripts and Their Texts* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 1996), 21-34. See also Julia Boffey, “Short Texts in Manuscript Anthologies: The Minor Poems of John Lydgate in Two Fifteenth-Century Collections,” in *The Whole Book*, 69-82.

⁷ Barry A. Windeatt, “The Scribes as Chaucer’s Early Critics,” *SAC* 1 (1979): 119-41. See also M.B. Parkes, *Scribes, Scripts, and Readers: Studies in the Communication, Presentation, and Dissemination of Medieval Texts* (London: Hambledon Press, 1991), especially the chapters “The Influence of the Concepts of *Ordinatio* and *Compilatio* on the Development of the Book,” 35-70, “The Literacy of the Laity,” 275-98, and M.B. Parkes and A.I. Doyle, “The Production of Copies of the *Canterbury Tales* and the *Confessio Amantis* in the Early Fifteenth Century,” 201-48.

⁸ On Chaucer’s relationship to his scribe Adam Pinkhurst, the lyric “Words Unto Adam, His Owne Scriveyn,” and the role it depicts for books in that relationship, see Alexandra Gillespie, “Books” in *Middle English*, ed. Paul Strohm (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 86-103. Regarding fifteenth-century French writers, see Cynthia Brown, *Poets, Patrons, and Printers: Crisis of Authority in Late Medieval France* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995), 17-60, and Deborah McGrady, *Controlling Readers: Guillaume de Machaut and His Late Medieval Audience* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006). For the possibility of Lydgate’s proximity to the publication of his texts by the “Lydgate Scribe,” see A.S.G. Edwards, “Lydgate Manuscripts: Some Directions for Future Research,” in *Manuscripts and Readers in Fifteenth-Century England: The Literary Implications of Manuscript Study, Essays from the 1981 Conference at the University of York*, ed. Derek Pearsall (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1983): 15-26.

⁹ On authorial revision in Chaucer’s works see Ralph Hanna III, “Authorized Versions, Rolling Revision, Scribal Error? Or, The Truth About *Truth*,” *SAC* 10 (1988): 23-40. The textual evidence for Chaucer’s revisions in *Troilus and Criseyde* is thin but correlates with Chaucer’s depiction of the poem being “in process”—both as a script to be performed before an audience and as the pages of a book being composed at a desk. See Barry Windeatt, *Oxford Guides to Chaucer: Troilus and Criseyde* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), 16. The case for Chaucer’s authorial revision of the “Prologue” to *The Legend of Good Women* is more convincing, due to the survival of distinct versions that either preserve or exclude a reference to Anne

Hoccleve, however, offers direct material evidence for authorship and authorial revision that these other English literary figures do not. Paired with Hoccleve's interest in the way readers' and writers' roles overlap, Hoccleve's manuscript corpus—which includes three manuscripts of his verse that survive in his own handwriting—gives us the opportunity to see a writer actively seeking to collaborate with readers like those he depicts in the *Series*' narrative frame.¹⁰ These volumes show Hoccleve strategically positioning his texts in relation to their material forms and the perspectives of his readers. In these manuscripts, we can also witness Hoccleve acting as a reader and performer of his own verse, allowing us to compare his efforts to evidence of scribes and patrons' readings of his work in other surviving manuscripts. Even in the case of his longest poem, the *Regiment of Princes*, which does not exist in a holograph manuscript, the

of Bohemia (d.1394), wife of Richard II. See my further discussion in Chapter 3, pp. 178-9, and A.S.G. Edwards and M.C.E. Shaner, textual notes to *The Legend of Good Women, Riverside Ch.*, 1178-9. Langland's revisions of *Piers Plowman* may have been influenced both by the textual form of the poem he had on hand and the changing political climate in which he found his audiences. For discussion of the theory that Langland used a corrupt copy of the B-version of his poem as the basis for the C-version, see George Kane and E. Talbot Donaldson, introduction to *Piers Plowman II: The B Version*, eds G. Kane and E.T. Donaldson (London: Athelone Press, 1975), 98-126. For discussion of Langland's possible motivation to deemphasize rhetoric in his poem that could be viewed as being sympathetic to Lollards after the Peasant's Revolt of 1381, see John Bowers, "Piers Plowman and the Police," *Yearbook of Langland Studies* 6 (1992): 12-15, and *Chaucer and Langland: The Antagonistic Tradition* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007), 115-35. A complementary explanation for Langland's revision of *Piers Plowman* in response to a statute against vagrancy enacted by the 1388 Parliament in Cambridge is offered by Anne Middleton, in "Acts of Vagrancy: The C Version 'Autobiography' and the Statue of 1388," in *Written Work: Langland, Labor, and Authorship*, ed. by Stephen Justice and Katherine Kerby-Fulton (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997), 208-317. Like *Piers Plowman*, Gower's revision of the *Confessio Amantis* in three recensions is similarly deemed authorial and categorized by how each version of the text contains different patronage-seeking language based on the political upheaval in the royal family during the 1390s (i.e. the later recension is addressed to Henry of Derby who was beginning to challenge Richard II for the crown.) A manuscript of the third recension, Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Fairfax 3, may also contain editorial notes made by or on behalf of the author in his workshop. See Russel A. Peck, introduction to *John Gower, Confessio Amantis*, vol. 1, 2nd ed., ed. R.A. Peck, TEAMS, (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 2006), 44-5, and G.C. Macaulay, introduction to *The English Works*, vol. 2 of *The Complete Works of John Gower*, ed. G.C. Macaulay, EETS e.s. 81-82 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1901), cxxx.

¹⁰ These volumes are San Marino, Huntington Library MSS HM 111 and HM 744, and Durham University Library, Cosin MS V.iii.9.

remarkable number of copies in which it survives allows us to see how numerous audiences responded to the ways Hoccleve attempted to direct their reading practices in the poem.

In order to discern Hoccleve's and his audience's readings of his texts, I draw on both the practices of literary history and textual criticism in order to read manuscripts of his texts as both products of and opportunities for reading performances. In doing this I seek to expand upon a methodology used in two fairly recent books: Andrew Taylor's *Textual Situations* and Jessica Brantley's *Reading in the Wilderness*. In both volumes, the authors present sustained analyses of individual manuscripts and their cultural histories in order to show, in Taylor's words, "how a given collection of texts might have taken meaning in the mind of a particular reader, a real person, at a given moment."¹¹ Taylor considers three multilingual collections of texts in terms of their potential to be perceived as "sung objects"¹² by their twelfth and thirteenth-century audiences. Brantley uses a single illuminated manuscript produced for a Carthusian monastic audience to explore how fifteenth-century devotional readers used performance modes derived from public recitals to give spiritual meanings to the vernacular texts in the manuscript that they may have read privately.¹³ By applying Taylor and Brantley's methodology to both the content of Hoccleve's works and the corpus of manuscripts in which they survive, I hope to present an overall picture of the textual situations one writer, his oeuvre, and his readers formed in and after his time. I fundamentally agree with Brantley who argues

¹¹ Andrew Taylor, *Textual Situations: Three Medieval Manuscripts and Their Readers* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002), 9.

¹² Ibid. 3.

¹³ Jessica Brantley, *Reading in the Wilderness: Private Devotion and Public Performance in Late Medieval England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 3.

that, in the fifteenth century, “it is not authorial processes of composition or even recitation that show the greatest affiliation with performance, but readerly processes of understanding.”¹⁴ Hoccleve’s engagement in his own manuscript record, though, allows me to complicate this claim. Hoccleve’s oeuvre reveals how the interconnectedness of composition and reading processes can itself inspire authorial composition and continuous engagement with the material artifacts of reading performances.

The surviving manuscripts of a medieval text comprise only a partial record of the text’s history—not only because the material manuscript record is incomplete, but also because the surviving manuscripts generally only reveal the written artifacts of reading performances that were “staged” in their audiences’ minds and the social spaces they inhabited. Manuscripts rarely offer direct evidence of how their texts were affected by these performances since they existed primarily in the oral/aural realm of a hybridized oral and written culture.¹⁵ Joyce Coleman, however, maps out the range of possibilities

¹⁴ Ibid., 3.

¹⁵ Works like Walter Ong, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word* (London: Routledge, 1982), and Paul Zumthor, *Oral Poetry: An Introduction*, trans. Kathryn Murphy-Judy (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1990) are known for characterizing an oral culture that was overtaken by a rise in written literacy in the late middle ages—a rise described in works such as M.T. Clanchy’s *From Memory to Written Record: England, 1066-1307* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993), and Richard Firth Green’s, *A Crisis of Truth: Literature and Law in Ricardian England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1998). This narrative of supersession has been complicated by some of the most prominent scholars of both orality and written literacy. From the orality-studies camp, Paul Zumthor, in *La Lettre et la voix: de la “littérature” médiévale* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1987), 172 (my translation), says: “The fixation, by and in writing, of a tradition that was oral does not necessarily put an end to the latter, nor does it marginalize it for sure. A symbiosis may establish, at least a certain harmony: oral writes, writing wants to be an image of the oral, in all cases reference is made to the authority of the voice. . . . Conversely, the fact that a written tradition goes through an oral register does not lead to its degradation or its sterilization.” From the literacy-studies camp, Brian Stock, in *Listening for the Text: On the Uses of the Past* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990; reprint Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996), 35, states: “on a philosophical level, one can ask whether the distinction between ‘oral’ and ‘written’ is valid at all. . . . From a linguistic point of view . . . a spoken discourse may contain all the structural features of a written text, and written versions, like the variant performances of a *chanson de geste*, continually absorb oral improvisation.” John Dagenais also argues that manuscript texts should be considered varieties of oral performances, because they depend upon the presence of an audience with whom to dialogue. He suggests, too, that the modern object of study in both oral performances and manuscript texts is similar: the absent

for reading performances that this hybrid culture produced. She finds that this range was presented in late Middle English literature with vocabulary that fits into what she calls an *aural-narrative constellation*. In this “constellation,” authors are described both as writing and reading their texts for audiences, and audiences get described both as hearing and reading texts. Coleman finds a frequent overlap between references to oral and written processes of reading in medieval texts. Oral tale-tellers “write” their stories for the audiences that hear them, or similarly, aural audiences experience a tale told to them in terms of its written status as a book or on a page.¹⁶

Coleman’s description of the aural-narrative constellation suggests that reading was always linked to performance practices in the Middle Ages, in which participating listeners and readers entered into metaphorical dialogues with written materials and actual dialogues with each other in order to recreate and perceive material texts in new contexts. Coleman provides some of the strongest evidence that reading practices were based in performance practices, significantly complicating the work of scholars like Paul Saenger, who has hypothesized that silent reading was replacing reading aloud in the late-medieval period.¹⁷ Literacy, Coleman argues, involved modalities of transmission and

voices of the original speaker of a performance and writer of a text. See Dagenais, “That Bothersome Residue: Toward a Theory of the Physical Text,” in *Vox Intexta: Orality and Literacy in the Middle Ages*, eds. A. N. Doane and Carol Braun Pasternack (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991), 246-57. Alois Wolf, in “Medieval Heroic Traditions and Their Transitions from Orality to Literacy,” which is also in the collection, *Vox Intexta*, 67-8, makes a point similar to Dagenais’: “in the Middle Ages, orality and literacy . . . merged and supported each other. . . . There existed many forms of literacy in Latin and in the vernacular and many forms of orality . . . [which] could meet when monks or clerics tried to take advantage of the possibilities offered by vernacular oral traditions.”

¹⁶ Joyce Coleman, *Public Reading and the Reading Public in Late Medieval England and France* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 97-108. Barry Windeatt in *Oxford Guides to Chaucer: Troilus and Criseyde*, 16-17, also notes several examples from Chaucer’s *Troilus* in which written and aural/oral modes of delivery are superimposed on one another.

¹⁷ Paul Saenger, *Space Between Words: The Origins of Silent Reading* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 1997), 268-9.

reception that formed continua between oral and written, public and private activities; these ranged from voiced or silent private readings conducted directly from books to memorized recitations of texts used to entertain groups of people.¹⁸

The close-knit interweaving of reading and performing in the literary culture of the late Middle Ages was caused in part by the techniques medieval readers relied upon due to a general lack of ready-access to physical texts. As Mary Carruthers sets out in her study of medieval practices and conceptualizations of memory, so much of medieval textual culture was based on memorization that reading a book in the medieval period was treated as an active performance involving vocal, mnemonic, and visual faculties. Carruthers suggests that reading was considered “a ‘hermeneutical dialogue’ between two memories”: a memory preserved in a text that a reader engaged with his or her own. The reader then evoked *voces paginarum* (the voices of the pages), which were conveyed into his or her mind, and usually his or her physical voice, too, in a low murmur, bringing the acts of recollection and recitation together through the written words of the text.¹⁹ These acts were performances that did not necessarily start or stop with material texts, but rather incorporated the appreciation of them into broader processes of cultural transmission, reception, and circulation.

By extension, writers, who themselves were audiences of other reading performances in their culture, practiced their craft with these processes in mind. Dante’s *La Vita Nuova* offers a famous example of the close relationship between memorized, performed, and material texts. In the opening lines of the poem, Dante’s persona

¹⁸ Coleman, *Public Reading*, 42-4.

¹⁹ Mary Carruthers, *The Book of Memory: A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 169-70.

describes his forthcoming act of composition as a process of copying down words he *sees* written and organized under rubrics in the “book” of his memory.²⁰ Carruthers interprets the poet’s emphasis to be on his primary act of visualizing the physical form of a text.²¹ Beyond an affirmation of the importance of the visual aspect of memory, however, Paul Zumthor takes Dante’s comment as a signal that he understood his own text to be “a living word, from which emanates the coherence of writing, the coherence of an inscription of man and his history, personal and collective.”²² Zumthor argues that the skills of *memoria* to which Dante draws attention are rooted in practices applied to the oral transmission of texts used to form communal vocal experiences among the scholarly. In other words, memorized texts were subject to performance practices, just as written texts were considered performance events in which an author could play out his mental recollection (or invention) of a text in a visual and potentially audible space.

Recently, Carlo Ginzburg has sought to complicate the notion that a medieval text could not be separated from performance practices and material circumstances. He uses the introduction of Dante’s *La Vita Nuova* to illustrate what he calls the medieval understanding of the “invisible text.”²³ Writers produced this invisible text by working with the faculties of their memory, similar to what Carruthers describes. Ginzburg, however, draws attention to Dante’s open acknowledgment that his copying of *La Vita Nuova* from memory would be incomplete and imperfect. Dante’s narrative persona

²⁰ See Dante Alighieri, *Vita Nuova: Italian Text with Facing English Translation*, trans. and eds. Dino S. Cervigni and Edward Vasta (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1995), 46-7.

²¹ Carruthers, 224.

²² Paul Zumthor, *La Lettre et la voix*, 156 (my translation).

²³ Carlo Ginzburg, “Copies, Facsimiles, and the Invisible Text” (paper presented for the 2009 Rolando Lara Memorial Lecture, Washington University, St. Louis, Missouri, November 2, 2009).

admits he intends to copy the words he finds in his memory but “*se non tutte, almeno la loro sentenza*” (“if not all, at least their substance”).²⁴ For Ginzburg, Dante’s act of imagining his book suggests that texts were considered to be self-sufficient, immaterial entities, like Platonic forms, that did not *need* to be composed or performed in order to be thought to “exist”—and, in fact, were diminished by acts of writing and reading. Ginzburg objects to book historians’ claims that medieval texts were envisioned in their time primarily as material objects that supported performances.²⁵ However, he does acknowledge—even if he does not emphasize it, that *any* representation or reproduction of a text, *any* attempt to turn an imagined “invisible” text into a piece of written or oral communication, must still be considered a performance. In his own act of seeking the book in his memory and transmitting its *sentenzia* to his readers, Dante acknowledges his role as a performer whose legible performance necessarily causes the text to vary from the form in his head. Dante amplifies this acknowledgement by drawing attention to his persona’s role as a reader in the narrative frame of the text, presenting the book as being mediated by both the text’s writer and its main speaking voice for an imagined audience.

The way readers were understood to mediate memorized or written texts for audiences through performance acts was reinforced in medieval culture by the way writers were taught to read in medieval schools and by the participatory nature of religious oratory. As E. R. Curtius describes, in the usual grammatical and rhetorical curricula, medieval students were taught not only to read Latin but also to master

²⁴ Dante Alighieri, *Vita Nuova*, 46-7. For a slightly different but widely cited translation of this line: “if not all of them, at least their essential doctrine,” see Dante Alighieri, *La Vita Nuova of Dante Alighieri*, trans. Mark Musa (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1962), 3.

²⁵ As a straw-man, Ginzburg specifically challenges John Dagenais’ essay “That Bothersome Residue” (see n. 15 above). Andrew Taylor’s and Jessica Brantley’s positions, cited above, would also come under his challenge.

speaking and writing it. They began by memorizing the *ars minor* grammar text of Donatus (or grammars based on it in the late Middle Ages), which provided “in the form of questions and answers, a knowledge of the eight parts of speech,” and afterwards proceeded to Priscian’s *Institutio grammatica* and Quintilian’s *Institutio oratoria* which explain principles of grammar and oration through examples from classical authors.²⁶ This instruction immediately exposed pupils to the intertextual relationships between Latin authors and modeled principles of dialogue and oral performance. Curtius also uncovers examples of pedagogical games that were used until the end of the sixteenth century in schools throughout Europe and Britain as exercises and entertainments in which students took turns reciting memorized *sententiae* stemming from successive letters of the alphabet.²⁷ These games show how students were to be taught to integrate written literacy with vocal and mnemonic activity in the context of live and sometimes competitive performances.²⁸ Vocal and mnemonic pedagogy was even more widespread in medieval educational efforts less geared toward developing written Latin literacy—

²⁶ Ernst Robert Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, trans. Willard R. Trask (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1953), 43.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 59.

²⁸ Marjorie Curry Woods and Rita Copeland, “Classroom and Confession,” in *CHMEL*, 389. For discussion of other specific accounts of immersive and performance-oriented Latin pedagogy, see Lynn Thorndike, “Elementary and Secondary Education in the Middle Ages,” *Speculum* 15.4 (1940): 400-8, and Rita Copeland, *Pedagogy, Intellectuals, and Dissent in the Later Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 86-88, who discuss the pedagogical plan drawn up in 1309 by Pierre Dubois, known by the title: *De recuperatione terrae sanctae*, as part of his strategy for educating missionaries for a crusade. For discussion of John of Salisbury’s nostalgic reminiscences about experiencing this sort of education, see Thorndike, 405; and Marjorie Curry Woods, “Among Men—Not Boys: Histories of Rhetoric and the Exclusion of Pedagogy,” *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 22.1 (1992): 18-26, and “Some Techniques of Teaching Rhetorical Poetics in the Schools of Medieval Europe,” in *Learning from the Histories of Rhetoric: Essays in Honor of Winifred Bryan Horner*, ed. Theresa Enos (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1993), 91-105.

such as those in parish song schools, female clerical orders, and dissenting religious sects—because they encouraged students to learn texts by rote in order to perform them.²⁹

Oral performances, after all, were deeply integrated into the fabric of late medieval public culture and were treated by mainstream and dissenting religious movements alike as tools for bolstering lay devotion to their otherwise written doctrines.³⁰ The rhetoric of religious oratory, in particular, with which almost all people would have been familiar from an audience’s perspective, characteristically involved dramatic practice. Rhetoricians following the model of St. Augustine found their practical outlet in preaching (the *ars praedicandi*) which required that they learn how to design effective performances of texts, an *inventio* that integrated interpretive exegesis with the act of preparing sermons for the ears and eyes of the public.³¹ As Jody Enders describes in her study of the influence of legal and religious rhetoric on medieval drama,

²⁹ For discussion of parish song schools for boys, see P.H. Cullum, “Learning to be a Man, Learning to Be a Priest in Late Medieval England,” in *Learning and Literacy in Medieval England and Abroad*, ed. Sarah Rees Jones (Tournhout: BREPOLs, 2003), 135, 139, and Marjorie Curry Woods and Rita Copeland, “Classroom and Confession,” 380. For discussion of rote Latin pronunciation pedagogy for female clerical orders see especially, Katherine Zieman, “Reading, Singing, and Understanding: Constructions of the Literacy of Women Religious in Late Medieval England,” in *Learning and Literacy in Medieval England and Abroad*, 97-120, and also her *Singing the New Song: Literacy and Liturgy in Late Medieval England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008). For discussion of Lollard pedagogical practices that entailed vernacular performance and group dialogue, see Anne Hudson, *The Premature Reformation: Wycliffite Texts and Lollard History* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), and Rita Copeland, *Pedagogy, Intellectuals, and Dissent in the Later Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 9-11.

³⁰ Lawrence M. Clopper, *Drama, Play, and Game: English Festive Culture in the Medieval and Early Modern Period* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 159. See also his “English Drama: From Ungodly *ludi* to Sacred Play,” in *CHMEL*, 742-5, for a discussion of how audience participation in theatrical contexts originated in ritual liturgical parodies of the 11th-13th centuries performed by lower ranked members of the clergy on feast days, dubbed *ludi teatrales* by Innocent III for their sometimes obscene, mocking, and otherwise ridiculous worldly nature. These performances established climates of jest and game in which lay audiences were able to participate, unscripted, in productions by interacting with players—clearing the way for the pageantry of the cycle plays of Corpus Christi festivals in the 14th-16th centuries. On the effects performances of the cycle plays likely had on audiences, see Sarah Beckwith, *Signifying God: Social Relation and Symbolic Act in the York Corpus Christi Plays* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 88.

³¹ Rita Copeland, *Rhetoric, Hermeneutics, and Translation in the Middle Ages: Academic Traditions and Vernacular Texts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 154.

“wherever and whenever *rhetorica* appeared, the memory of delivery inhered, and performance was as imminent as it had been in the mnemonic exercises once described by the pseudo-Cicero, Augustine, and Martianus.”³² The conventions of medieval performance culture show how audiences were understood to shape the texts communicated to them even if they only did so indirectly—causing other mediators, scribes, performers, and readers to craft texts in order to appeal to them.

Seeking Historical Meanings of Texts in Use and Reception

Considering manuscripts to be artifacts of reading performances is an effective approach for understanding the overlapping composition and reception processes that produced them, because oral reading and oral performances were integral modes of textual transmission throughout the late middle ages, even among the literate. But as Laurel Amtower argues, oral performances of texts were not only considered to enhance the experience of reading, but they were also being factored into the criteria used to “delineat[e] the separate realms of private and public performance.”³³ To accommodate this private and public duality and to resist the inaccurate conventional treatment of medieval literacy as a dichotomy between oral and written modes of reading, I adopt a useful generalization made by Evelyn Birge-Vitz, et al. They posit that “any way in which a narrative is actualized can be said to be a performance. In this sense, even

³² Jody Enders, *Rhetoric and the Origins of Medieval Drama* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992), 245. Enders describes how, in order to boost appeals to an audience’s emotions, orators were taught to strategically use rhetorical figures such as *actio*, *pronuntiatio*, and *hypokrisis* in the oral delivery of their memorized texts. These all were stylistic patterns that incorporated calculated affects, fakery, and impersonations into oral presentations, to take advantage of the known fact that “intonations, gestures, costumes, colors, actions—the ‘dramatization’ of the oration—were perceived before any other ‘message’” (21-2).

³³ Laurel Amtower, *Engaging Words: The Culture of Reading in the Later Middle Ages* (New York: Palgrave, 2000), 38.

private, silent reading is one kind of narrative performance.”³⁴ The accumulation of these performances and their relationships to one another—each one forming a new textual situation—make up a text’s history.

My argument that manuscripts can help reveal this combined oral and written, spoken and silent, public and private history is indebted to Paul Zumthor’s analysis of the phenomenon of medieval culture that he calls *intervocalité*. He coins this term in his 1987 book entitled *La Lettre et la voix*, when he seeks to describe the network of relationships formed between voices in a written text and the voices of all the people who read, copied, or heard those voices in the medieval period and all the people who have read the text since:

Tradition, when voice is its instrument, is thus, by nature, the domain of the variant, of what, in many works, I have called the *mouvance* of texts. I indicate it again here, by ‘hearing’ it as a vocal network immensely vast and tightened; like—at distance—literally the murmur of the centuries—or, at times, in isolation, the very voice of the interpreter.³⁵

The major benefit of the term *mouvance* is precisely this scalability—its potential to describe both the way a medieval text has changed over time to reach the pages of our modern editions, and the essential variations among copies that scribes, readers, and hearers introduced into the text along the way. Approaching a text from the perspective that its voices must be and have been performed allows these vocal elements to have direct relationships with the voices of its creators and interpreters outside it—the external human elements engaged in the process of working with the text. I quote Zumthor again at length to illustrate how he sees this approach as allowing us to appreciate the hybrid

³⁴ Evelyn Birge Vitz, Nancy Freeman Regaldo, and Marilyn Lawrence, introduction to *Performing Medieval Narrative*, eds. Evelyn Birge Vitz et al, (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2005), 3.

³⁵ Paul Zumthor, *La Lettre et la voix*, 160. All quotations from this text are my own translation.

nature of a text's possible oral/aural performances in the context of its known scriptural transmissions:

The amplitude of *mouvance* appears to us then very differently, from poetic genre to poetic genre, even from text to text, and from century to century. Every text registered by writing, as we read it, occupied nevertheless a precise place in a set of mobile relations and in a series of multiple productions, in the midst of a chorus of reciprocal echoes: of an *intervocality*, like 'intertextuality' which has been talked about for a number of years now, and that I consider here under its aspect of exchanges of words and resonant connivances; a polyphony perceived by the addressees of a poetry that is communicated to them—whatever the modalities and the performance style might be—exclusively by the voice. These intervocal relations, in the world of personal contacts and sensations, resemble those that establish themselves (with less warmth!) in our modern practice between the original text and its commentary or its translation.³⁶

Zumthor's emphasis on how texts are situated by writing in a context that is not static, but is comprised of fluid relationships and networked multiplicities, shows how he understands *mouvance* to be governed by vocal mechanisms—tied to people and their use and manipulation of texts by their own voices in performances. These performances, though, can be carried out in the material space of written texts just as well as they can occur on a stage or behind a lectern. If, as Zumthor suggests, modern editorial practices can provide a model for intervocal performances as we translate, edit, and adapt texts to use them for our own purposes, medieval scribes certainly can be thought to have produced similar adaptive performances in manuscripts.

Intervocality, thus, describes the relationships that accumulate over time among all participants in the reception and production of texts regardless of the texts' oral/aural or written states. These participants may include a text's author (real or hypothesized),

³⁶ Zumthor, *La Lettre et la voix*, 161.

the scribes who transmit and circulate variant versions of the text's lyric or narrative content, and readers and hearers who perceive the text by means of a single version or performance. As such, I see intervocality as the confluence of Zumthor's two most famous terms from earlier in his career: *mouvance* and *vocalité*. *Mouvance*, toward which Zumthor gestures in his definition of intervocality above, is the essential instability of medieval texts brought on by the variation inherent in manuscript traditions, more positively framed as a "mobility" or "mutability."³⁷ Zumthor defines vocality as the aspects of a text transmitted from a physical, material, written text during a reading or recitation. These are aspects of a medieval text that we cannot fully perceive based solely on the surviving textual object in which we read it.³⁸ In this formulation, written texts can only represent static and tacit representations of a dynamic vocal medium that was embedded fully in actively negotiated cultural communication among writers, readers, performers, and hearers.

While we may not be able to grasp all the sensory implications of a text's vocality due to our distance from its audible medieval reading context, we can interpret how a text seems to have been designed for particular reading practices and compare these practices to actual readings preserved in manuscript witnesses. We can then work to reconstruct the circumstances of physical and intellectual perception for a text that its manuscript tradition makes possible: its intervocality. But while Zumthor may have coined this term toward the end of his career to link the two complementary perspectives *mouvance* and vocality offer on the nature of medieval literary culture, he does not model how

³⁷ See Paul Zumthor, *Toward a Medieval Poetics*, 1972, trans. Phillip Bennett (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1992), 45-9.

³⁸ See Paul Zumthor, "The Text and the Voice," trans. Marilyn Engelhardt, *NLH* 16.1 (1984): 69, 76.

manuscript studies can help illuminate the role intervocality plays in medieval poetics. Nor does he show how intervocality facilitates the study of text variation and readers' use of manuscripts that he claims it makes possible. Bernard Cerquiglini has critiqued Zumthor on this very point for building too much concern for orality into his descriptions of *mouvance* while ignoring essential features of written text.³⁹ Cerquiglini replaces *mouvance* with his own concept of *variance* to account for the purely written dimension of textual variation in manuscripts, but in doing so rather deliberately ignores the elements of performance in acts of reading. Zumthor's intervocality seems to account precisely for these performance elements that rely upon but also become unbounded from a text's written form.

In this project, I seek to further explore Zumthor's terminology for the relationships between performances and written texts, and expand on its implications for manuscript studies. I propose that intervocality presents a rationale for moving back and forth between literary and textual criticism in order to discern features of reading performances and, more broadly, to define the meanings of medieval texts by their historical uses. The textual critic Roger Chartier suggests that "if we want to understand the appropriations and interpretations of a text in their full historicity we need to identify the effect, in terms of meaning, that its material forms produced."⁴⁰ These forms become

³⁹ Bernard Cerquiglini, *In Praise of the Variant: A Critical History of Philology*, trans. Betsy Wing (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), originally published as *Éloge de la variante: Histoire critique de la philologie* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1989).

⁴⁰ Roger Chartier, *Forms and Meanings: Texts, Performances, and Audiences from Codex to Computer* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1995), 2. See also Jerome McGann, *The Textual Condition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), 10, for his argument for the broader adoption of textual criticism by literary studies using a rationale that incorporates elements similar to aspects of Zumthor's intervocality: variants that multiply over time in textual materials, which can reveal "hidden" readers and audiences.

part of a cumulative network of historical meanings that can be revealed through hermeneutic explorations of even the smallest material features of books.⁴¹

Just as a text's material form changes over time, different readers also read it differently. Particular reading performances of a text recovered in manuscript details also can lead us to decipher the text's multiple and evolving meanings that readers created throughout its circulation history.⁴² Readers' agency over interpretation in what Umberto Eco calls a text's "generative process" is a constant in the theories of reader-response and reception developed in the late 1970s and early 1980s.⁴³ Particularly useful to my understanding of medieval readers' reception of texts in material and performance contexts is Jonathon Culler's theory that writers' understanding of reading and their experience with the conventions of that activity enable the act of writing. Culler adds to

⁴¹ See D. F. McKenzie, in *Bibliography and the Sociology of Texts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 23, for a similar description of hermeneutic practice that links literary criticism and textual criticism.

⁴² Framing critical readings of texts in terms of the multiplicity of reception contexts is gaining energy in studies of contemporary American and British poetics, building upon the tropes of reader-response theories like I am for medieval poetics. See, for example, Peter Middleton, *Distant Reading: Performance, Readership, and Consumption in Contemporary Poetry* (Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press, 2005).

⁴³ For a comprehensive survey of reader-response theory and a categorization of its major works, see Susan R. Suleiman and Inge Crosman, introduction and annotated bibliography in *The Reader in the Text: Essays on Audience and Interpretation*, eds. S.R. Suleiman and I. Crosman (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1980). For Umberto Eco's characterization of the "generative process of the text," and how texts codify their own "Model Readers" see *The Role of the Reader: Explorations in the Semiotics of Texts* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1979), 4, 7-10. In his later book, *The Limits of Interpretation* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1990), 55, Eco revises his notion of how texts design their own Model Readers so that a Model Reader is comprised of two simultaneously realized components: "a first level, or a naïve one, supposed to understand semantically what the text says, and a second level, or critical one, supposed to appreciate the way in which the text says so." This underscores how any text is always already subject to multiple kinds of reading performances.

this idea that “writing itself can be viewed as an act of critical reading, in which an author takes up a literary past and directs it toward a future.”⁴⁴

By analyzing medieval reading performances in their material artifacts, I can account for the truth in both the statement that readers make texts,⁴⁵ as well as the statement that texts make their readers.⁴⁶ This reciprocity, as John Ganim and Robert Sturges both point out in respective monographs, is apparent in the ways medieval readers and writers sensed their interchangeability. Poets knew that their authority could be obstructed by readers and sought to teach and delight them in order to gain their good will and impress them. Readers, in turn, knew that they could subvert or assume writerly authority simply by scribbling in the margins of their texts. Readers’ *ad hoc* commentaries were submitted to future readers and copiers according to the same processes by which commented-upon writers read and adapted texts and commentaries that came before them.⁴⁷ Karla Taylor has recently demonstrated how the *Canterbury Tales* is structured according to these reciprocal processes in order to set up an intertextual model of literary history. This model establishes the *Tales*’ intertextual

⁴⁴ Jonathan Culler, “Prolegomena to a Theory of Reading,” in *The Reader in the Text: Essays on Audience and Interpretation*, eds. Susan R. Suleiman and Inge Crosman (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 50.

⁴⁵ Articulated notably by D. F. McKenzie, in *Bibliography and the Sociology of Texts*, 29: “new readers of course make new texts.”

⁴⁶ See Wolfgang Iser, “Interaction between Text and Reader,” in *The Reader in the Text*, 106, for a version of his theory of ‘virtual’ texts and his extension of Eco’s hypothesis that texts select their own ‘model’ or ‘expert’ readers. For an inquiry into the reciprocal nature of reading and writing in terms of the intentionality shared by readers and writers in constructing implicit meanings in a text’s phonemic patterns, see Garret Stewart, *Reading Voices: Literature and the Phonotext* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990). For over a dozen studies that, using methods from the cognitive sciences, find Iser’s and Eco’s theories to accurately describe real reading practices, see Elaine F. Nardocchio, ed., *Reader Response to Literature: The Empirical Dimension*, ed. (New York: Mouton de Gruyter, 1992).

⁴⁷ John Ganim, *Style and Consciousness in Middle English Narrative* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), 11-12; Robert Sturges, *Medieval Interpretation: Models of Reading in Literary Narrative, 1100-1500* (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1991), 3-6. Ganim, especially, keeps his focus on the way the reader’s experience is at the foreground of medieval texts throughout his book.

connections with contemporary and classical literary authorities (viz. Dante, Ovid, Virgil) while also projecting these connections into the future. By examining internal links between the *Tales*' fragments (in their edited form) and allusions to external sources, Taylor argues that the *Tales* seems designed to accommodate and influence new English readers who may be resistant to the translation of classical literary traditions into vernacular contexts.⁴⁸ It is my argument, though, that as a result of readers' necessary involvement in the production of a text's meanings and material forms, we need to qualify claims about a text's presupposed readers by accounting for a text's bibliographic and codicological history in specific ways. We must consider the construction and circulation of individual copies of medieval texts because these processes ultimately dictated not only the way texts were read in their own time by individual readers, but also how we have come to understand them today.

Adopting an analytical methodology that examines the history of texts in terms of their reception and material forms, along with their content, allows my study of Hoccleve's texts, manuscripts, and readers to contribute to the ongoing project of stretching the boundaries of medieval literary studies to account for rich, empirical material histories.⁴⁹ Following Jessica Brantley's suggestion in a 2009 *PMLA* article, with this method I seek an "emphasis on potential histories of readers, as well as of writers" wherein it "no longer necessarily matters only how a manuscript was designed to

⁴⁸ Karla Taylor, "Chaucer's Volumes: Toward a New Model of Literary History in the *Canterbury Tales*," *SAC* 29 (2007): 43-85. In this article, Taylor draws on the theory that texts presuppose model readers who have certain competencies, as articulated by Gian Biagio Conte, in *Memoria dei poeti e sistema letterario: Catullo, Virgilio, Ovidio, Lucano* (Turin: Einaudi, 1974). Conte's notion of the Model Reader is similar to Eco's, see n. 43 above.

⁴⁹ A project that has occasionally been referred to collectively with the rubric "New Philology" since Stephen Nichols, "Introduction: Philology in a Manuscript Culture," *Speculum* 65 (1990): 1-10. This whole issue of *Speculum* was specially dedicated to this topic.

work, if you can see, from the readers' perspective, how it did."⁵⁰ By investigating how elements of a manuscript's physical existence affected the personal experiences of reading Hoccleve's works,⁵¹ I also show how this approach to studying medieval literature addresses recent questions scholars have raised about the directions in which to take "new-historicist" literary criticism now that it is no longer "new."

As Frederic Jameson diagnoses in a recent special issue of *New Literary History*, innovative literary histories are almost impossible to write today because in order to be "new," literary historians cannot just write new narratives for the historical understanding of literature, but rather must "invent new ideas of literary history" itself, within "new narrative paradigm[s] of history." While Jameson argues that these new histories must "remain purely theoretical," he describes his call for them as "an imperative to multiplicity... one new idea for literary history must be understood as calling for many more. These then begin to stake out the bounds of the Real, they approach it asymptotically in their very variety and in their contradictions."⁵² In the same issue of *NLH*, Brian Stock corroborates Jameson's call for multiplicity with his own suggestion that histories of reading ought to play a bigger role in the future of historicism. Stock argues that a consistent reliance on interpretive pluralism has proliferated in historiographies of reading since antiquity as well as in empirical studies of reading

⁵⁰ Jessica Brantley, "The Prehistory of the Book," *PMLA* 124.2 (2009): 635a.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, Brantley offers these examples of such physical elements: "traces of scribal collaboration, the importance of paratexts such as rubrics and running titles, the meaningful integration of illumination into the layout of the page, readers' marginalia, editorial anthologizing, and translation practices."

⁵² Frederic Jameson, "New Literary History after the End of the New," *NLH* 39.3 (2008): 386.

performed in the cognitive sciences and neurosciences in the last few decades.⁵³ Such inherent pluralism suggests that new paradigms for literary history meeting the requirements of Jameson's "imperative to multiplicity" can be designed around investigations of historical readers and modes of reading.

I claim that historicism's "next" steps involve elaborating on the uses to which both historical and modern readers put literature and aesthetics as they and we seek to understand the inherent multiplicities in any text. My approach links reception studies, book history, and close-reading techniques that derive from "new criticism" in descriptions of individual reading histories. In the case of Hoccleve, I show how an author himself participates in these reading histories while knowing them to be plural and indeterminable. Aligning with Maura Nolan's recent description of characteristics she suggests will be central in "post-historicist" literary criticism, I see my methodology to be contributing to the development of a critical framework that is conscious of alterity, multiplicity, and variation as it links strange and unique readings to a text's artistic and cultural significance.⁵⁴

By studying the interactions between Hoccleve's texts' language and their "manuscript matrix" while situating these interactions in the social networks in which they originally occurred, I draw on some of the established techniques of New Philology.⁵⁵ I do not wish to limit myself to this mode of inquiry, however. Robert Meyer-Lee has critiqued New Philology and textual criticism for leading its practitioners

⁵³ Brian Stock, "Toward Interpretive Pluralism: Literary History and the History of Reading," *NLH* 39.3 (2008): 389-413.

⁵⁴ Maura Nolan, "Historicism after Historicism," in *The Post-Historical Middle Ages*, ed. by Elizabeth Scala and Sylvia Federico (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 84.

⁵⁵ Stephen Nichols, "Introduction: Philology in a Manuscript Culture," 9.

to unnecessarily privilege the study of historically accurate representations of medieval texts (in manuscripts, manuscript facsimiles, or hypertext transcriptions of manuscripts, as opposed to painstakingly crafted scholarly editions) over the appreciation of the literary value of the texts, themselves, upon which our whole field is built.⁵⁶ I demonstrate, however, that the manuscripts of Hoccleve's texts can be read closely and in conjunction with editorial representations of their content to reveal the ways Hoccleve and his first readers understood, constructed, and transmitted the literary value of his works. It is their original impression of that value, after all, that we emulate and seek to recover with our work.

With these aims, my methodology draws on the techniques and interests of both literary and textual criticism to demonstrate the central importance of understanding the links among reading, performing, and manuscript production in the interpretation of a medieval poet's works. These links are especially pronounced in the works of a poet like Hoccleve who so invested himself in his texts' reception history. Thus, in addition to advancing general historicist and textual studies of medieval literature to attend to the interpretative implications of specific moments of reading, I also advance the study of Hoccleve's poetic practices. This is an area of Hoccleve research that has remained underdeveloped while critics have dedicated much energy to exploring the vivid perspective his works offer on clerkly life in early fifteenth-century London⁵⁷ or on

⁵⁶ Robert Meyer-Lee, "Manuscript Studies, Literary Value, and the Object of Chaucer Studies," *SAC* 30 (2008): 1-37.

⁵⁷ This dissertation thus serves, in part, to answer Sarah Tolmie's call for greater attention to Hoccleve's poetics in "The Professional: Thomas Hoccleve," *SAC* 29 (2007): 341-73. Important studies of Hoccleve's works in the context of the bureaucratic and political culture in which Hoccleve lived and worked include: John A. Burrow, "The Poet as Petitioner," *SAC* 3 (1981): 61-75; Richard Firth Green, *Poets and Princepleasers: Literature and the English Court in the Late Middle Ages* (Toronto: University of Toronto

Hoccleve's biography.⁵⁸ While interpretations of Hoccleve's works as examples of medieval autobiography have produced some stylistic studies of his strategic use of conventions for representing authorial personae in poems,⁵⁹ studies of Hoccleve's poetics have generally settled on the characterization of his style as an "attraction to multiple and

Press, 1980); Larry Scanlon, "The King's Two Voices: Hoccleve's *Regement of Princes*," in his *Narrative, Authority, and Power: The Medieval Exemplum and the Chaucerian Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 299-322; James Simpson, "Nobody's Man: Thomas Hoccleve's *Regiment of Princes*," in *London and Europe in the Later Middle Ages*, eds. Julia Boffey and Pamela King (London: Queen Mary and Westfield College, 1995), 149-80; Judith Ferster, *Fictions of Advice: The Literature and Politics of Counsel in Late Medieval England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996), 137-59; Paul Strohm, "Three London Itineraries: Aesthetic Purity and the Composing Process," in his *Theory and the Premodern Text* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 3-19; Ethan Knapp, *The Bureaucratic Muse: Thomas Hoccleve and the Literature of Late Medieval England*, (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2001); John A. Burrow, "Hoccleve and the 'Court'," in *Nation, Court, and Culture: New Essays on Fifteenth-Century English Poetry*, ed. Helen Cooney (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2001), 70-80; Robert Meyer-Lee, *Poets and Power from Chaucer to Wyatt* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 88-123; Jenni Nuttall, *The Creation of Lancastrian Kingship: Literature, Language and Politics in Late Medieval England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), especially 55-71.

⁵⁸ Studies of the relationship between Hoccleve's works and his life, including a possible period of insanity include: Penelope B. R. Doob, *Nebuchadnezzar's Children: Conventions of Madness in Middle English Literature* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1974), 208-31; Stephen Medcalf, "Inner and Outer," in *The Later Middle Ages*, ed. Stephen Medcalf (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1981), 108-71; Stephen Kohl, "More Than Virtues and Vices: Self-Analysis in Hoccleve's 'Autobiographies'," *Fifteenth Century Studies* 14 (1988): 115-27; James Simpson, "Madness and Texts: Hoccleve's *Series*," in *Chaucer and Fifteenth-Century Poetry*, eds. Julia Boffey and Janet Cowen (London: King's College, 1991), 15-28; George MacLennan, *Lucid Interval: Subjective Writing and Madness in History* (Rutherford, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1992), 1-23; Matthew Boyd Goldie, "Psychosomatic Illness and Identity in London, 1416-1421: Hoccleve's *Complaint* and *Dialogue with a Friend*," *Exemplaria* 11.1 (1999): 23-52; Richard Lawes, "Psychological Disorder and the Autobiographical Impulse in Julian of Norwich, Margery Kempe and Thomas Hoccleve," in *Writing Religious Women: Female Spiritual and Textual Practices in Late Medieval England*, eds. Denis Renevey and Christiania Whitehead (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2000), 217-43; Lee Patterson, "'What is Me?': Self and Society in the Poetry of Thomas Hoccleve," *SAC* 23 (2001): 437-470.

⁵⁹ See, for example, John A. Burrow, "Autobiographical Poetry in the Middle Ages: The Case of Thomas Hoccleve," *Proceedings of the British Academy* 68 (Nov. 1982): 389-412; David Lawton, "Dullness and the Fifteenth Century," *ELH* 54.4 (1987): 761-799; D. C. Greetham, "Self-Referential Artifacts: Hoccleve's Persona as a Literary Device," *Modern Philology* 86.3 (1989): 242-51; Albrecht Classen, "The Autobiographical Voice of Thomas Hoccleve," *Archiv* 228.143 (1991): 299-310; Derek Pearsall, "Hoccleve's *Regement of Princes*: The Poetics of Self-Representation," *Speculum* 69.2 (1994): 386-410. A notable exception in this pattern is the formalist approach in Judith Jefferson, "The Hoccleve Holographs and Hoccleve's Metrical Practice," in *Manuscripts and Texts: Editorial Problems in Later Middle English Literature, Essays from the 1985 Conference at the University of York*, ed. Derek Pearsall (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1987), 95-109.

alternative voices.”⁶⁰ A few studies have sought to describe more specifically and categorize some of Hoccleve’s voices and poetic strategies,⁶¹ but I seek to pinpoint the effects of the voices available in his texts on their readers, rather than to add items to the catalog. As such, I approach Hoccleve’s style in the context of his poems’ culturally revelatory and autobiographical elements as well as the bibliographic elements of their manuscript corpus—which Hoccleve helped produce. I demonstrate how his poetics enabled reading performances that may have occurred in a poem’s process of being written (such as the *Series* depicts), immediately after it was written, or any time after.

The Shadow of Hoccleve Reading in *La Male Regle*

In this dissertation, I explore in three chapters how Hoccleve collaborated with his audiences in a culture of literary production and consumption deeply indebted to modes and themes of performance. I develop the thesis that a “poetics of reading” central to Hoccleve’s style reflects how he designed his texts to unfold in reading performances. But before describing in greater detail the progression these chapters follow, I offer a limited example of how the methodology upon which they are built casts Hoccleve, himself, as one of his own readers, who acts on par with his audiences to “perform” his own poems in manuscripts.

The poem *La Male Regle de T. Hoccleve*, when read in the context of its two surviving manuscript witnesses (one full holograph copy and one partial scribal copy),

⁶⁰ Such as Paul Strohm describes in “Hoccleve, Lydgate, and the Lancastrian Court,” in *CHMEL*, 650.

⁶¹ Including Albrecht Classen, “Hoccleve’s Independence from Chaucer: A Study of Poetic Emancipation,” *Fifteenth Century Studies* 16 (1990): 59-81; David Mills, “The Voices of Thomas Hoccleve,” in *Essays on Thomas Hoccleve*, ed. Catherine Batt (London: Centre for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, Queen Mary and Westfield College, University of London, 1996), 85-107; and David Lawton, “Voice after Arundel” (paper presented at the conference “After Arundel: Religious Writing in Fifteenth-Century England,” Oxford, U.K., April 2009).

shows how both Hoccleve and the other scribe perform the poem 15-25 years after it was originally composed by reshaping its form and context to emphasize its moral themes. In this poem, originally written in 1405-6, a speaker assumes the persona of the poet, describing the prodigal follies of his youth and how he came to reform them. He does this to appeal to Lord Furnivall, Treasurer of the Exchequer, for payment of his yearly annuity of ten pounds (*LMR* 421), in order to demonstrate that he wants for money and will no longer waste what is given to him.⁶² Cited from editions of the holograph copy (San Marino, Huntington Library MS HM 111), *La Male Regle* is known among modern scholars especially for the narrator's descriptions of Hoccleve's raunchy behavior in his youth for which he tries to atone.⁶³ This behavior notably includes his indulgence in local tavern culture:

Of loues art yit touched I no deel.
 I cowed nat, and eek it was no neede.
 Had I a kus, I was content ful weel,
 Better than wolde han be with the deede. (*LMR* 153-56)

Wher was a gretter maister eek than Y,
 Or bet aqweyntid at Westmynstre yate
 Among the tauernereres namely
 And cookes, whan I cam eerly or late? (*LMR* 177-80)

...fynde kowde I no macche
 In al the Priuee Seel with me to endure,
 And to the cuppe ay took I heede and cure,
 For þat the drynke apall sholde nocht,
 But whan the pot emptid was of moisture
 To wake aftirward came nat in my thocht. (*LMR* 307-12)

⁶² This petition helps date the poem—based on Furnivall's documented tenure as Treasurer and records of late annuity payments made to Hoccleve after Furnivall may have received this poem. See John A. Burrow, *Thomas Hoccleve*, *Authors of the Middle Ages*, no. 4 (Brookfield, VT: Variorum Ashgate, 1994), 15.

⁶³ Cited from Ellis, 64-78. For slightly different punctuation see also Thomas Hoccleve, *Selections from Hoccleve*, ed. M. C. Seymour (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981), 12-23.

The marvelous nuggets of narrative from which these examples are drawn seem to offer a direct window into Hoccleve's life as mid-level bureaucrat in London and Westminster: they portray him as a fairly rowdy fellow who enjoyed flirting with the local women, but who enjoyed food and drink more. The appearance of these descriptions in the context of this poem, however, reveals the way Hoccleve attempts to use traditional generic conventions for penitential narratives to outline and support a successful petition.⁶⁴ The penitential elements in the poem can also be seen as instructions for reading, authorizing the poem's audiences to carefully examine the text itself and the people who may be associated with it in real life—including the poet and themselves.

These authorizations first become apparent in the appeal to the God of Health that opens the poem, in which the speaker lauds the “tresor incomparable” (*LMR* 1) of wellness and prosperity and bemoans his parallel falls from both. The speaker's voice takes on the tone of a complaint in the first four stanzas, opposing a distinct “I” to the “thee” of Health, who the speaker claims has forsaken him, and then offers the following aphorism:

But I haue herd men seye longe ago,
Prosperitee is blynd and see ne may,
And verifie I can wel it is so,
For I myself put haue it in assay.
Whan I was weel, kowde I considere it? Nay,
But what, me longed aftir nouelrie
As yeeres yonge yernen day by day,
And now my smert accusith my folie. (*LMR* 33-40)

Here the speaker appeals to the nonspecific historical authority of “men...longe ago” for the source of the saying in line 34, but uses his own experience to validate the

⁶⁴ See Ethan Knapp, *Bureaucratic Muse*, 38-9, and also his “Bureaucratic Identity and the Construction of the Self in Hoccleve's *Formulary* and *La Male Regle*,” *Speculum* 74 (1999): 371.

applicability of its wisdom. First, he claims his own role in the transmission of the saying to the reader with the claim “I have herd.” Then, he demonstrates its wisdom in two ways: appealing to the simple authority of his own experience, “verifie I can wel it is so,” and then to the authority of logic and reasoning by submitting a rhetorical question to the audience and then answering it himself.

This appeal to the authority in his own experience becomes immediately complicated in the next several stanzas, however, when the speaker’s object of criticism becomes his own personified “vnwar yowthe” (*LMR* 41),⁶⁵ who refuses to let anyone but himself direct his actions:

Ful seelde is seen þat yowthe takith heede
Of perils þat been likly for to fall.
For, haue he take a purpos, þat moot neede
Been execut. No conseil wole he call.
His owne wit he deemeth best of all,
And foorth therwith he renneth brydillees,
As he þat nat betwixt hony and gall
Can iuge, ne the werre fro the pees.

Alle othir mennes wittes he despisith.
They answeren no thyng to his entente.
His rakil wit only to him souffysith.
His hy presumpcioun nat list consente
To doon as þat Salomon wroot and mente,
þat redde men by conseil for to werke. (*LMR* 73-86)

Youth is criticized here for how “he” tends to rely on his own wit and experience instead of deferring to the advice of wiser men and the authority of Solomon’s share of Scripture.

Solomon’s text, as he describes in line 86, derives authority from how other men read it

⁶⁵ A.C. Spearing, *Medieval to Renaissance in English Poetry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 119, suggests that “small-scale personification” like this which recurs throughout Hoccleve’s works reveals the influence by Langland on his style rather than Chaucer. Charles Blyth, challenges Spearing’s claim, however, because Hoccleve’s personifications are generally only “lightly suggested,” and not developed into a full allegorical characters like in *Piers Plowman*. See Blyth, explanatory notes to *RofP*, 202, n. to line 7.

for advice on how to conduct themselves—a point emphasized by the use of the verb “redde.” *Redde* is from the Middle English “reden,” which along with its principal meaning, “to read,” can also mean “to teach,” “to interpret,” and “to advise.”⁶⁶ The nature of the authority of personal experience here almost completely opposes that from 50 lines earlier. Instead of invoking a non-specific external authority validated by experience and reason, personal experience and wit is shown here as something that can trump the wisdom of a known and studied textual authority, however unprofitably. This negative portrayal of Youth’s experience helps the speaker distance himself rhetorically from his “brydillees” (*LMR* 78) former self. It also literalizes the speaker’s penitential self-examination in line 40, which might be read: “now my smartness and more mature sensibility accuses my *former* follies.”

This literalization gets further developed in lines 351-2, when the narrator seems to talk to himself through the poem: “Bewaar, Hoccleue, I rede thee therefore, / And to a mene reule thow thee dresse” (*LMR* 351-2). Using the verb “rede” again, but this time primarily in the sense of urging or counseling, the narrating voice (“I”) admonishes the version of himself who actually possessed an unruly youth (“Hoccleve,” “thee”) to attend to his “mean rule”—his lack of self control. The narrator seems to encourage a punned reading of the phrase “I rede thee” in line 351, blending together an assertion of personal authority (“I advise you” or “I urge you”) with a claim that such advice is merited on a more objective observation (“I see you clearly,” i.e. “I read you like an open book”). A reader of the poem might not only take these lines to mean: “Beware, Hoccleve of the past, I advise you to reform,” but also “Beware, Hoccleve, I am *reading* you in this text,”

⁶⁶ *MED*, electronic edition, s.v. “reden.”

or maybe even “*as a text.*” The narrator establishes the figure of Hoccleve, in the poem, as an exemplar for his readers to emulate, modify, or critique, paralleling the narrator’s use of Solomon in lines 84-6 of the poem, and paralleling how the poem itself may have been used by readers.

One of the poem’s readers was a scribe who indeed used the poem for his own purposes, and used Hoccleve as an exemplar for a general moral lesson. In the only other surviving textual witness to *La Male Regle*’s verse, Canterbury Cathedral Archive Register O, this scribe extracted nine stanzas from Hoccleve’s poem to form a stand-alone “balade” on two empty folios near the end of this codex of Cathedral records.⁶⁷ This scribal reader did not merely excerpt fragments of Hoccleve’s text, but rather worked to adapt stanzas from *La Male Regle* into a didactic poem on the themes of moderation. He filtered out tones of complaint and petition, amplified its penitential premise, and reshaped Hoccleve’s verse to convey more broadly stated moralizations. As the transcriptions in Figure 0.1 show, distinctive features in the Canterbury scribe’s adaptation include the removal of Hoccleve’s name from the second to last line in Huntington Library HM 111, stanza 44, and the changing of pronoun references to the personifications of youth and reason from feminine to masculine (cf. HM 111, stanza 6). The resulting voices of the Canterbury ballad are much more assuredly male and much more broadly moralistic than in Hoccleve’s narrator’s mea culpa. This stylistic alteration

⁶⁷ The Canterbury Cathedral Archive “balade” is described by Marian Trudgill and John A. Burrow, “A Hocclevean Balade,” *NQ* 45.2 (1998): 178-80. The poem appears on folios 406-verso and 407-recto of the manuscript, and reproduces stanzas from *La Male Regle* in this order: 5, 6, 9, 10, 12, 14, 45, 44, 51. David Watt’s edition of the text, “Thomas Hoccleve’s *La Male Regle* in the Canterbury Cathedral Archives” (forthcoming), records the Canterbury scribe’s punctuation more thoroughly. Trudgill and Burrow posit that the Canterbury text is roughly contemporary (1420s or 30s) with the holograph copy of *La Male Regle* in HM 111, which dates to 1422-26.

may have been the copyist's politic maneuver to make the poem more appealing to other readers in the Canterbury Cathedral community as well as more personalized to his own tastes.

**(a) Huntington Library MS HM 111
(my transcription)**

Stanza 6 of 56 (fol. 17v)

Myn vnwar yowthe kneew nat what it wroghte
 This woot I wel / whan fro thee twynned shee
 But of hir ignorance hir self shee soghte
 And kneew nat þ^t shee dwellyng was w^t thee
 For to a wight wer^e it greet nycetee
 His lord or freend wityngly for toffende
 Lest þ^t the weighte of his aduersitee
 The fool opp^{re}sse / & make of him an ende

Stanza 44 of 56 (fol. 24r)

Despensee large enhaunce a mannes loos
 Whil they endure / and whan they be forbore
 His name is deed / men keepe hir mowthes cloos
 As nat a peny hadde he spent tofore
 My thank is qweynt / my purs his stuf hath lore
 And my carkeis replet with heuynesse
Be waar, Hoccleue / I rede thee therfore
 And to a mene reule / thow thee dresse

**(b) Canterbury Cathedral Archive Register O
(transcription by David Watt)**

Stanza 2 of 9 (fol. 406v, partly damaged)

-----war yowthe / kneew no3t what he wroghte
 -----oot y wel / whan fro the twymyd he
 --- of his ignoraunce / him self he soghte,
 --- knew not / that he dwellyng was wyth the
 For to a wyght / were to greet nycete
 --ys lord or frend / wytyngly for to offende
 -- that the wyghte / of his adu^{er}syte
 ---ffool opp^{re}sse / make of hym an ende

Stanza 8 of 9 (fol. 407r)

And al so despensee3 large / en haunce a mannes loos
 Whyll they endure / and whan ther is more
 hys name ys ded / *men* kepe her mowthe close
 as no3t a peny / hadde be spent afore
 My thank ys queynt / my purs his stuf hath lore
 and myn karkeys / replet of heuynesse
Be war therfore / y rede the^{the} more
 and to a mene rewle / now dresse the

Figure 0.1: Facing transcriptions of two stanzas from *La Male Regle de T. Hoccleue* in HM 111 and Canterbury Cathedral Archive Register O. (Correlations of special interest marked with underlines.)⁶⁸

While Trudgill and Burrow suggest that the scribe's extraction from the poem might have been motivated by a desire to appeal to the local audience they nonetheless frame their interest in the text with an apology for its editorial insignificance: "The Canterbury text can present no challenge to the readings of that authoritative copy [i.e. HM 111], but it provides a curious, indeed unique, piece of evidence of the early

⁶⁸ For the Canterbury Cathedral text, I thank David Watt for supplying me with a preliminary draft of his forthcoming edition. My transcription of HM 111 is from the facsimile edition: John A. Burrow and A.I. Doyle., eds., *Thomas Hoccleve, A Facsimile of the Autograph Verse Manuscripts*, EETS s.s. 19 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

reception of Hoccleve's idiosyncratic poem."⁶⁹ I argue that we need to underscore their second clause. The Canterbury scribe's "balade" can help us understand how scribes perceived Hoccleve's texts as useful exemplars that could be adapted for and performed in new reading contexts and, more broadly, how scribes made new texts out of what they read. The Canterbury scribe, though, is not the only adapting and performing reader of the poem for whom we have material evidence: Hoccleve, himself, must be counted among *La Male Regle*'s scribal readers. When considered within his self-made collection of poems in HM 111, copied sometime between 1422-26, Hoccleve can be shown to perform the poem from earlier in his life in a new context that emphasizes its story of personal reform.

In HM 111, *La Male Regle* is accompanied by what appears at first to be a miscellaneous collection of Hoccleve's short, occasional works.⁷⁰ Among them are lyrics that celebrate or honor noblemen or civic leaders, including ballads to King Henry V, London mayor Robert Chichele, and Hoccleve's fellow bureaucrat, Henry Somer. Other ballads are highly political in tone: one commemorates the reburial of King Richard II at Westminster Abbey, a significant event by which Henry V tried to placate opponents of the Lancastrian regime, another rebukes Sir John Oldcastle for the Lollard heresies that eventually led to his execution. The remaining poems are religious devotions to Mary (e.g. two poems headed *Ad Beatam Virginem*), pieces that announce that their original contexts are to be found elsewhere in Hoccleve's oeuvre (e.g. two different envois for the *Regiment of Princes*), or both (e.g. a Marian segment excerpted from Hoccleve's

⁶⁹ Trudgill and Burrow, 180.

⁷⁰ See John A. Burrow and A.I. Doyle., introduction to *Hoccl Facs*.

contribution to the Middle English translation of Guillaume Deguilleville's *Pelerinage de l'âme*).⁷¹ *La Male Regle*, however, suggests a uniting purpose for these occasional, political, and religious poems. Together they form a collection of evidence for the social and moral maturity the poet developed in the course of his life. They portray Hoccleve as a productive, connected, and active man in his society who also worked to develop his spiritual well-being throughout his life via orthodox religious practices. In other words, they bolster the poet's authority to judge his "unwar youth" and claim he has reformed.

Just as *La Male Regle* thematically models a reflective and reflexive mode of reading to encourage its readers to appraise the narrator of the poem, his personal subject of critique, and the poem's text itself, HM 111 reveals its compiler engaged in the same practice. The HM 111 context shows Hoccleve reexamining, assembling, and organizing his poetic accomplishments, and marking the petition to Treasurer Furnivall as having occurred in the past. HM 111 emphasizes *La Male Regle*'s narrative of introspection and self-examination over its petitioning premise, as well as Hoccleve's claim to have successfully repented for his misspent youth.

Hoccleve, thus, appropriates the preexisting poem, *La Male Regle*, in HM 111, much like the Canterbury scribe does in Cathedral Archive Register O. Although their final products vary dramatically in form, both Hoccleve and the Canterbury scribe recopy and adapt the words of the poem into new textual performances that extend beyond its words. We might even consider the Canterbury scribe to offer a sympathetic reading of Hoccleve's intentions for compiling the poem into HM 111. If Hoccleve was motivated

⁷¹ See *The Pilgrimage of the Soul: A Critical Edition of the Middle English Dream Vision*, ed. Rosemarie Potz McGerr (New York: Garland, 1990).

to contextualize *La Male Regle* in the HM 111 collection to communicate the benefits of its personal penitential narrative to its audience, the Canterbury scribe demonstrates the wide applicability of its messages about morality and moderation by depersonalizing this narrative.⁷² Alternatively, it is also possible that the Canterbury text derives from a shortened version of the poem that Hoccleve wrote himself, anticipating that some of *La Male Regle*'s verse could appeal to a broader audience if recast for general moral instruction.⁷³ In this case, the HM 111 version of the poem might actually represent Hoccleve's attempt to restore and preserve its longer petitionary form, while still evoking the penitential uses of its ballad form with its compilation context.

While there is no doubt that the HM 111 copy of the poem is authoritative (though it would be more accurate to call it an authorial revision), from our perspective looking back on its limited surviving circulation history, the Canterbury scribe adds dimension and depth to the poem. Both the Canterbury scribe's variant reading and Hoccleve's authoritative—but also scribal—reading contribute to the ways we can understand *La Male Regle*. Together they offer us a collective picture of how the poem's meanings took shape through both Hoccleve's and others' transmission of it to audiences, years after its original composition. *La Male Regle* thus illustrates the fundamental state in which medieval texts exist: even those texts that survive in unique and autograph

⁷² See David Watt, *Exemplars and Exemplarity: The Making of Thomas Hoccleve's Series* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, forthcoming), 50-1, for possible evidence that a clerk of the Privy Seal may have brought the poem with him when promoted to work at Canterbury Cathedral around this time.

⁷³ David Watt also offers a parallel speculation that the Canterbury scribe could have used as his exemplar a shortened version of the poem that had been written by Hoccleve with the goal of editing it down to its penitential elements. See his "Thomas Hoccleve's *La Male Regle* in the Canterbury Cathedral Archives" (forthcoming), 6.

copies are the products of performances that repurpose and reinterpret them for manuscript audiences.

In the following chapters, I show how analyzing themes of reading and the forms of texts in manuscripts can help us account for the meanings of Hoccleve's works in terms of the sum of their uses, rather than exclusively by the interpretive possibilities in their most "authorial" versions. This method also allows me to properly historicize Hoccleve as a writer immersed in a hybrid literary culture in which reading and writing were both considered types of performance. I characterize Hoccleve's poetic style by the ways the poet seeks to collaborate with his audiences in active and vibrant reading performances. Hoccleve directs and shapes readers' interpretive experiences and encourages readers to participate in the establishment of his texts' material forms. But while, in *La Male Regle*, we have evidence of Hoccleve's own reading performance of the poem to collate with the rest of its manuscript record (as we are fortunate to have for all of his poems that survive in holograph manuscripts), we do not have this evidence for his longest and most widely circulated poem, the *Regiment of Princes*. As I argue in the first chapter, however, we can still observe Hoccleve attempting to structure his poem to solicit collaborations with and performances from readers. Through analyses of the various depictions of reading activity and its material artifacts in the *Regiment's* multiple narrative frames, I show how Hoccleve reconceptualizes medieval theories of literary authority so that they center on the role of the reader. Hoccleve's understanding of authority thus resembles Zumthor's intervocality, and the numerous manuscripts of the

poem in existence reveal emphases in its rhetoric that only become apparent by comparing variant versions of the text.

In the second chapter, I examine the role of visual layout in manuscripts of his texts in order to explore further implications of Hoccleve's placement of authority in readers and his understanding of the relationship between performances and material texts in his culture. Specifically, I investigate illumination, rubrication, and the traces left by readers in some manuscripts, as well as Hoccleve's own layouts for his occasional poems, like his ballads to Henry Somer in HM 111. I argue that these elements of marginalia indicate the presence of paratextual "scripts" that Hoccleve designs to guide readers to perceive and perform his texts in predetermined ways, encouraging awareness of the texts' past renditions. Especially for ballads, these past forms may have included oral performances. Just like performers following dramatic scripts, however, copyists and readers added their own decorations and annotations to the layout of Hoccleve's texts and thus affected their meanings: sometimes these readers seem to have followed Hoccleve's guidance, while sometimes they obscured his texts.

While I argue throughout this project that Hoccleve designs his texts to anticipate variation and actively involve readers in the production of their meanings, I do not mean to suggest that he welcomed readers' interpretations that contradicted his intentions. In the *Dialogue with a Friend*, written late in his career as part of the *Series*, Hoccleve specifically criticizes readers' misinterpretations of his role in the production of his earliest known poem, *The Letter of Cupid*. Whereas Hoccleve seems to have viewed the *Letter* as a showcase for his translation skills and his ability to navigate intertextual traditions of lover's complaints, Hoccleve claims that some readers interpreted the poem

to indicate his authorial approval of misogynist speeches by its main character. In my third chapter, I query these claims of misinterpretation with analyses of the *Letter of Cupid* text and of its surviving manuscript and early printed record, in which it circulated with very different structures throughout the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. By comparing Hoccleve's holograph copy to its subsequent scribal copies, I determine that the former is actually an authorial revision that specifically attempts to resolve ambiguities in the poem's verse that may have led to the misinterpretation he critiques. Though his revised version of the text does not seem to have circulated widely, by considering the manuscript and early printed contexts within which it did circulate, I argue that his authorial posture as an adaptor of intertexts was successfully communicated to later readers—even when the *Letter* was misattributed to Chaucer.

Finally, in a short conclusion, I postulate that Hoccleve's poetics of reading—his efforts to thematically and materially involve readers in the construction of his authority and texts—may have broad significance for understanding the trajectory of English poetic development after Chaucer. By considering the manner in which Chaucer's *House of Fame* critiques the competing voices of authority that vie for cultural importance in textual traditions, I argue that Hoccleve's work resolves debates about the relative value of authors by foregrounding the reader's role in determining that value. By briefly looking ahead to John Skelton's *Garland of Laurell* in its surviving printed and manuscript contexts at the beginning of the sixteenth century, I suggest that a poetics deriving from readers' authority was a central characteristic in English literature that extended from the late medieval period into early modernity.

Chapter 1 Intervocality and the Authority of the Reader in the *Regiment of Princes*

As the examples from the *Series* and *La Male Regle* that I presented in the Introduction show, a hallmark of Thomas Hoccleve's poetic style is his thematization of the materiality of reading. The physical processes of reading and crafting texts figure prominently in his subject matter, and figured readers (his own personae among them) guide his narratives. This thematization shows Hoccleve responding to the cultural tension between writers and readers that was ongoing in the late medieval period by turning it into a source for creative expression. This tension was formed as writers sought more control over the meanings and circulation of texts that they turned over to the agency of their readers.¹ Hoccleve's creative response was to design his poems in such a way as to acknowledge his audiences' roles in shaping the meanings and forms of his texts. When considered in the context of his poems' surviving manuscripts, this design also shows Hoccleve leaving himself a way to reengage with his textual materials over time to redirect their rhetoric and meaning for new purposes.

The thematic and practical weight placed on readers in his texts reveals that Hoccleve theorized literary and textual authority to revolve around readers and reading practices. Medieval theories of authority may have provided an historical basis for

¹ Cynthia Brown, in *Poets, Patrons, and Printers: Crisis of Authority in Late Medieval France* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995), 17-60, argues that late-medieval French poets including Christine de Pizan and Gillaume de Machaut (with whom Hoccleve was undoubtedly familiar), were becoming more protective of their texts and sought to control their circulation and recopyings. Deborah McGrady, in *Controlling Readers: Guillaume de Machaut and His Late Medieval Audience* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006), 8-16, 61-76, 157-63, 185-7, explores the complexities in this protectiveness much more deeply to show how Machaut actively sought to negotiate with the "inventive readers" among scribes, performers, artists, and limners who mediated his work before it reached his intended reading public, and their responses. Laurel Amtower, in *Engaging Words: The Culture of Reading in the Later Middle Ages* (New York: Palgrave, 2000), offers a complementary survey of the ways reading was conceptualized in terms of the reciprocal relationship between readers and authors, and the producers and audiences of material texts, focusing on Chaucer and his continental influences.

Hoccleve's placement of authority in readers, but one characteristic of these theories was a hierarchical design that subordinated readers to the creative agency of writers and scribes. In the doctrine of the *causae moventes ad scribendum*, the "causes moving to write" that St. Bonaventure and other scholastic philosophers popularized in the thirteenth century, responsibility for a text's content was successively dispersed among scribes, commentators, and compilers before being made available to an audience.² Philosophers did not think that this audience was comprised of passive consumers of texts. They treated people involved in mediating texts for other readers (or listeners at a performance) as having more authority for determining its meaning, form, and value than people receiving a text without participating in its ongoing transmission. Hoccleve, however, seems to operate on the assumption that every reader is a source of authority, whether they are involved in circulating and performing texts or just reading and hearing them. In a culture based on manuscript circulation that was closely coupled with the aural reception of texts, he seems to ground his sense of authority on the principle that each reading and each member of a text's audience is dependent on other readers who transmit a text materially to them or perform the text orally for them. Authority is thus accrued in readings, and in the ways that audiences use texts, rather than being disseminated from a single creating source.

As such, Hoccleve's reader-centered theory of authority has an affinity with Paul Zumthor's notion of *intervocality*, in which the connections between readers and readings that occur in Hoccleve's texts and between their manuscripts form an immanent network.

² See Alastair J. Minnis, *Medieval Theory of Authorship: Scholastic Literary Attitudes in the Later Middle Ages* (London: Scholar Press, 1984), 80-1. I discuss the *causae* at greater length below, pp. 53-9.

Intervocality is a term that describes how fictions of reading in texts blend with the reality of reading and writing texts in a culture that is lived and experienced. Zumthor's original coinage of the term describes the connections between "vocalities," the many momentary performed oral readings of a text for which each written copy stands in. Building on this term, I see intervocality as a way to describe the full set of relationships formed between a text's content and its manifestations over time, be they written, read silently or privately, *or* performed aloud. Each reading of a text is a new variant version of the text, both in terms of the verbal form of its content and in terms of the material and social context in which it is presented and perceived. Intervocality offers a picture of literary authority that accounts for how audiences remake texts as they read, recopy, or listen to them, rather than the conventional medieval understanding of literary authority that conferred the most responsibility for a text on the people who seemed most proximal to a text's point of origin. Whereas hierarchical models of authority are still prevalent in modern "authoritative" editions of medieval texts, I argue that Hoccleve can show us how to rethink these models to account for reading histories. Hoccleve's focus on readers and their interpretive agency levels out this authority. Hoccleve's texts are designed to fit into networks that include variant written versions along with variant readings of each of those versions.

Intervocality presents a way to describe the manner in which Hoccleve depicted readers' authority in the content of his texts. Hoccleve both explicitly and implicitly illustrated readers' interpretive agency, modeling the reading practices he desired for his texts. These efforts to define parameters for reading his texts, however, also draw attention to readers' activities—and ultimately demonstrate the control over his texts that

Hoccleve ceded to readers. As I show later in this chapter and in following chapters, manuscript variation evidence suggests that readers exercised their authority over Hoccleve's texts so prolifically that when he attempted to reassert authority over their forms and interpretations, he did so by drawing attention to his own creative *reading* activities. In these authorial rereadings, he revises his texts in response to changing audiences like some of his most important English literary predecessors: Langland, Chaucer, and Gower.³ Manuscript evidence suggests that these major fourteenth-century poets tried to reshape the material forms of their texts that were already in circulation. Hoccleve's documented participation in the surviving manuscript record of his texts, along with the extensive treatment in his verse of the relationship between scribes and their audiences, highlights the way he envisioned his audiences collaborating with him in acts of reading, interpreting, and transmitting his texts.

In this chapter, I argue that the amount of authority Hoccleve derives from these "collaborations" with audiences can be discerned in the connections between his texts' fictional content and their real status as circulating objects in fifteenth-century literary culture. Often, these connections are grounded in a text's narrative as Hoccleve demonstrates the authority readers have to assign value to the text, to read it in specific ways, or to benefit morally or socially from reading it. Hoccleve occasionally describes quite directly the ways he hopes readers will engage with his texts, much like Chaucer does in his "Wordes Unto Adam, His Owne Scriveyn"—clarifying or critiquing the amount of effort he desires in a reading of his works.⁴ Sometimes Hoccleve structures a

³ See Introduction, pp. 8-9 n.9.

⁴ Geoffrey Chaucer, "Chaucers Wordes Unto Adam, His Owne Scriveyn," *Riverside Ch*, 650.

text to encourage readers implicitly to interpret the text in particular ways, such as through allusions to cultural-historical events or figures that frame readings in contexts of his choosing. Without Hoccleve's sanction, however, scribes and readers forge connections themselves with a text's content as they select from, recontextualize, and introduce variations into the manuscripts they read or design. The ways in which a text is manipulated or referred to as a whole entity by scribes and readers also shows how a text could be treated as an object that carries a certain value *in* the world of readers.

Hoccleve's oeuvre reveals the poet seeking out readers to collaborate in his poems' meanings, by drawing attention to his own role in developing his texts while acknowledging readers' interpretive agency. Hoccleve participates in the networks of multiple and variant readings within which—via his texts' manuscript record—we can see readers exercising that agency. As a consequence, I argue that Hoccleve sets up his readers to emphasize key aspects of his poems' content, especially in his narratives like the *Regiment of Princes*. These emphases clarify his claims for his own and his readers' relative authority over his texts.

The *Regiment of Princes*: Compiler as Reader

The collaborative dynamic between Hoccleve and his readers can be witnessed especially in his poem the *Regiment of Princes*, because it offers the widest survey of his readership. The *Regiment*, which survives in more manuscripts than any of Hoccleve's other poems and all but four other works of Middle English verse,⁵ was written circa

⁵ M.C. Seymour, "The Manuscripts of Hoccleve's *Regiment of Princes*," *Edinburgh Bibliographical Society Transactions* 4.7 (1974): 255. The four more numerous surviving verse texts are Richard Rolle's *Prick of Conscience*, Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, Langland's *Piers Plowman*, and Gower's *Confessio Amantis*.

1411 under the premise of advising the rising Prince Henry (soon to be Henry V) on matters of good governance. With so many surviving copies, we have a wealth of textual evidence within which to analyze readers' responses to Hoccleve's narrative and its subject matter.⁶

The *Regiment* has two major parts: an advice-giving narrative, which itself is divided into themed sections of lessons about moral conduct, and a prologue, spanning the first 2,016 of the poem's 5,463 lines, which features a dialogue between Hoccleve's narrative persona and an old man.⁷ Between the two parts, and prefacing the advice narrative, is a section known as the "Words of the Compiler to the Prince." In this section, the narrator assumes a posture of extreme deference and humility before his purported reader, asking the prince for the "license" (*RofP* 2024) to declare to him his "inward wil" (*RofP* 2027), though it may represent nothing more than a "dul conceit" (*RofP* 2057). He also subordinates his own poetic authority to that of the late Geoffrey Chaucer, whom he describes as the English Cicero and Aristotle, and whom he claims was his "maistir" and "fadir," though he humbly admits he learned "lyte or nagh" (*RofP* 2077-79) from him due to his own dullness.⁸ The description of Chaucer as the English heir to Greek philosophy and Latin rhetoric and then the narrator's self-association with

⁶ There are 43 manuscripts total, not counting two fragments of a 44th. One of these fragments I have personally examined, Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Rawlinson D. 913 f.63, contains lines 2185-2247 of the poem, except for the stanza comprised of lines 2213-19, which the copyist left out, probably out of carelessness. See John A. Burrow, *Thomas Hoccleve, Authors of the Middle Ages*, no. 4 (Brookfield, VT: Variorum Ashgate, 1994), 50-1, for a list of all the manuscripts.

⁷ Except where stated, I cite the poem from the most recent edition: *RofP*. While not a critical edition, it reflects the poem's two earliest copies emended with word forms from the three surviving manuscripts that have survived in Hoccleve's own handwriting. See Charles Blyth, introduction to *RofP*, 14-26.

⁸ *RofP* 2073-2107, consists of five stanzas describing Chaucer as the English Cicero and Aristotle, and lamenting his death. See David Lawton, "Dullness and the Fifteenth Century," *ELH* 54.4 (1987): 761-799, for discussion of the late-medieval trope by which poets used self-deprecation to bolster their authority.

him (regardless of the quality of the claimed association) signals Hoccleve's claim to have a direct link to the foundational sources of Western knowledge. This association extends to the addressed reader as well, making a claim for the significance of the prince's national literature and congratulating royal efforts to patronize vernacular poetic production in English.⁹ It also structures Hoccleve's own claim to be in a second generation of English poets around a metaphor of Chaucer's "fatherhood."

From the perspective of noble readers of the poem, the narrator's address to the prince would implicitly offer an opportunity to listen-in to a "pseudo-private" exchange between the country's sovereign political authority and a writer privileged to have his ear. This effect is facilitated by the narrative run-up to this section in which the old man in the poem's prologue recommends the narrator write the advice narrative as a petition to the prince—which the narrator then does. The narrator's painstaking attention to his named audience establishes a realism with which readers were meant to identify, putting themselves in the prince's place in the poem's narrative and assuming some of his social authority in the relationship to the narrating persona of the text. This "staged" address to the royal persona mainly allows Hoccleve to use the prince as a focal point for a wider audience to give weight to the cultural and moral criticism he offers throughout the poem.¹⁰ As I discuss later in the chapter, Hoccleve's petition to the prince may have been real, but more importantly, the framing of the petition in the *Regiment's* narrative offers

⁹ See Paul Strohm, *England's Empty Throne: Usurpation and the Language of Legitimation, 1399-1422* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998), 180-191, for an examination of how Chaucer was used to cement Lancastrian power by building a nationalist literary tradition around him.

¹⁰ See Anne Middleton, "The Idea of Public Poetry in the Reign of Richard II," *Speculum* 53 (1978): 107, for her argument that kings are not the imagined audiences for texts of this sort, but that they rather communicate the writer's desire to rise to a public occasion and appeal to a broad, politically-minded audience.

members of Hoccleve's broader audience a chance to explore the dynamics of patronage relationships via their active reading methods.¹¹

Accompanying his statements of humility before the prince and Chaucer, Hoccleve continues his portrayal of readers' authority by announcing the three source texts from which his narrative is derived and modeling interpretations of them. He offers an implicit interpretation of the anonymous *Secreta Secretorum*, for instance, with the hint that he and the prince (or any patron identifying himself with the prince) can model their own relationship on the text's figured relationship between Aristotle and Alexander the Great. In this relationship, the extremely powerful monarch willingly places himself into the tutelage of a scribe by accepting the latter's letters. In the earliest manuscripts of the *Regiment*, this modeled relationship is accented by an illumination depicting a cleric on his knees, presenting a book to a prince.¹²

The narrator models interpretations of his other principal sources a bit more overtly in the text. Concerning Giles of Rome's *De regimine principum*, a thirteenth-century collection of Latin tales derived from Aristotle's *Ethics* and *Politics* that gives Hoccleve's own poem its title, the narrator announces: "of Gyles of Regiment / Of Princes, plotmeel thynke I to translate" (*RofP* 2052-3). Similarly, of his third source,

¹¹ In this sense, Hoccleve's audience is fictional in the manner that Walter Ong describes in his essay, "A Writer's Audience is Always a Fiction," *PMLA* 90.1 (1975): 9-21. Such an audience must fictionalize itself as Hoccleve's audience in order to participate in his rhetoric. Hoccleve's imagined audience among the nobility who might have access to his manuscripts, however, is much more specifically and narrowly defined than the amorphous collectives to whom Ong suggests most writers direct their narratives. Anne Middleton calls these imagined groups of readers a writer's "public" to distinguish them from the actual readership garnered by his or her work. The public to whom Hoccleve directed the *Regiment* seems to have been limited to the English nobility and their clerical staff. See Middleton, "The Audience and Public of 'Piers Plowman'," in *Middle English Alliterative Poetry and its Literary Background: Seven Essays*, ed. David Lawton (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1982), 102.

¹² London, British Library, MS Arundel 38, fol. 37r. British Library, MS Harley 4866 likely had a similar portrait on its missing folio between f. 36-37. See *BLCIM*, s.v. "Arundel 38" and "Harley 4866."

Jacob de Cessolis' *Chessbook*, a popular sermon that represents the moral pressures on each medieval social estate with analogies to chess pieces, he proposes that "heere and there, as that my litil wit / Affoorthe may, I thynke translate it" (*RofP* 2113-4). While translating texts "plotmeel" (piecemeal) and "here and there" might create the impression that the writer considers his work to derive casually from existing texts, guided by his own whimsy, the subtext in these comments is a claim to authorize his own interpretative selections by associating such readings with the genre of exemplary narrative.¹³ As their organization into themed sections shows, the moral tales Hoccleve translates from his sources are very deliberately selected and brought into concordance with one another. By directly mentioning his source texts, Hoccleve flaunts his confidence as a translator, and by drawing attention to his act of selection, he cues his audience to examine his skill as a compiler and reader.

Hoccleve's claims for the authority he vests in his own readers come to light when his narrating persona describes how he hopes the prince will receive this volume:

I am seur that tho bookes alle three
Red hath and seen your innat sapience;
And as I hope, hir vertu folwen yee.
But unto yow compyle I this sentence
That, at the good lust of your excellence,
In short yee mowen beholde heer and rede
That in hem thre is scatered fer in brede. (*RofP* 2129-35)

In this stanza, the narrator subordinates Hoccleve's authority as a compiler of texts to the authority of his reader because the prince is likely already to have read the texts in their original language. With the prince noted as such an experienced reader, the narrator casts

¹³ See Larry Scanlon, *Narrative, Authority, and Power: The Medieval Exemplum and the Chaucerian Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), for discussion of the popularity and significance of this genre in the late Middle Ages and the *Regiment's* place in it.

the benefit of his book as its ability to make the “sentence” (in the sense of “maxims” or pieces of wisdom, from the Latin *sententiae*) of the three sources more conveniently accessible. The narrator’s deference to the prince puts Hoccleve on the record as assuming that the prince is a good reader, who is already innately wise enough to follow the virtues his text teaches. Thus, the following stanza addresses other uses the prince may have for the book since the narrator cannot actually suggest that the prince needs to learn new information from it:

And although it be no maneere of neede
Yow to consaille what to doon or leeve,
Yit if yow list of stories taken heede,
Sumwhat it may profyte, by your leeve;
At hardest, whan yee been in chambre at eeve,
They been good for to dryve foorth the nyght;
They shal nat harme if they be herd aright. (*RofP* 2136-42)

If nothing else, the narrator expresses a hope that his work could be read for entertainment in the evening, even if the reader can find no other profit in it. The succession of uses that the narrator describes for the book (a convenient compilation of exempla, a collection of possibly beneficial advisory stories, casual bedtime reading) increasingly discounts the authority Hoccleve claims for his role as a writer and amplifies the reader’s role in determining the text’s value.

Following the narrator’s pronouncements of his own dull wit and humbleness in the presence of his royal reader and textual tradition, and following his displacement of authority for the advice in the book onto his sources, Hoccleve leaves the impression that he relinquishes almost all authority in the text to his readers, except for his own interpretive selections. Several studies of this part of the *Regiment* have interpreted Hoccleve’s ultimate deference to readers, especially a royal reader, as a self-authorizing

gesture meant to bolster his stature as a poet in the literary culture of the early fifteenth century.¹⁴ While this is true, the themes of reading and royal reading placed in an exemplary narrative framed by a dialogue with a destitute old man make the claims of authority for the *Regiment's* authorial persona very unstable.¹⁵ I argue that his deferential rhetoric is meant to convey the impression that literary authority does not reside in any particular person, persona, or source to the exclusion of others.¹⁶ Hoccleve seems less interested in pinning down authority in himself and his text than he is in creating a framework within which he can connect his own acts of reading to those of his readers.

Dispersing Authority Among Readers

The prevalent model of literary authority in the late middle ages would have led Hoccleve in the direction of placing authority in his readers. This model of authority, though, was hierarchical and centered on the creation and creators of texts, offering writers nuanced ways to describe the amount and kinds of agency they exercised in the books they composed and encountered. Based on exegetical techniques originating in Latin ecclesiastical texts of the thirteenth century, especially in St. Bonaventure's commentary on Peter Lombard's *Sentences*, the model attempted to account for the Aristotelian *causae moventes ad scribendum* (causes moving to write) in the texts of

¹⁴ See Richard Firth Green, *Poets and Princepleasers: Literature and the English Court in the Late Middle Ages* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1980), 141-52, 165-6; Scanlon, *Narrative, Authority, and Power*, 298-322; and Robert Meyer-Lee, *Poets and Power from Chaucer to Wyatt* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 88-123.

¹⁵ Nicholas Perkins, *Hoccleve's Regiment of Princes: Counsel and Constraint* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2001), 70-84.

¹⁶ See Scanlon, 38, for a similar, but general, view that Hoccleve's sense of authority entailed "not just deference to the past but a claim of identification with it and a representation of that identity made by one part of the present to another." Later in his book, 298-302, Scanlon discusses how Hoccleve attempts to strike a balance between deference to the literary authority of figures like Chaucer and Gower, and the political authority of Prince Henry.

Scripture, Augustine, and the early Church fathers. These “causes” (explored in terms of hierarchies of motivations and roles through which people were assigned responsibility for a text or parts of it) added complex human agents of authority to the standard theological notion that Biblical text was the ultimate product of God, the divine *auctor*. This made possible an understanding that authors of individual books of the Bible (including apocryphal ones) were craftsmen of their texts according to their own intentions and limitations, even when divinely inspired.¹⁷ What the *Regiment* and other examples from Hoccleve’s poetry show, however, is that Hoccleve was joining in the poetic efforts of late medieval vernacular writers to reconceptualize the traditional hierarchical model to make way for a much stronger emphasis on readers.¹⁸

As Alastair Minnis demonstrates in his study of the medieval understanding of literary authority, a fairly new notion that texts were products of craftsmanship processes (by which, of course, they had always been fashioned) allowed late-medieval theorists to begin describing the many roles people could play in producing texts and adapting them for various reading contexts. By focusing on the human complexities of a book’s production and reception, St. Bonaventure parsed the activities of *auctor*, *scriptor*, *commentator*, and *compilator*, in order to determine to whom he could assign the authority and responsibility for the actual content of a text that may have circulated in numerous versions for centuries.¹⁹ All of these roles would be subordinated to the

¹⁷ Alastair J. Minnis, *Medieval Theory of Authorship: Scholastic Literary Attitudes in the Later Middle Ages* (London: Scolar Press, 1984), 80-1.

¹⁸ See Emily Steiner, “Authority,” in *Middle English*, ed. Paul Strohm, Oxford Twenty-First Century Approaches to Literature (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 142-159, for remarks about how this reconceptualization is apparent especially in medieval cycle plays and William Langland’s *Piers Plowman*.

¹⁹ Minnis, 94-5.

authority of God as the main source of inspiration for a text, but then break down according to the amount of original effort a person contributed to it. Regarding the biblical Book of Wisdom, for instance, which inspired numerous commentaries following St. Augustine's original analysis of its provenance in *De doctrina christiana*,²⁰ Robert Holcot and Nicholas of Lyra joined Bonaventure in isolating Solomon's role as "principle human auctor" from God's role as the source of all "wisdom." They then attributed to either Philo the Jew or Jesus, son of Sirach, the role of compiling the actual sayings in the Book from diverse sources or hearsay, or for translating a lost Hebrew Book of Solomon.²¹ While this may have placed the compiler in a lower position among the text's authorities than the supposed original speaker or writer of the text's words, the compiler was certainly recognized for having a creative role in forming the version of a text people would read; the compiler was nearer to the readers of a text.

Commentators and compilers found a space in the late Middle Ages to develop new ambitious projects to help mediate the wisdom available in their culture's canonical texts for other readers (in the form of *sententiae* or *exempla*). Devising an elaborate organizational system of *ordinatio* to help readers understand and use his text, Vincent of Beauvais' encyclopedic *Speculum maius* was the grandest of such compilations during the period. In this project, dated to the mid-thirteenth century, he attempted to assemble and organize all knowledge he could collect about the natural world, scholastic doctrine, and history into three compendia.²² But since Vincent and his successors drew their

²⁰ Augustine, *On Christian Doctrine* (trans. D.W. Robertson, Jr.), 2.8.13.

²¹ Minnis, 96.

²² *Ibid.*, 154. The compendia are named the *Speculum naturale*, *Speculum doctrinale*, and *Speculum historiale*.

material from Roman and Greek philosophers and poets *as well as* from Scripture, patristic writers, and contemporary Christian scholars, one consequence of commentators' and compilers' work was to make common the moral justification of techniques that brought all these authorities together. It came to be recognized that "the literary activities of Christian and pagan *auctores* were comparable"²³ and that secular and sacred poets could be understood as writing from a common ground of literary theory.²⁴ Because of this, Ovid could be examined for what he revealed about human morality and then exegetically interpreted in the context of Christian culture and doctrine, as he was in Pierre Bersuire's extremely popular *Ovidius Moralizatus* (also known as the *Ovide moralisé*).²⁵ Hoccleve himself demonstrates the popularity of this technique in his poem *La Male Regle*, written a few years prior to the *Regiment*, when he invokes a pagan God of Health, Solomon, and even contemporary commentators on the Book of Wisdom. One of these commentators, Robert Holcot, whom Hoccleve directly cites in his verse, was known for his "classicizing" techniques that showed how moral wisdom derived from Scripture could be demonstrated by pagans from antique tales, such as Ulysses.²⁶

The authority attributed to commentators and compilers was still conventionally understood to represent a different sort of authority from that in the texts being compiled or commented upon, however. Vincent of Beauvais emphasized this in the *Speculum* by introducing his opinions and those of his contemporaries with the word *actor*, to mark a

²³ Ibid., 113.

²⁴ Ibid., 138-9.

²⁵ See Minnis, 142, for his description of the blending of secular and sacred authority in Bersuire.

²⁶ In *La Male Regle*, Hoccleve refers to Holcot in terms of his book: "Holcote seith vpon the book also / Of Sapience, as it can testifie, / Whan þat Vlixes saillid to and fro / By meermaides this was his policie" (*LMR* 249-52).

contrast with the scriptural and classical *auctores*.²⁷ This word choice emphasizes how writers were beginning to see themselves as forming secondary relationships to valued source texts, “performing” accepted sources of authority upon the stage of new analytical and interpretive projects. This should not be seen as a complete subordination of “modern” authority to the “ancient,” though, because at the same time it showed *auctoritate* to be subject to analysis—subject to reading. While *auctores* were acknowledged as sources of texts, they were framed in practical ways for people to read and understand with their own intentions and purposes.

By Hoccleve’s time, readers’ interpretive authority was already being factored into the model of authority presented by the *causae moventes ad scribendum* as writers began to anticipate and facilitate methods of “active” reading applied to their texts. As Suzanne Reynolds describes in her study of twelfth and thirteenth-century reading practices, the style of reading for extractable passages, commonplaces, and authoritative excerpts made “reading that acknowledges texts to be useful, valuable, and even pleasurable in themselves”²⁸ central to literary culture throughout Britain and Europe. Likewise, as Vincent Gillespie has argued, the prominence of a glossing and commentary tradition throughout the medieval period (and even reaching back into late antiquity) suggests that medieval readers were “recognized as active participators in the generation of meaning, not just passive consumers of an encoded truth”²⁹ by writers of the era. As

²⁷ See Minnis, 157-8, and Vincent Gillespie, “From the twelfth century to c. 1450,” in *The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism*, vol. 2, *The Middle Ages*, eds. Alastair Minnis and Ian Johnson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 182-5.

²⁸ Suzanne Reynolds, *Medieval Reading: Grammar, Rhetoric, and the Classical Text* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 149.

²⁹ Vincent Gillespie, “From the twelfth century to c. 1450,” in *The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism*, v.2, eds. Alastair Minnis and Ian Johnson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 148.

described above, the “Words from the Complier to the Prince” section of the *Regiment of Princes* illustrates Hoccleve’s allusions to source-texts that represent just such an attempt to structure exemplary material with a thematic and narrative system to make it accessible to readers. The layout of the *Regiment*’s manuscripts also commonly accent this structuring system with *ordinatio* devices like individually titled sections and marginal glosses that refer readers to the poem’s Latin sources. Additionally, Hoccleve’s descriptions of readers’ activity in the section reveal his understanding that his audience’s motivations for reading ultimately filtered out and replaced his own intentions for writing.

The increasing authority being granted to readers in the late-medieval period was also influenced by the popularizing of Nicholas of Lyra’s main contribution to exegetical theory: his refinement of the concept of *sensus litteralis* (the literal sense) which he detailed in his 1331 commentary on the Bible, *Postilla litteralis*.³⁰ Cutting through mystical interpretations of figurative language to give primary meaning to that which a text was “meant” to express, its literal sense, Nicholas advocated using a technique similar to our modern methods of close reading: a careful study of the actual basic meanings of the immediate things to which the words of a text referred in its original language.³¹ While the literal sense imposes limitations upon a text’s meanings based on

³⁰ Blyth, introduction to *RofP*, 12, provides evidence that Hoccleve was likely familiar with the biblical commentary tradition that included Nicholas.

³¹ See Rhonda Wauhkonen, “The authority of text: Nicholas of Lyra’s Judeo-Christian Hermeneutic and *The Canterbury Tales*,” *Florilegium* 11 (1992): 145; Ralph Hanna, et al, “Latin commentary tradition and vernacular literature,” in *The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism*, vol. 2, *The Middle Ages*, eds. Alastair Minnis and Ian Johnson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 394-5; and for a thorough history of the “literal sense” as applied in heterodox theology see Rita Copeland, *Pedagogy, Intellectuals, and Dissent in the Later Middle Ages: Lollardy and Ideas of Learning* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 51-140.

assumptions about authorial intent, as Rhonda Wauhkonen describes, it also “introduces a volitional aspect to reading in which the text invites the reader to be a participant in its ‘unpacking.’ If the reader chooses to respond appropriately, the text leads him or her through the various levels of fiction into its essential ‘meaning’: if such effort on the part of the reader is not made, the process of reading is stymied.”³² The possibility that a literal or intended meaning was best found in a text’s words, rather than beyond them in mystical figurations, enhanced the authority of a text’s most immediate producers, but it also probably made readers much more aware of their own importance in bringing about the realization of a text’s meaning.

This awareness was confronted in an interesting academic statute at the University of Paris in 1340. According to Johannes M.M.H. Thijssen’s analysis, this directive to the Paris faculty of arts discouraged the use of hermeneutic methods meant to deal with multiple meanings in texts (including methods being popularized by Nicholas of Lyra, Bonaventure, and Robert Holcot), particularly when teaching students. The statute’s authors critiqued their colleagues’ rigorous linguistic scrutiny for privileging the corruptible letter of a text over the intentions of the venerable author who wrote it. Instead, the statute sanctions a method of reading that relied on a reader’s prior understanding of a text’s author to help him decode a text’s meaning. Although the statute does not address how a reader may acquire an understanding of an author and his intentions, it does acknowledge the importance of the reader’s determining presence in

³² Wauhkonen, 151.

the interpretation of an author's work.³³ As Minnis suggests, the recognition of how readers ultimately had a freedom of choice in their interpretations is one of the key characteristics of the medieval theory of authority that proliferates in examples throughout the period. By the fifteenth century, it became practically a cliché for poets to disclaim their own responsibility for the meaning in their works and defer to the interpretive responsibility of their readers.³⁴ As the University of Paris statute shows, even when conflict arose over methodology, both new and established pedagogues acknowledged the ultimate authority a reader had over a text.

In Hoccleve's work, however, his recognition of readers' authority is a constitutive force that shows him negotiating the potential for variant readings in his narratives. Whereas in the *Regiment of Princes* he often embraces this potential, there is also a recurring theme of anxiety in this and his other poems about the interpretive power readers can claim to have over his texts. One example from his other work occurs in his

³³ Johannes M.M.H. Thijssen, "The Crisis Over Ockhamist Hermeneutic and its Semantic Background: The Methodological Significance of The Censure of December 29, 1340," in *Vestigia, Imagines, Verba: Semiotics and Logic in Medieval Theological Texts (XIIIth-XIVth Century)*, ed. by Constantino Marmo (Tournhout, Belgium: BREPOLs, 1997), 384-6. He does not go so far as to generalize like I am implying, but with the corroboration of Minnis' research and evidence from Hoccleve later in the period, I think that it is a tenable position to take.

³⁴ Minnis, *Theory of Authorship*, 193, 201. See also Minnis, 185, for two examples he cites from Gower to illustrate the proliferation of such a disclaimer: (1) lines 1445-6 of *Vox clamantis*, book vii: "Hec set vt auctor ego non scripsi metra libello,/ Que tamen audiui trado legenda tibi," which he translates: "But I have not written as an authority these verses in a book; rather, I am passing on what I heard for you to read"; (2) one of the versions of the epilogue to the *Confessio amantis*, which I cite from John Gower, *Confessio Amantis*, vol. 1, 2nd ed., ed. Russel A. Peck (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute, 2006):

Whan I this book began to maake,
 In som partie it mai by take
 As for to lawhe and for to pleye;
 And for to looke in other weye,
 It mai be wisdom to the wise,
 So that somdel for good apprise
 And eek somdel for lust and game
 I have it mad, as thilke same
 Which axe for to been excused (*Confessio amantis* Book 8, lines 3056*-64*)

late poem the *Dialogue with a Friend*, which comprises part of the narrative frame for the *Series*. In it, Hoccleve's narrative persona responds to offended female readers of Hoccleve's first datable poem, *The Letter of Cupid*, a translation of Christine de Pizan's poem *Epistre au dieu d'Amours*.³⁵ Hoccleve's narrator claims that these readers are responsible for their own offense because they misinterpreted the poem. According to the narrator, these readers, who interpreted the poem as a statement of Hoccleve's misogyny, were misguided by their method of reading and to *whom* they assigned responsibility for its antifeminism. The narrator protests:

Whoso þat seith I am hire aduersarie
And dispreise hir condicions and port,
For þat I made of hem swich a report,

He misauysed is, and eek to blame.
Whan I it spak I spak compleynyngly.
I to hem thoghte no reproof ne shame. (D 768-73)

Expressed by the persona of the writer, this depicts a model of reading that incorporates his awareness that the stances a poet adopts in a textual medium are inherently fictional into a concession that readers may not be aware of that fictionality. His frustration with "misadvised" readers who do not recognize the fiction seems to be based on an expectation that his audience should understand his rhetorical posturing, but he also acknowledges the readers' freedom to bring whatever interpretation they want or can to a text. By referring to the rhetorical style of the complaint in which the *Letter* was written, he signals his disappointment that his audience did not perceive the genre's convention and allow for more distance between the author and the voices his persona assumes in the

³⁵ I will expand on the relationship between these passages of the *Series* and the *Letter of Cupid*, itself, in Chapter 3.

text. He seems to be annoyed, in fact, with how close this audience thought they could be to him.

He also criticizes his female readers for not reading the whole text before judging its voices. If they had done so, he claims, they would have found that “The book concludeth for hem” (*D* 779). This criticism of readers’ reading of a complaint is placed in the compilation of the *Series* in such a way as to complicate the book’s own structure. The dialogue the narrator is having with his friend serves in part as a commentary on the preceding poem in the *Series*, the narrator’s *Complaint* about how his friends and colleagues view his mental health. It also lays a foundation for the rest of the *Series* by qualifying the responsibility he claims for the three verse translations that follow the *Dialogue*. These qualifications crystallize as the narrator points out to the friend about *The Letter of Cupid*:

Considereth, therof was I noon auctour.
I nas in þat cas but a reportour
Of folkes tales. As they [*the female readers*] seide, I wroot.
I nat affermed it on hem, God woot.

Whoso þat shal reherce a mannes sawe
As þat he seith moot he seyn and nat varie,
For, and he do, he dooth ageyn the lawe
Of trouthe. He may tho wordes nat contrarie. (*D* 760-7)

Not only does this add to his critique of the reader for choosing to blame him rather than the original *auctor* for offensive content, but it also serves as a claim for his capabilities as a translator: he claims to adhere to “the law of truth” and would not dare to alter the meaning of a source text. This strong claim for his own ability as a translator is also a claim for his ability as a reader. Following his correction of his audience’s hermeneutics, it is also an attempt to bolster the credibility of the three translations that follow the

Dialogue (which, in themselves, further demonstrate his interpretive and linguistic skills while retroactively trying to reinforce the *Letter of Cupid* translation). This claim also evokes for his readers a sense that, via his “rehearsal,” they are over-hearing his own direct observations of his sources. Hoccleve achieves this effect with the same language Chaucer uses to authenticate his observations of the pilgrims in the *General Prologue*.³⁶ Though Hoccleve uses terminology derived from a hierarchical model of authority, marking the different assumed levels of responsibility for a text’s *auctor* versus its “reporter” (i.e. scribe or compiler), this passage shows him drawing attention to how readers can impact the meaning of the texts they read—properly in his own case and improperly in the case of the readers of the *Letter of Cupid*.

Even though the narrator corrects and criticizes Hoccleve’s readers, their interpretations of his text and the reputation they have given Hoccleve remains—and he must respond to it. Thus he turns the need to appease his offended readers into the rationale for selecting the texts he translates in the *Series* (particularly the *Tale of Jereslaus’ Wife*) and incorporates a statement of this rationale into the narrative frame of the compilation in lines 799-826 of the *Dialogue*. This implies that Hoccleve sees an audience’s interpretation, no matter how close it is to a writer’s intent, as existing in a real social context that is significant enough to shape a writer’s goals.³⁷ The text becomes

³⁶ CTI (A), 731-735: “Whoso shal telle a tale after a man, / He moot reherce as ny as evere he kan / Everich a word, if it be in his charge, / Al speke he never so rudeliche and large, / Or ellis he moot telle his tale untrewe.”

³⁷ Roger Ellis, in his introduction to Thomas Hoccleve, *‘My Compleinte’ and Other Poems* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2001) 9, dismisses Hoccleve’s understatement of his authority in the *Dialogue* as a conventional gesture meant to signal an assertion of authorial status under a guise of humility. While the gesture is conventional, used notably by Chaucer to show he could stand toe-to-toe with renowned continental authors, I think the frustration Hoccleve’s narrator expresses in the *Dialogue* is directed at readers who understood the convention’s use as an assertion of authority. Hoccleve’s complaint is that

a site for the author to make an assertion about the relationship between a writer and his audience but also a site at which he must concede his lack of control.

Re-Centering Modern Conceptions of Medieval Authority on the Reader

Although several studies of the late-medieval period acknowledge the trend among writers to complicate conceptions of authority by positioning their works in relation to readers, these studies have generally still reproduced the hierarchies of poet-centered authority that they claim were called into question. Seth Lerer, for instance, suggests that the four levels of authority writers could claim from the *causae* began to blur in English verse with Chaucer, as literary production was realized socially and collaboratively “in moments of reception and transmission.”³⁸ But Lerer’s focus on the manner in which Chaucer is reconstructed as a model of authority by English poets of the fifteenth century, making them all “Chaucerians,”³⁹ superimposes a new hierarchy on these poets built upon the texts of a vernacular *auctor* rather than a pool of Latinate sources. While it is true that Hoccleve, Lydgate, and other fifteenth-century writers did rely on the associations they could make with Chaucer to posit a basis for part of their authority, these writers were by no means limited to Chaucerian associations in the ways they engaged their own readers in the appraisal and interpretation of their works.

Jocelyn Wogan-Browne et al, in their anthology of metatextual commentary gleaned mainly from prologues to medieval texts, go a few steps further than Lerer in

these readers do not understand the important literal value of the convention: to signal difference and separation between the writer, translator, and reader of a text.

³⁸ Seth Lerer, *Chaucer and His Readers: Imagining the Author in Late-Medieval England* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993), 13.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 11.

demonstrating the ways in which writers throughout the late-medieval period characterized the overlapping authoritative roles they and their readers played in their texts.⁴⁰ Wogan-Browne et al classify texts in their collection by the texts' authors' direct descriptions of reading and writing processes and descriptions of intended audiences. Wogan-Browne et al show how these texts need not be classified as "Chaucerian" to account for the ways they depict readers and writers sharing access to the materials of textual reproduction.⁴¹ Still, the edition relies on a model of literary authority that emphasizes the distinction between poet and reader. For the purpose of their edition, the editors must leave the layers of scribal variation, manuscript construction, and reading contexts that mediated texts for their contemporary audiences virtually unexplored.

Ethan Knapp offers some of this exploration in his definitive historicist monograph on Hoccleve. Knapp advances descriptions of fifteenth-century vernacular literary authority such as those offered by Lerer and Wogan-Browne et al with the suggestion that what the modern observer might perceive as a crisis in authority may actually indicate a deficiency in the hierarchical model of authority we use to describe Hoccleve's work.⁴² As an example, Knapp shows that the ways Hoccleve designs his work in relation to his sources and readers is not sufficiently described by the conventional understanding of medieval authority, especially in Hoccleve's *Letter of*

⁴⁰ Jocelyn Wogan-Browne, Nicholas Watson, Andrew Taylor, and Ruth Evans, eds., *The Idea of the Vernacular: An Anthology of Middle English Literary Theory, 1280-1520* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999).

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, xvi.

⁴² To his comment that "the literary culture of fifteenth century England suffered a protracted crisis in authority, a recurrent doubt about the grounding and merit of vernacular poetic composition," he adds the caveat that we should not necessarily view this crisis as a dominant "psychological reality" or "collective neurosis" under which poets of the period worked. See Ethan Knapp, *The Bureaucratic Muse: Thomas Hoccleve and the Literature of Late Medieval England* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2001), 45-46.

Cupid. He argues that Hoccleve's persona in the poem seeks to demonstrate the wide scope of authority in the period that extended beyond Latin texts by "negotiating" for it silently with Christine de Pizan, whose *Epistre au dieu d'amours* was Hoccleve's source. This negotiation is certainly present in Hoccleve's poem, and it emphasizes how Hoccleve seeks authority from his efforts as a reader with access to a broad range of vernacular texts. Merely adding Christine de Pizan to Hoccleve's list of sources and models of authority along with Chaucer, however, does little to shift our understanding of medieval literary authority away from the author-centered structure that does not fully account for Hoccleve's deference to his own readers. The audiences that use his texts and confer authority upon them are at the true center of his "negotiations."

I argue that Hoccleve smoothly and confidently composes his texts with an understanding of authority based on the centrality of reading and performance. Jessica Brantley has recently posited a model of medieval reading that could accommodate this audience-centered authority. Regarding a small but extensively illuminated late fifteenth-century codex, British Library MS Additional 37049, she claims that the book's producers structured it visually and verbally to call to mind conventions of theatrical performance. As Brantley suggests, this miscellaneous anthology of moral and religious texts in several genres "'acts' on its readers," both in how readers perceive its texts as if they were unfolding in the course of a performed spectacle and in how readers likely participated in the performance by forming their own non-sequential connections between its disparate contents.⁴³ This participation is exactly what Hoccleve's texts seem

⁴³ Jessica Brantley, *Reading in the Wilderness: Public Reading and Private Performance in Late Medieval England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 2-7, 20-21.

to be designed to solicit in his readers—especially the *Regiment* with its thematically organized sections of advice, but also in all of the manuscripts Hoccleve compiled of his own poetry.⁴⁴ These works depict reading actions that an audience is supposed to perform and place the onus on an audience for determining a text’s meaning, value, and reading order. But while Brantley’s analysis of a single volume extends to some of the most popular fifteenth-century texts in circulation by virtue of their inclusion in the volume, including Hoccleve’s own lyric contributions to the English *Pilgrimage of the Soul*,⁴⁵ her model of the way books can be designed for performed readings is fairly limited in scope to the way this one book was positioned in relation to what was likely a Carthusian monastic audience. An accurate description of Hoccleve’s or other late medieval writers’ portrayals of readers’ authority should account for evidence from the manuscript tradition of their works that reveals the wide variety of actual readings that their texts inspired.

I propose that we can formulate such a description by taking additional cues from Paul Zumthor’s concept of *intervocalité*.⁴⁶ By considering Brantley’s observations about her selected manuscript to be part of a broader phenomenon like intervocality, we can explore more thoroughly the intersections between written text, reading, and performance in the risky social spaces of courtly patronage dynamics in which so much fifteenth-century literature circulated. Brantley herself recognizes Zumthor’s contributions to the study of the relationship between performance and materially variant texts by very briefly

⁴⁴ Two of his autograph manuscripts are miscellaneous collections, Huntington Library HM 111 and 744. A third is a copy of the *Series* preserved in Durham University Library Cosin V.iii.9. While the narrative frame of the *Series* seeks to direct readers to proceed through the included texts in a linear fashion, its three translations could be read in any order, and occasionally were circulated without the frame narrative (such as in British Library MS Royal 17 D.vi and Bodleian Library MS Digby 185).

⁴⁵ Brantley, 240-7.

⁴⁶ Paul Zumthor, *La Lettre et la Voix: De la "littérature" médiévale* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1987), 160-1.

evoking his use of dramatic metaphors to describe the qualities of medieval reading that are most inaccessible to us as modern observers.⁴⁷ But in his explanation of intervocality, Zumthor uses performance terminology not just metaphorically but as the key for understanding the manner in which late medieval writers like Hoccleve accounted for and accommodated readerly agency that resulted in textual variation and variant interpretations. As I describe at the beginning of this chapter and in the introduction, intervocality represents the confluence of two modes of textual variability that Zumthor explored throughout his career: the necessary variability of their written forms in manuscripts (which he called *mouvance*),⁴⁸ and the variability in their potential to be read, reread, and performed orally (which he labeled *vocalité*).⁴⁹ Together, these modes of variation show how medieval texts were continuously reinvented over time in the hands, minds, and voices of their audiences.

What one actually identifies as a medieval text such as the *Regiment of Princes*, then, if one accounts for the roles played by readers in circulating and interpreting it, is what Zumthor calls an “archetype.” This archetype “designates the sum of all preexisting potentialities in all textual production. . . . [which] appears like the relay of similar lines, joining such text to the next, and between them the diverse performances of a presumed unique text.”⁵⁰ The intervocality of a text forms within this archetype as a network of both a text’s manuscript copies and the moments in which a text is read and reproduced.

In each instance, a text becomes a new, although related, performance (written or oral,

⁴⁷ Brantley, 2-3.

⁴⁸ Zumthor, *Toward a Medieval Poetics*, trans. Phillip Bennett (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1992), 45-9.

⁴⁹ Zumthor, “The Text and the Voice,” trans. Marilyn Engelhardt, *NLH* 16.1 (1984): 69.

⁵⁰ Zumthor, *La Lettre et la voix*, 162 (all quotations from this text are my translations).

public or private) that must be considered to exist in single moments of irreproducible communication.

This notion of relays that form between written and performed communicative elements shares many properties with the immanent network that is central to Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's concept of the "rhizome." Any new elements that join a rhizome's network become part of it via the same connections that link together all the other elements that form its network in the first place (i.e. Deleuze and Guattari call these connections "lines-of-flight" that connect at nodes they call "plateaus" in order to describe their characteristics as staging grounds for activity, launching pads for future lines-of-flight to expand the network, rather than as static and fixed moments or places of unity).⁵¹ Any new manuscript copies of texts or pieces of texts, any new indications of performance—any new readers—become fully incorporated into and fully contained by a "textual archetype's" intervocal network. The network does expand its boundaries over time to encompass each new reader and each new reading, but most of what gets added to the network is complexity. The network takes on new internal dimensions with every new interpretation and every new iteration of a text, but these are still part of the same multiplicity, the same intervocal system and textual archetype.

Immanent networks of textual production and performance are featured in much of Zumthor's work throughout his career. In the 1981 essay "Intertextualité et mouvance"

⁵¹ See Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 20-24, for their explanation of rhizomes and how they operate "by variation, expansion, conquest, capture, offshoots ... [and pertain] to a map that must be produced, constructed, a map that is always detachable, connectable, reversible, modifiable, and has multiple entryways and exits and its own lines of flight" (21). While I do not take a stance here on Deleuze and Guattari's cultural criticism, I draw on these useful metaphors from their criticism to help illustrate the structural framework supporting Zumthor's understanding of intervocality.

he concisely sums up his overall motivations for this: “medieval ‘literature’ ... appears as if it is made up of a tangled intertwining of texts, each one of which barely lays claims to its own autonomy. Fuzzy contours encircle it imperfectly and the lines of communication from one part of this network to another are never cut off.”⁵² Thus, when Zumthor describes the nature of intervocality, he assures his readers that even texts that uniquely survive in single material manuscript witnesses are unstable because they have been and are being read and circulated. He explains that as “voices speak, sing, the texts seize the fragmented echoes without ever fixing them, pushed by chance by the whirlwind of intervocality.”⁵³ A written medieval text, due to its intervocality must always be considered to be “in-process” and subject to readers’ actions. Zumthor elaborates on this state of permanent instability by suggesting that we consider each manuscript of a text to be “a rewriting” that is more analogous to a live performance than a fixed hard copy. The difference between each “relay” in a text’s network of possibilities, each performance—again, written or oral, public or private, or any combination thereof—“measure[s] the space of freedom left in each text by the voice of each of its interpreters.”⁵⁴

The notion of a “text” can be redefined in terms of its archetype’s immanent intervocality as the plurality of all its known and possible variants—and not only its manuscript variants but also those that may be introduced into it during a reading. Thus, even the collection of all known manuscript witnesses cannot give us the whole picture of

⁵² Qtd. and trans. in Zumthor, “The Text and the Voice,” 77. See also Zumthor’s “The Vocalization of the Text: The Medieval ‘Poetic Effect’,” trans. Nancy Rose and Peter Haidu, *Viator* 19 (1988), esp. 280-1, where he is even more explicit about how he understands the relationship between medieval texts and voices as an unevenly woven fabric of ceaseless interconnections.

⁵³ Zumthor, *La Lettre*, 163.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

how a textual archetype was read and transmitted since they only represent a fraction of the total manuscripts of a text that were likely produced in the medieval period. And, of course, even if we could compare all the manuscript copies of a text ever inscribed, we would not be able to account for all the meanings and variations that may have been added to the archetype in the sphere of reading and performance.⁵⁵ What we *can* do to paint a more specific picture of the network of readings and readers that Hoccleve engages with a text like the *Regiment of Princes* is to describe and characterize the ways Hoccleve and his readers form connections in that intervocal network. Each manuscript of the *Regiment* presents only a limited perspective on the poem's authorship and audiences, but represents a node or plateau in the poem's network of variant and multiple readings. Each manuscript offers the modern observer an example of how the text might have been read by specific audiences since its period of origin and how these readers may have interpreted Hoccleve's deference to them in his narrative.

Reading in the *Regiment*

With an in-depth examination of one section of the advice-giving portion of the *Regiment of Princes*, we can see how Hoccleve sets up the poem to be read as a node in an intervocal network and how Hoccleve anticipates readers' roles in interpreting and reproducing the poem materially in that network. The section titled "De virtute largitatis et de vitio prodigalitatis" ("On the virtue of largesse and the vice of prodigality") presents

⁵⁵ See Joyce Coleman, *Public Reading and the Reading Public in Late Medieval England and France* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996) for a cultural ethnography of reading and performing in the early fifteenth century. She shows that texts were regularly performed for public entertainment both in large "prelections" and smaller more private, but still oral, readings. Coleman uses the term prelection to describe the act of reading aloud to an audience from a written text—combining oral and written forms of textual transmission.

an ideal subject for analysis because it foregrounds Hoccleve's reliance on readers' performances of his text. Compared to the "Words from the Compiler" section, which follows conventions for prefaces in which metatextual commentary and direct addresses to an audience might be expected,⁵⁶ this section shows how one of the most artful and creative moments of Hoccleve's narrative is structured around his acknowledgment of readers' authority.

What makes this section especially "artful" is its central feature: the tale of John of Canace, which is the longest single exemplum in the entire *Regiment*. Translated and liberally adapted from the *Chessbook* of Jacob de Cessolis, the tale is carefully constructed to lead into a direct petition in which Hoccleve's narrator beseeches the Prince to advocate on his behalf for payment of government money owed to him. The tale is framed by exempla from the pseudo-Aristotelian *Secreta Secretorum* and other Latin texts to emphasize its exposition on the ways virtues of generosity can turn into vices—particularly if one gives away too much of one's wealth or gives it to undeserving people. Both the petition and the translated tale are part of Hoccleve's strategy to blend fiction and reality in his poem in moments of performed reading in order to accomplish his rhetorical goals while affirming readers' authority. In effect, this levels out the authority that can be claimed for both the creator of the text and its audience, showing them generating authority by virtue of their relationship.

As an example of how excessive generosity can become prodigality, the tale is about a father who depletes his whole fortune by doting on his two ungrateful daughters

⁵⁶ See Ruth Evans, "An Afterword on the Prologue," in *The Idea of the Vernacular*, eds. Jocelyn Wogan-Browne et al (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999), 371-8.

and concocts an entertaining scheme in order to maintain himself.⁵⁷ It begins with a description of John as a rich man who gladly let his daughters wed two worthy men. Out of love, he would occasionally give both couples extravagant gifts from his wealth. Because of this generosity, the two couples indulge him with flattery and great hospitality in their houses, greedily hoping that he will continue to spoil them. When John's wealth runs out to the point that he can no longer give them lavish gifts, however, he finds that "they weery weren of his compaignie" (*RofP* 4206), and that he is no longer so welcome among them. To remedy this, he devises a plan to make the two couples think that he has a reserve cache of wealth that he is saving to bequeath to them when he dies. He borrows 10,000 pounds from a merchant friend, puts the money in a chest at his home locked with three locks, and invites his children over for dinner. The couples are well entertained and stay late enough for John to convince them to spend the night in a room divided from his own by only a makeshift partition. At daybreak, before they arise, he goes to the chest, dumps out all the money and gleefully starts counting, weighing, and sorting it on his carpet. Witnessing this racket through gaps in the partition, the daughters and sons-in-law become convinced that if they behave more generously to their father, they will be in line for a substantial inheritance.

In order to bolster the drama of John's deception, Hoccleve's narrator significantly departs from the *Chessbook* version of the tale to quote the characters'

⁵⁷ See Paul Strohm, "John's Locked Box: Kingship and the Management of Desire," in *Theory and the Premodern Text* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 182-200, for an analysis of the tale's narrative form that is especially attentive to its theoretical implications. Strohm's, *England's Empty Throne*, 197-214, provides a detailed historicization of the tale in the context of early fifteenth-century English politics and Hoccleve's intertextual sources. See Perkins, 111-14, for a useful overview of the scholarship on the manipulation of authority in the tale.

voices directly.⁵⁸ The first instance of direct speech occurs when John insists that his children sleep at his house: “This nyght yee shul nat passe out of the gate; / your hous is fer and it is dirk and late” (*RofP* 4225-6). The couples, in turn, first speak to confer about the gold they saw John counting: “Oon seide, ‘I wonder theron;’ ‘And I eek,’ / Quod anothir ‘for also God me save, / Yistirday, thogh I sholde into my grave / Han crept, I durste on it han leid my lyf / That gold with him nat hadde be so ryf” (*RofP* 4273-7). Later that day, John’s children invite him to move in with them and they speak in one voice: “‘Fadir,’ quod they, ‘this is your owne houshold; / In feith ther is nothyng withynne oure hold / But it shal be at your commandement”” (*RofP* 4288-90). After he accepts their offer, his daughters assume one voice in the narrative to ask John “...how mochil moneye / In your strong bownden chiste is, we yow preye?” (*RofP* 4304-5). The narrator records his answer along with a comment on his deception: “‘Ten thousand pounde,’ he seide, and lyed lowde” (*RofP* 4306).

These elements added to the tale’s narrative show Hoccleve silently expanding and interpreting his source text to add realistic dimensions to the characters—giving them voices so that readers can corroborate the narrator’s portrayal of their greedy personalities. This allows Hoccleve’s readers to see that John is able to deceive the children partly because their greed makes them interpret John’s cunning performance at face value. Since the tale’s narration shows that John desires his “audience” to misinterpret his lies as truth, Hoccleve’s readers are given the opportunity to evaluate their own reading skills relative to those of the characters.

⁵⁸ Cf. Jacob de Cessolis, *The Book of Chess*, trans. and ed. H.L. Williams (New York: Italica Press, 2008), 96-8.

The realism of the characters' speeches also helps draw readers' attention to the staged reading performance at the tale's climax. This performance begins to unfold when John lies on his deathbed, long having returned the money to the merchant and long having been cared for by his children. To underscore the slyness of John's scheme, the narrator quotes only John as he instructs his children how to claim their inheritance (*RofP* 4320-30). In this scheme, his heirs must donate money on his behalf to the three orders of friars in town in order to retrieve the three keys for his strong-box, which he had given to each monastery for safe keeping. When John dies, however, all that the incensed couples find in the chest is a sergeant's mace with the inscription: "I, John of Canace, / Make swich testament heere in this place: / Who berith charge of othir men and is / Of hem despysid, slayn be he with this" (*RofP* 4351-4). In this manner, Hoccleve's narrator dramatizes how an act of writing gives John the authority to taunt from the grave those who had displeased him in life.⁵⁹

The revelation of the mace inscription in the poem's narrative is a startling moment of depicted reading. It shows Hoccleve dramatizing the rhetorical dynamic between a text and its implied reader, which may in part be why he devoted so much space to the tale in the poem. After all, the implied readers of the text John inscribes on his mace are his daughters and sons-in-law, yet they are not addressed directly by the text itself. The "speaking" voice in the four lines of text is ambivalent about the context in which it will be read and its significance for its readers, addressing a much more generic

⁵⁹ See Jenni Nuttall, *The Creation of Lancastrian Kingship: Literature, Language and Politics in Late Medieval England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 113-119, for an interpretation of the mace and its inscription as John's payment of his children for his debt to them for their reluctantly offered care, and the significance of this in the context of Hoccleve's anxieties about credit in this section of the *Regiment*.

detestable figure: “*Who berith charge of othir men and is / Of hem despysid...*” (*RofP* 4352-3, my emphasis). The dramatic impetus of the moment when the text is read by the sons-in-law comes from two simultaneous interpretive acts: the recognition that they are meant to identify themselves in the repugnant subject of the text, and the realization that the text’s impersonal voice keeps them at a distance from the father whom they thought of as their loving benefactor. Thus, not only are the children *materially* excluded from the inheritance they had desired, but they are also *narratively* excluded from John’s final written “testament,” doubly underscoring his posthumous insult.

Following this event, which tacitly asserts the power of a text to have a social impact in the world of its readers, the tale concludes without another glance at its characters. The narrator then begins a famous petition addressed to his own overtly claimed reader, Prince Henry, in which he names himself as “Hoccleve” for the first time in the *Regiment’s* advice-narrative.⁶⁰ What is remarkable about this context, though, is that he proclaims his name in order to admit that he is guilty of the very vice of prodigality that he has been denouncing: “I, Hoccleve, in swich cas am gilty; this me touchith / So seith povert, which on fool large him vouchith” (*RofP* 4360-1). He then uses this admission to gutsily petition Prince Henry for money that the government owes him:

My yeerly guerdoun, myn annuitee,
That was me grauntid for my long labour,
Is al behynde—I may nat payed be;
Which causith me to lyven in langour.
O, liberal Prince, ensample of honour,
Unto your grace lyke it to promoote
My poore estat, and to my wo beeth boote. (*RofP* 4383-9)

⁶⁰ This is the second time in the whole poem however: The first is in the context of the dialogue with an old man in the *Regiment’s* long prologue (*RofP* 1864-5)

This statement is made in the context of an argument that, while he may have been a prodigal at one time, he is now reformed and thus deserves the money he is owed as well as the prince's advocacy. As such, the argument merges the poem's fictional frame with the real world of the reader outside the poem. Just like the scene in which the mace's inscription is realized by its audience, the named audience of this passage is brought into a conversation with its named narrator, though in this case the reader is portrayed *much* more favorably.⁶¹ It is particularly striking that Hoccleve's petition is placed in a section filled with exempla that are themselves nested within their *own* fictional framework (as part of the "regiment" being prescribed to the Prince by the narrator). The effect makes it seem as if the petition and the account of his financial plight can be read as having the same morally instructive value as the other anecdotes he translates from source-texts and that they equally can be used to guide the Prince's actions. Since the *Regiment* is mostly intended for readers other than the Prince, the exemplary nature of the address to the Prince emphasizes these readers' positions relative to the over-hearing fiction of the poem. By creating this dynamic, Hoccleve seems to want his various readers to recognize that they can act on the moral lessons in the text by offering real patronage to the poet.

The dynamic in the overarching narrative that encompasses both this solicitation and the tale of John of Canace shows how Hoccleve seeks to derive his authority from his readers, but even in small narrative details it also models the reading practices by which readers might assert their own interpretive authority. When the narrator introduces the tale of John of Canace into the "De virtute largitatis..." section of the *Regiment*, for

⁶¹ Charles Blyth, "Thomas Hoccleve's Other Master," *Mediaevalia* 16 (1990): 353-5, describes the narrative shift back to an autobiographical begging persona here as a "nervy" attempt by Hoccleve to juxtapose the surprise absence of the inheritance John's daughters and sons-in-law expect with his own hopes that the prince will not disappoint him in his request for money.

instance, he says: “Of fool largesse wole I talk a space, / How it befil, y not [I know not] in what contree, / But ther was oon named John of Canace” (*RofP* 4180-82). While it is not necessary for the tale to take place in “Canace” for John to bear its name, the narrator’s comment that he does not know where the story takes place, coupled with John’s geographic surname, underscores the tale’s origin in a source beyond the confines of the *Chessbook*. The narrator is disclosing that his source’s information is limited, and that he is attempting as diligent a reading of it as possible. This bolsters the narrator’s authority by demonstrating that he is a “good” reader, aware of a text’s history, potential gaps, and variants. The narrator thus models how a “good” reader can use such knowledge to recreate and also augment new versions of texts.

By suggesting that reading can enrich a text’s meaning, Hoccleve rhetorically fortifies his text against scribal variation and future readings that may portray him unfavorably. Since he knows that he cannot prevent such variation from happening, he attempts to show how readers can recognize their role in his text’s intervocal network and use their individual reading practices to add new dimensions to the poem’s meanings. On the literal level of the petitioning narrative, it is especially important for the Prince to recognize the power of his own reading practices to shape the sense he gets of Hoccleve’s authority and intentions, in the event that Hoccleve’s constructive criticism is mistaken for censure or (worse) treason. Hence, immediately following the request for the Prince to work on his behalf to expedite his annuity payment in the “De virtute largitatis...” section of the poem, Hoccleve’s narrative persona reminds the Prince that “In al my book yee shul nat see ne fynde / That I youre deedes lakke or hem dispreise” (*RofP* 4397-8). Paired with the key passage about his “yeerly guerdoun,” his reward for long-standing

service to the government (see *RofP* 4383-9, quoted above), this statement highlights the two primary functions he envisions the poem performing in the real world: expressing admiration of his noble patron without flattering, and recommending governmental reforms through his readers' interpretations of his moral lessons.⁶² The poem still has these functions even though the prince was not really among its main intended readers, but rather various noblemen who associated with the prince. Additionally these words frame the act of reading Hoccleve's whole poem as a statement of allegiance to Henry V and the royal factions that were rising to power while he was still Prince of Wales.

Affirming that his reader has the authority to read the whole book to verify his good intentions, Hoccleve lays down cover for a pointed critique of the Prince regarding the delayed annuity, which he builds into the text a few hundred lines later. Here he emphasizes the reader's agency to act on advice given to him with the statement, "For your honour, it mochil bettre were / No graunt to graunte at al than that your graunt / Yow preeve a brekere of a covenant" (*RofP* 4800-2). While the grant emphasized with alliteration in line 4801 seems to recall to mind the narrator's previously mentioned "guerdown" (*RofP* 4383), the narrator avoids directly connecting this frustrated affect with his earlier plea. Instead, he folds it into a lesson about how a king can attract the love of his subjects with his actions—just one of which might be to make sure all promised annuities are paid in a timely fashion. The implicit connection with Hoccleve's explicit petition for his "guerdown" only crystallizes if the reader has already read and remembers the earlier part of the text. In this way, Hoccleve embeds his request for

⁶² Many of the reforms Hoccleve hints at in the poem are consistent with ways Henry was known to want to reform his father's government. See Scanlon, *Narrative, Authority, and Power*, 306-8; Judith Ferster, *Fictions of Advice: The Literature and Politics of Counsel in Late Medieval England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996), 141-7.

assistance in a process of hermeneutic discovery. By redirecting interpretive authority to the reader, Hoccleve's harshest note of criticism in the moral lesson he ostensibly offers to the Prince and other noble patrons is still deferent to sovereign power, since it only surfaces when the reader recognizes his own creative agency and interpretive acts. Extending this agency to the reader is a particularly clever rhetorical move for Hoccleve to appeal to noble patrons other than the Prince. Such an audience would get to perceive the text's moral and political critique indirectly—as lessons of wisdom that may not be meant to apply to them personally, but from which they might still benefit if they identify with the ambitions and cultural luxuries of royalty.

The *Regiment's* Speculative Reading Histories

Although the manuscript of the poem that Hoccleve may have given to Prince Henry does not survive, or at least has not been identified, there is evidence that the Prince read the *Regiment* without being offended and that Hoccleve's solicitation worked.⁶³ The poem's extensive surviving bibliographic record, though, tells us that other readers, including scribes, acted on their creative authority to interpret and reproduce the poem according to what they found valuable in it—and according to the values of audiences they anticipated for new copies. I posit that the variations in the *Regiment's* narrative structure in different manuscripts, both at the broad level of textual organization and at the minute level of depicted character voices, show how the poem's intervocality became more complex throughout the fifteenth century.

⁶³ Burrow, *Thomas Hoccleve*, 17, 33-49, identifies documentary evidence from rolls of the Exchequer and Chancery, recording late annuity payments made to Hoccleve at the time the *Regiment* first circulated.

By examining the network of variants in the manuscript history of the *Regiment*, we can augment our understanding of the poem's historical meanings. New scribes and readers occasionally made the voices in Hoccleve's narrative more uniform, and they occasionally multiplied them. Often they did so in ways that Hoccleve seems to have encouraged with the poem's design. This is not to say that Hoccleve wholeheartedly permitted or "authorized" variant readings of his work. In fact, as I mentioned earlier, Hoccleve's narrator complains about such variant interpretations in the *Dialogue with a Friend* when he claims that women would have interpreted his *Letter of Cupid* more like he had intended if they would have read it through to its conclusion (i.e. if they would have followed the conventions for reading epistolary complaints that he evoked with the text as opposed to following their own selective, abbreviating whims). In that the *Regiment's* narrative is structured to help readers recognize their own creative authority, though, some aspects of the poem's presentation, including the tale of John of Canace, seem to accommodate textual variation.

Since written evidence of audiences' actual responses to a text is quite rare, I will offer examples of how to perceive audience response by comparing the *Regiment's* manuscripts. In the next chapter I describe how some manuscripts (including some inscribed by Hoccleve himself) reveal specific reading performances that play out in the dynamic between scribe, text, and audience through decorations, annotations, and page-layout. Here, though, I would like to suggest some ways to use manuscript comparisons to write speculative reading histories for the *Regiment*, which characterize the ways contemporary readers may have understood their collaboration with Hoccleve in the poem's intervocality.

The most significant variants of the poem that seem to be least aligned with Hoccleve's narrative "plan," for example, are in the two scribal copies of the *Regiment* that are missing the prologue's dialogue with the old man (British Library MS Harley 372 and Bodleian Library MS Rawlinson Poet. 168).⁶⁴ In these manuscripts, the poem seems to have been valued exclusively for its collection of exempla and advice-giving commentary texts—Harley even compiles the shortened *Regiment* along with another advice poem: Lydgate's *Advice on Marrying*. Rawlinson also seems to have been intended as a collection of advisory texts. Its copy of the *Regiment* was extracted from the middle of a larger miscellaneous volume and placed at the beginning of this book, followed by at least 50 blank folios to leave room for additional moral commonplaces. In both cases, assuming that the scribes were aware of the prologue's existence, the prologue's absence suggests that they interpreted its premise to be an ancillary part of the *Regiment* narrative. Both copies reveal the scribes' intent to repackage the poem in order to transmit exemplary texts to readers more efficiently. By moving the narrator's address to the Prince into the text's immediate foreground, these scribes are also attempting to emphasize and simplify the narrating persona's claim to have the authority to advise a royal audience—perhaps to bolster their own credibility.

The structural truncation of the poem also goes the opposite way, such as it does in British Library MS Harley 7333, a very large book (in physical dimension and text length) in which only the prologue is copied. Harley 7333 is a miscellany that includes many extracts from the works of Chaucer, Gower, and Lydgate, and this extract from the

⁶⁴ The standard guide to descriptions of the *Regiment* MSS is M.C. Seymour, "The Manuscripts of Hoccleve's *Regiment of Princes*," 253-297. My descriptions derive partially from his, and partially from my own observations of the actual manuscripts.

Regiment is the very last item. Such truncation and placement could have two effects on its readers. First, the final lines of the prologue, “I took corage, and whyles it was hoot / Unto my lord the Prince thus I wroot” (*RofP* 2015-6), could be interpreted not as referring to a separate book of moral lessons (such as the old man convinces the narrator to write earlier in the prologue), but to the interlocutors’ discussion itself *in* the prologue. Referring back to the narrated discussion could convey a reflexive completeness that is usually associated with dream narratives, like Chaucer’s *Book of the Duchess*, which is in the manuscript. In such dream poems, a narrator’s final statements recount his moment of waking, in which he resolves to write down the tale from his dream that he has just narrated. Evoking this genre could associate the voices in the *Regiment*’s prologue more closely with those in the manuscript’s other works and perhaps with the authority of Chaucer. A second impression conveyed by ending the poem after the prologue is that the book of moral lessons is missing, which perhaps would leave readers wondering whether the scribe had left it out on purpose. Did the scribe fail to locate the text the narrator describes having written to the Prince? Did he dismiss it? Perhaps he simply found Hoccleve’s poem most interesting for its focus on how to gain wisdom from poor fortune, the prologue’s central theme.

As a counterpoint to these examples of the poem’s truncation, two copies of the *Regiment* actually expand its narrative structure by adding a second envoi to the one already included in the conclusion of the poem’s narrative. In the first envoi, the narrator addresses his book directly, telling it to “go wher thow go” (*RofP* 5448) and to beseech the Prince for “mercy and indulgence” (*RofP* 5460)—a rather conventional device used in

this era as a final moment of deference to a patron.⁶⁵ The second envoi is a poem also preserved independently in Hoccleve's own handwriting as the *Balade to John, Duke of Bedford*.⁶⁶ British Library MS Royal 17 D.xviii includes it as a separate text on a page facing the regular envoi, complete with its own initial capital, and Bodleian Library MS Dugdale 45 presents it with no separation from the first, except for stanza breaks that are consistent with the rest of the manuscript. In both cases, with a direct address to a man called "the rial egles excellence" in the first line, the *Balade* reveals that Hoccleve may have personally sent his poem to at least one noble reader besides the prince.⁶⁷ Along with addressing this reader as the recipient of such a book, it also hints that other readers would come into contact with the book by virtue of its being in the "royal eagle's" possession. One verse of the ballad asks the recipient to show the book to a man named "my maistir Massy" (line 10) who, with his "fructuous intelligence" (line 11), will be able to correct the poetic errors that the narrator humbly admits he probably made in the *Regiment*.

These copies clearly codify that Hoccleve anticipated single copies of the poem to be read by multiple people besides the prince. Each of these readers would bring different perspectives to the text. In the Dugdale manuscript, the seamless flow of text from the

⁶⁵ The first envoi is a regular feature of *Regiment* manuscripts, but it is missing from many manuscripts that have lost outer leaves, including British Library MS Harley 4866 (one of the earliest copies) and Bodleian Library MS Bodley 221 (a copy that also contains Hoccleve's other long exemplary narrative, *The Series*). It is also preserved in Hoccleve's own handwriting in San Marino, California, Huntington Library MS HM 111 as an independent poem.

⁶⁶ See Hoccleve, *Selections from Hoccleve*, ed. M. C. Seymour (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981), 57, for an edition of this based on Huntington Library MS HM 111, f. 37v-38r.

⁶⁷ Hoccleve copied another envoi to the *Regiment* in HM 111, 32v-34r, which probably took the place of the ballad to Bedford in a presentation copy of the *RofP* given to Edward, Duke of York. This presentation manuscript has either not survived or has not been identified (owing to the fact that many surviving copies of the *RofP* are missing their final folios). See Hoccleve, *Selections*, ed. Seymour, 55-6, 126-7.

usual envoi to the *Balade* blurs together all these different figured readers, suggesting that Dugdale's scribe integrated the new perspectives depicted by the second envoi with those in the first. The reference to the "royal eagle" seems to blend with the references to the Prince. Perhaps this is meant to offer the Duke of Bedford—or a different reader meant to identify with the "eagle"—an opportunity to identify more easily with the Prince's perspective. In the Royal manuscript, though, the physical separation between the two envois emphasizes their distinctions, suggesting that the scribe used each envoi as a separate frame for the *Regiment* text. This scribe attempts to use Hoccleve's second envoi to give his readers a sense that their perspectives are being added to the Prince's; through this book, they are associating with the Prince and gaining access to a privileged royal discourse. In both instances, the additional envoi reveals Hoccleve's extension of the poem to multiple readers, as well as scribes' extensions of the poem to their own multiple intended readers.

These manuscripts with their truncations of or additions to the poem's narrative structure are admittedly exceptions, not the rule, among the 43 surviving manuscripts of the poem. But even the numerous copies of the poem that reproduce the prologue, advice-narrative, and single envoi in sequence reveal variant readings that may have *enhanced* later readers' appreciation of elements in Hoccleve's narrative, such as character voices, compared to readers of the earliest manuscripts. While manuscripts of the poem tended to get more simply decorated over time, punctuation tended to become more actively used in copies throughout the fifteenth century, opening up new ways for readers to interpret

vocal demarcation.⁶⁸ One rather simple example of this can be seen by comparing the appearance of the stanza of rapid dialogue among John's children in the tale of John of Canace (*RofP* lines 4271-7, partially quoted on page 74 above) in one of the earliest copies of the poem (British Library MS Arundel 38, f.78r) to its equivalent stanza in a late copy of the poem (Newberry Library MS 33.7, f.62r). The stanza in Arundel marks no speaker changes with punctuation, even though tinted and gilded paraphs often mark speaker changes and regularly decorate the beginnings of stanzas throughout the manuscript (see Fig. 1.1). Newberry, which is much more modestly decorated on the whole, indicates speaker changes in this stanza with virgules, which are used in a manner relatively equivalent to the modern comma (see Fig. 1.2). The visual distinction between speakers is thus much more pronounced in Newberry. Specifically, the attribution of I-voices in the stanza becomes much less definite compared to Arundel because the virgules offer alternative phrasal breaks that can reshape the clause structure in the syntax: "and y yeke" (at the end of line 3, Fig. 1.2) is not necessarily spoken by the same voice as "yiste day þought y shuld into my graue han crep" or "y durste hau swore" (lines 5-6, Fig. 1.2). The effect Newberry offers, thus, is much closer to the chattery "jangling" among all four of the people walking home together that Hoccleve describes with the stanza's first line (line 1, Fig. 1.2: "Walkyng homwarde þey iangled faste and speke"), than the simpler remark and response staged in Arundel's syntax.

⁶⁸ This observation was made from the detailed collation notes supplied to me by Charles Blyth that he used to develop his edition of the *Regiment*. See n. 70 below.

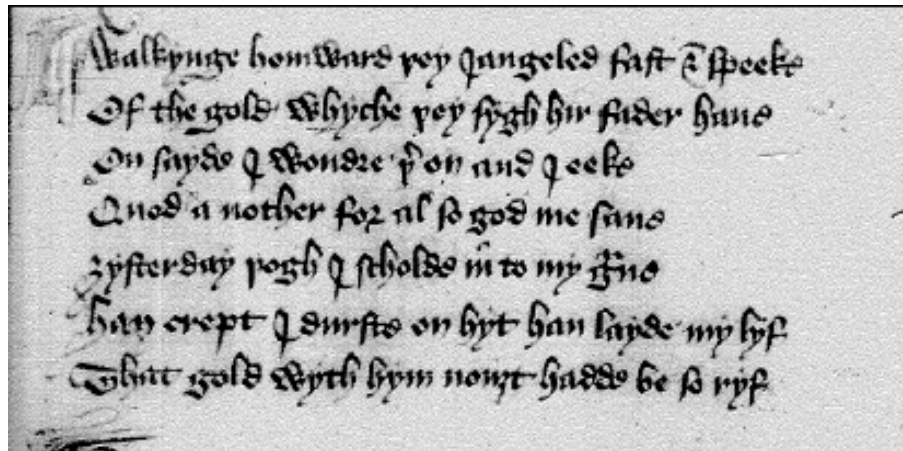


Figure 1.1: *Regiment of Princes* lines 4271-7 in British Library MS Arundel 38, fol. 78r (detail, scanned from microfilm negative)

Lines

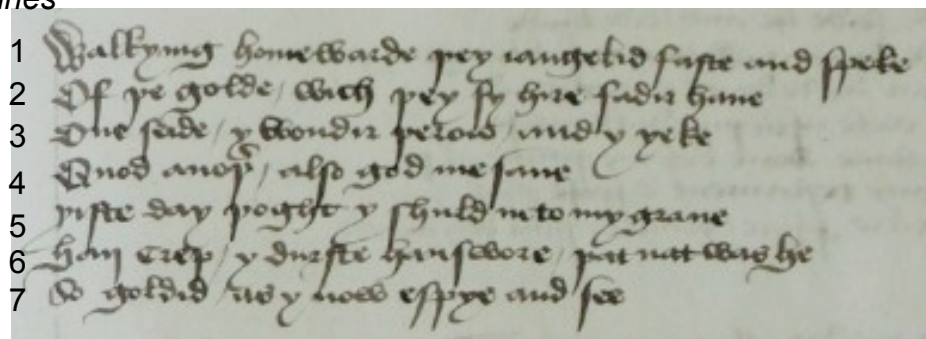


Figure 1.2: *Regiment of Princes* lines 4271-7 in Newberry Library MS 33.7, fol. 62r (detail)⁶⁹

Newberry’s variant reading of lines 4276-7 (the last two lines of Figs. 1.1 and 1.2) also eliminates the Arundel speaker’s comment: “I durste on it han leid my lyf / That gold with him nat hadde be so ryf,” which follows from the image of “having crept into my grave” present in both manuscripts. Newberry’s replacement: “y durste hau swore / þat nat was he // So goldid / as y now espye and see,” emphasizes the speaker’s own direct visual observations of John and his gold with the end-rhyme of the final couplet in the stanza that juxtaposes what the speaker saw (“he”) with his act of surveillance (“see”).

⁶⁹ I thank the librarians and curators at the Newberry Library’s Roger and Julie Baskes Department of Special Collections for allowing me to photograph this manuscript for my research.

The Newberry version also simplifies the speaker's mode of swearing disbelief, syntactically separating the "crept into the grave" expression from the "I would have sworn" remark by stripping out the second clause's pronoun reference to the grave. This "edit" portrays a more independent expression of surprise that once again encourages the sense that more than two voices could be speaking in the stanza. The fact, too, that the Newberry version is replicated in more surviving *Regiment* manuscripts than the Arundel version,⁷⁰ suggests that *more* readers may have perceived *more* voices in the text from their copies than Hoccleve may have initially designed in the punctuation of his first presentation copies. However, these readings also put a greater emphasis on the personal observation and interpretation of John's deceptive performance and would have amplified Hoccleve's overall portrayal of readers' authority that stems from the depiction of voices in the tale.

These examples of manuscript variation collectively imply that the many scribes and readers of the *Regiment* each perceived the text differently based on how its narratives and voices were framed and replicated in each of their copies. While variations in medieval texts have often been dismissed as erroneous readings of an author's intended textual product, actual contemporary audiences would have rarely recognized such errors. Despite changes of emphasis in each of its forms, the *Regiment* seems to have been interpreted as a successful petition, a compelling personal narrative, and a popular collection of advice anecdotes for its readers. While Hoccleve seems to have designed his poem to accommodate such recontextualizations brought about by

⁷⁰ This claim is derived from my examination of the full collation of the *Regiment* manuscripts that Charles Blyth compiled for his edition. I thank Dr. Blyth for giving me access to his notes and allowing me to archive them digitally in: "The Hoccleve *Regiment of Princes* Collation Table Archive," ed. Elon Lang (St. Louis: Washington University Digital Library Services, forthcoming).

manuscript variation, the historical and cultural contexts of individual moments of reading that he could not anticipate also shaped the *Regiment's* intervocality.

Generally, we can only form hypotheses about these historical and cultural contexts by connecting the evidence of readers and scribes' activities to what we know about a manuscript and its provenance. For example, John Mowbray, the courtier who is thought to have commissioned or at least owned British Library MS Arundel 38,⁷¹ was probably able to follow Hoccleve's rhetoric of adaptation throughout the poem quite closely. Like the description of the Prince's knowledge of the text in the "Words from the Compiler" section, Mowbray may have been familiar with Jacob de Cessolis' popular Latin text and may have been able to note that the characters in the tale of John of Canace seem more realistic and vocal in the *Regiment's* version of the tale. Mowbray also may have been aware that the narrative persona mediating John's voice was motivated by Hoccleve's real financial distress, which may have allowed him not only to take pleasure in being placed in the dignified company of the princely addressee, but also to enjoy being cast as Hoccleve's potential patron.⁷² If the scribe of Arundel 38 gave the poem to Mowbray independently from Hoccleve, the scribe's own request for patronage from the nobleman would have mirrored Hoccleve's more ambitious petition to the Prince in a way that would flatter both the scribe and the reader. However Mowbray may have understood his own relationship to the authorial and scribal personae in the text, whether he read it often or read it a few years after it was composed in 1411 or 12, he may also

⁷¹ Kate Harris, "The Patron of British Library MS Arundel 38," *NQ* 31.4 (1984): 462-3.

⁷² John J. Thompson, "Thomas Hoccleve and Manuscript Culture," in *Nation, Court and Culture: New Essays on Fifteenth-Century English Poetry*, ed. Helen Cooney (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2001), 94, argues that the rhetorical acrobatics of Hoccleve's petitioning may have been part of an act of self-promotion offering readers "the vicarious pleasure gained from seeing, through a beleaguered poet's eyes, the privileged and sometimes frantic world of Lancastrian literary patronage."

have been aware that the figure of Prince Henry looming over the poem depicted a significantly different person than King Henry V. Particularly after the victory at Agincourt in 1415, the poem's final section of advice that urges Henry to seek peace with the king of France would have seemed out of date. Henry's ambitious conquest of northern France would have suggested that he did not follow the advice offered by Hoccleve, putting Mowbray in a position to evaluate that advice for himself, and possibly reconsider his support for the poem's author or scribe.

All of these historical and individual circumstances could have informed Mowbray's perception of the poem at the same moment. Exploring these possible circumstances reveals how different readers could open up new complexities in the poem over time, associating new interpretations and social-historical contexts with it. Returning to my manuscript comparison above, for example, we could reasonably speculate that readers of Newberry Library MS 33.7, which dates from the third quarter of the fifteenth century, would have encountered the poem with quite different sets of assumptions about how to read it than Mowbray.⁷³ These readers would have read the poem with the awareness that the Lancastrian regime of the princely addressee was in peril, if not already deposed. The poem's reference to a youthful Prince Henry would have seemed historical, or depending on a reader's allegiance in the Wars of the Roses, perhaps even nostalgic. Readers even later in the century would have had an even wider set of cultural and textual contexts available to them. Such readers of late copies of the

⁷³ These assumptions would be guided in part by viewing two scribes at work in the Newberry MS, one correcting the other. The Newberry version of the text reveals differently nuanced characterizations of the poem's speaking voices than in other—especially earlier—manuscripts, although its readers would not necessarily have been aware of these differences. The visible scribal corrections, however, would serve as signals for readers to be aware that the text has come to them through several mediating agents.

Regiment may have encountered the poem in one of its extracted copies, or may have been able to compare Hoccleve's advice narrative to Lydgate's more expansive *Fall of Princes*. Hoccleve's version of the tale of John of Canace could also have been compared to William Caxton's translation of Jacob de Cessolis' *Chessbook (The Game and Pleye of Chess, 1474)* in the new medium of print. The proliferation of such texts would have cast the *Regiment* as just one text in a broadening network of common genres, sources, and styles that had made it distinctive in English when it was first composed.

Readers' Authority in the *Regiment* and its MSS: A Response to Hierarchies

By considering how the *Regiment* manuscripts illustrate readers acting on the authority that Hoccleve depicts himself sharing with them, we can see the poem as Hoccleve's response to the hierarchical causal model of authority. Instead of being the products of clearly demarcated levels of creative agency, individually translated exempla in the *Regiment* reveal that agency to be distributed throughout a complex, overlapping system. Explaining an exemplum's relationship to the poem's nested narrative and scribal history reveals the exemplum to be embedded in an intervocal network of creative readers rather than an hierarchy of creating writers. If we focus solely on the tale of John of Canace, for instance, the roles of *auctor*, *compiler*, *commentator*, and *scriptor* initially seem quite clear: the original *auctor* (the tale's original teller) is unknown, likely deriving from an oral tradition; Jacob de Cessolis is the tale's *compiler*, making a first level of reproduction and adaptation available to Hoccleve; Hoccleve, himself, is the tale's *commentator* (in that his act of translation adds his own elements to the tale told by Jacob); and any of the scribal copiers of the *Regiment* manuscripts are obviously the

tale's *scriptors*. In the context of the whole "De virtute largitatis..." section in which the tale is situated, however, these *causae* become harder to apply. Hoccleve certainly acts as compiler to the exempla from the *Secreta Secretorum* that are gathered together around the tale, but the narrator's self-castigation and appeal to the Prince which follow the tale reach beyond commentary and explication to add new voices of Hoccleve's own creation to the text, making him their *auctor*. In the *Regiment's* narrative frame, the narrative persona who offers the mea culpa remarks is portrayed as the figure who compiles the exempla. This figure, himself, is compiled *into* the narrative written from the perspective of the figure who dialogues with the old man in the first 2,000 lines of the poem. The voice in the "whole" text of the poem that seems to offer the most "authorial" perspective is not even the narrator of this dialogue but the speaker of the regular (or first) envoi at the end of the poem, which begins: "O litel book..." While this voice is still part of the fictional premise of the text, it most closely represents Hoccleve's authoritative position as the *auctor* of the whole volume. It is distanced by both the frame-narrative of the prologue and the frame-narrative of the advice compilation from the speaker who appeals to the Prince for "my yeerly guerdon, myn annuitee" (*RofP* 4383).

Examining the content of the tale of John of Canace itself, it is also hard to adequately describe whose authorial cause is responsible for the jangling characters at the heart of the tale. As mentioned above, Jacob de Cessolis's original text does not give John or his progeny the opportunity to speak like they do in the *Regiment*.⁷⁴ These voices are Hoccleve's invention, but do they indicate the intercession of an authorial cause into a text resulting from his role as a commentator? Should we see them as an extension of the

⁷⁴ See p. 74 above, and cf. Jacob de Cessolis, 96-8.

innermost narrating voice who acts as the tale's storyteller, and thereby classify them as part of the fiction that establishes this storytelling voice as the compiling persona of the *Regiment's* advice-sections? Even though both entail Hoccleve (the poet) being assigned ultimate responsibility for these embedded voices, they give different impressions of readers' proximity to the text's speakers.

A similar effect of uncertain proximity to the poem's speakers is created by the marginal glosses in most manuscripts of the poem. These indicate that even some of the realistic depictions of dialogue in the narrator's conversation with the old man in the prologue derive from external sources. These sources must each have their own authorial causes. The most exterior narrator of Hoccleve's text (i.e. the "speaker" in the envoi mentioned above) then might be considered to have the authority of a *compiler*, and Hoccleve himself might be treated by the *Regiment's scriptores* as a poet at the authorial center of a text that lends itself to be productively read inside a glossatorial apparatus. The organizational intricacy of the *Regiment* and the relational nature of the *causae moventes ad scribendum* make precise *causae* difficult to identify in these glosses. This effect is amplified by evidence that Hoccleve himself, drawing on his experience as a professional scribe and his awareness that source references could enhance the mechanics of book pages for readers, may have initially designed the glosses himself or at least commissioned their composition in the first copies of the poem.⁷⁵

This complexity suggests that trying to determine how much *auctorite* Hoccleve claimed for himself or had in his texts is asking the wrong question. Hoccleve's narrative

⁷⁵ See Blyth, introduction to *RofP*, 16. Chapter 2 in this dissertation more thoroughly explores the vocal relationship between the text and margins in Hoccleve's texts, including glossing practices.

and his copyists' variations of that narrative all form a "tight web of connections"⁷⁶ that involves his readers and encompasses Hoccleve's portrayals of reading. The currency of the *causae* in Hoccleve's era suggests that he wrote and read with a view that various agents who participated in the material circulation of a text mediated access to poetic authority. Hoccleve recognized the inevitable multiplying effects of variation caused by manuscript circulation, though, and resisted the hierarchical organization of these agents. Rather than being structured around authorial causes, the *Regiment* exposes how interdependent this well-read writer, who was also a well-practiced scribe, knew he had to be with his audiences.

As I show in this chapter, Hoccleve thematizes the materiality of reading practices in his works and designs his texts to incorporate his readers' interpretations and manipulations. By portraying himself as a reader like he does with his persona in the *Regiment of Princes*, Hoccleve destabilizes the system of *causae moventes ad scribendum* in a way that makes its hierarchies porous. He levels out the authority attributable to sources and their successive copiers and interpreters in a way that empowers readers to recognize their own agency in texts. He shows how reading and writing creates a network of relationships formed between readers and the material artifacts from which they perform their readings. This network, this intervocality, allows

⁷⁶ I borrow this phrase from Gérard Genette. *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method*, trans. Jane E. Lewin (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1980). As a qualification to his hierarchical method of organizing layers of narrative and narrating personae, he explains that his hierarchies do not preclude broad-based interactions between levels and layers of narrative elements: "A narrating situation is, like any other, a complex whole within which analysis, or simply description, cannot differentiate except by ripping apart a tight web of connections among the narrating act, its protagonists, its spatio-temporal determinations, its relationship to other narrating situations involved in the same narrative, etc. ... [we] look successively at elements of definition whose actual functioning is simultaneous" (215).

him to promote the value of what he perceived to be the young tradition of English poetry. His deference to figures like Chaucer and Gower not only gives *them* authority as English successors to the canonical traditions of Western literature, but also grants *readers of English* (especially his patrons) a central role in defining literary authority.

The relationship between Hoccleve's verse and his manuscript record demonstrates that the poet intuited what Deleuze and Guattari suggest in their introductory comment to *A Thousand Plateaus*: "writing has nothing to do with signifying. It has to do with surveying, mapping, even realms that are yet to come."⁷⁷ In the *Regiment of Princes* especially, Hoccleve realized that writing a narrative about a reader extracting material from source texts relied on the premise that his own writing could also be extractable and malleable in the voices and hands of readers. He also realized that he could take advantage of that pliability himself, to make a collection of advice-giving verse and a petition for money into a widely accessible cultural artifact.

As I explore in the next chapter, the status of texts as *physical* artifacts also presented Hoccleve with key opportunities to engage his readers in performances of his texts that extended beyond his verse. By examining the visual properties of surviving manuscripts of his texts, I show how Hoccleve used paratextual elements and other features of page layout to supplement the content of his poetry and to "script"—without fully determining—the kinds of reading practices he desired from his audiences. Just as variant forms of Hoccleve's verse in *Regiment* manuscripts reveal readers acting on their authority to reinterpret and recontextualize the poem over time, variations in marginalia

⁷⁷ Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 4-5.

and visual format reveal a history of readers treating his texts as sites for interactive performances.

Chapter 2 Visual and Vocal Dialogics: Hoccleve's Scripts for Reading Performances

Medieval manuscripts were often designed to encourage readers to be aware of their physical interactions with texts. Illuminations in some manuscripts even show how manuscript pages offered “mirrors” for their readers’ probable actions, guiding readers to handle or to respond to their books in particular ways.¹ For example, in Figure 2.1(a), from a partial thirteenth-century Bible manuscript, a monk reads at a lectern, and it appears that he is holding the book open with his left hand while gesturing at the text with two fingers of his right. The historiated capital letter *F* in which the monk sits, is actually the first letter in the word “frater,” so—in an effect like an illustrated *ABC* book—the monk is depicting a condition of his brother-monks’ existence: they are

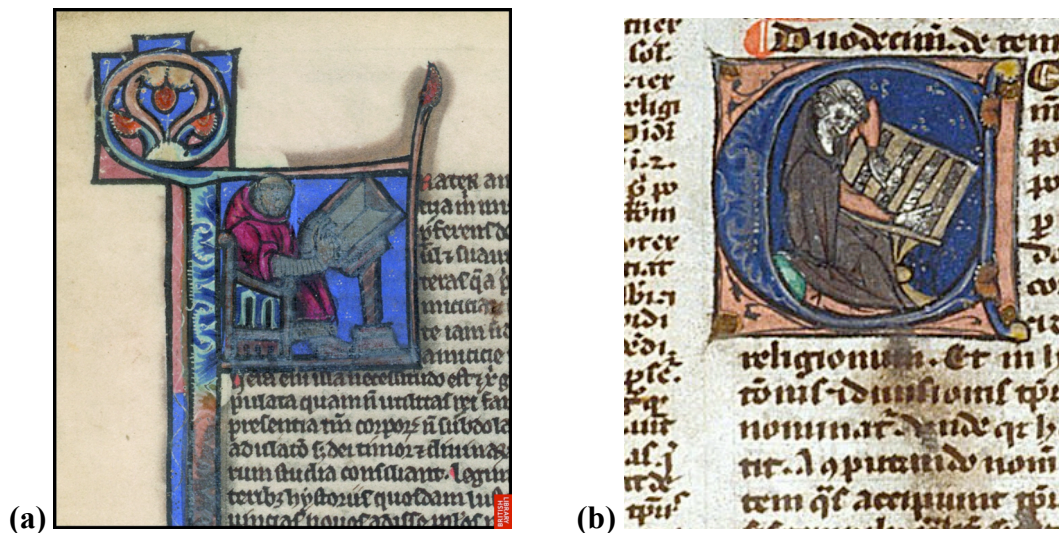


Figure 2.1: British Library, (a) MS Harley 2813, fol. 4r (detail), (b) MS Harley 4350, fol. 68v (detail).²

¹ Mirrors and mirroring themes are prominent in Hoccleve’s works. See especially Anna Torti, “Mirroring in Hoccleve’s *Regiment of Princes*,” *Poetica* 24 (1986): 39-67, and David Watt, *Exemplars and Exemplarity: The Making of Thomas Hoccleve’s “Series”* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, forthcoming), 8-11. In the latter, pp. 15-16, 85, Watt also considers mirroring across textual and paratextual structures, including a miniature illumination in the copy of Hoccleve’s *Lerne to Dye* in Bodleian Library MS Selden Supra 53, fol 118r.

² Images from *BLCIM*, s.v. “Harley 2813” and s.v. “Harley 4350.”

reading and studying the very Bible in which they find him. Similarly, in Figure 2.1(b), from a calendar-calculating text with instructions for computing the date of Easter, an historiated initial *C*, for the word “computus,” shows a monk privately pouring over a text at his reading desk. The monk physically keeps track of his places in the text with his hands in order to cross-reference different passages. Viewed in the context of the whole page (see Figure 2.2), we can see that a reader of this particular text might have to mimic these physical actions in order to read back and forth between the text and glosses.

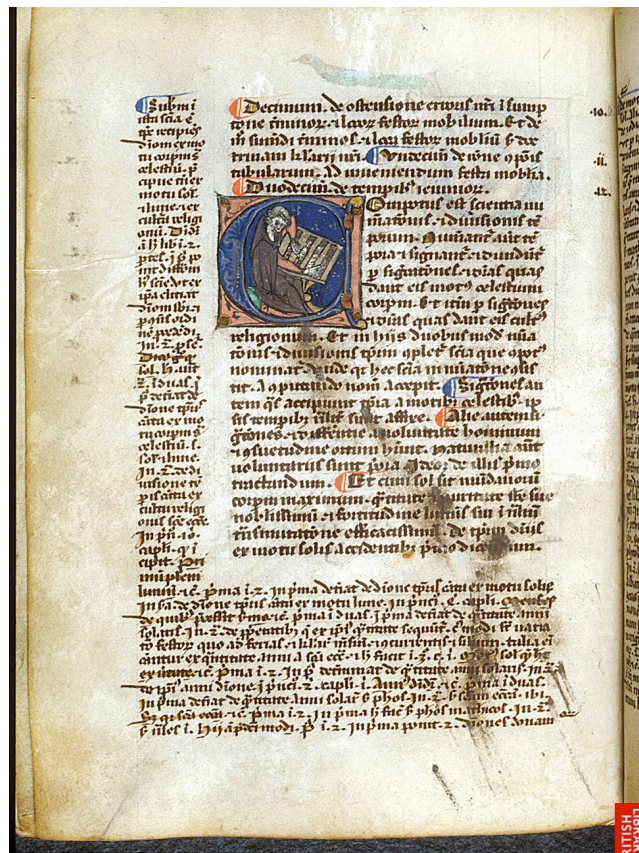


Figure 2.2: British Library, MS Harley 4350, fol. 68v³

³ Image from *BLCIM*, s.v. “Harley 4350.”

These illuminations both depict readers' actions and model a manner of attentive reading for their viewers that involves physical actions applied to the handling of material texts. These are examples of medieval "multimedia" that illustrate how a text's physical form can become part of the content it communicates to its audiences. The visual layout of a page and the possible presence of images incorporate messages about how to read the text into the text itself. In this sense, a dialogue forms between participants in a text's production and reception. The full meaning of the text only unfolds in the course of readers' acts of perceiving its content in particular material contexts: that is, in readers' *performances* of the text.

These performances were real events in readers' daily lives and experiences of culture. As Michael Camille argues, the theatrical sensations texts offered to readers were aided by the fact that manuscripts, especially when illuminated, were "site[s] of past performance and self-articulation."⁴ Thus, like Chaucer's narrative premise in the *Canterbury Tales*, a fictional narration of personal experience could be written as a performed recounting of past events.⁵ Scribes and illuminators approached their texts

⁴ Michael Camille, "Sensations of the Page: Imaging Technologies and Medieval Manuscripts," in the *Iconic Page in Manuscript, Print, and Digital Culture*, eds. George Bornstein and Theresa Tinkle (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1998), 44. See also Sylvia Huot, *From Song to Book: The Poetics of Writing in Old French Lyric and Lyrical Narrative Poetry* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987), 3, and Jessica Brantley, *Reading in the Wilderness: Private Devotion and Public Performance in Late Medieval England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 1-3. Huot frames her study of thirteenth and fourteenth-century French poetry with the argument that illuminated manuscripts take on a theatrical quality when they visually represent texts with a distinctly oral character. Brantley considers the relationship between reading and performance discernable in a fifteenth-century English vernacular manuscript.

⁵ See for example the shift to the subjunctive mood at the end of the *General Prologue* when the narrator begins his recounting of the *Knight's Tale* with a gesture to the text's potentially aural audience in the present: "And with that word we ryden forth oure weye / And he bigan with right a myrie cheere / His tale anon, and seyde as ye may here" (CT I [A] 856-8). See also the narrator's apology to the audience in the *Miller's Prologue* for his obligation to account for the events of the pilgrimage truthfully: "...I moot reherce / Hir tales alle, be they better or werse / Or elles falsen som of my mateere" (CT I [A] 3173-5).

with a stance similar to Chaucer's narrator: acting out and preserving these past-performances. These manuscript producers communicated their own styles and colorful emphases to readers, who in turn re-performed each text again as they perceived and possibly transmitted it to others. As Andrew Taylor argues in his book *Textual Situations*, even manuscripts without illuminations ought to be considered "sung objects" since their material forms necessitated that readers be conversant in complex skills and social conventions that often involved discussion, musical performance, or other forms of mediating oral and aural discourse. While these performance elements usually "left no traces in [a] manuscript itself,"⁶ Taylor emphasizes that:

A medieval text might have existed as a monk's slow mumbling, as an ongoing courtly flirtation, as a regular daily ritual in a monastery or great household, or as a few snatches from a familiar story sung on street corners—but it never simply existed. Just as an eighteenth-century poem existed in some specific edition, so a medieval poem existed in some specific performance, and this performance was no less fundamental in determining what the text was.⁷

I argue that manuscripts represent scripts for these various kinds of reading performances. Like scripts for dramatic productions, these scripts were designed to facilitate a reader's interactions with and use of the texts they presented.

When we read an individual author in the context of the manuscript history of his or her works, we are thus exploring a history of reading performances. In Chapter 1, I show how the thematic meta-awareness of texts' physical, material properties that

⁶Andrew Taylor, *Textual Situations: Three Medieval Manuscripts and Their Readers* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002), 18-19. To support his assessment of the manuscript medium, Taylor, 20-22, cites Paul Zumthor's claim that written text in the medieval period always presented an occasion for vocal performance (from *Toward a Medieval Poetics*, chapter 2). See also Ardis Butterfield, *Poetry and Music in Medieval France: From Jean Renart to Guillaume de Machaut* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 15.

⁷ Andrew Taylor, *Textual Situations*, 22.

Thomas Hoccleve expresses in his verse allows us to witness an author anticipating reading performances and attempting to direct them. As I discuss in this chapter, Hoccleve's involvement in copying, collecting, and circulating his own texts, reveal an author attempting to script reading performances with visual, paratextual elements in the spaces that surround his verse in manuscripts. In the following sections, I show how Hoccleve, like the producers of the Bible and calendar manuscripts in the Harley collection from two centuries before him, designed his texts so that their meanings would unfold in readers' acts of engaging with the margins of his texts—even though those performances could not be predetermined fully. By examining the manuscript layouts of two occasional poems that communicate properties of oral performances to readers and a passage of the *Regiment of Princes* that is verbally linked to a manuscript illumination, I consider how Hoccleve used the manuscript medium to bridge the unknown distances between past and future reading performances of texts. Then, with the example of Hoccleve's *Lerne to Dye*, I show how Hoccleve's two manuscript versions of the poem work in concert with its narrative to encourage readers to question the unity of character voices in the text that are central to performing and understanding it. As a consequence, I demonstrate that errant scribes of *Lerne to Dye* and annotating readers of manuscripts of Hoccleve's other texts all contribute to the multiplication of performance possibilities that Hoccleve seems to initiate in his manuscripts. First, however, I offer a brief theorization of how the past performances built into manuscript texts and the future reading performances resulting from them draw upon what Jonathan Culler calls “public

interpretive processes” available to the community of readers and audiences in which medieval texts circulated by both written and oral means.⁸

Manuscript Reading Performances: A Brief Theorization

The interpretive processes encoded in manuscripts can be described largely in terms of the relationships between two types of reading performances: the past performances that informed the construction of a text, and the multiple possible reading performances that were available to a text’s audiences (in oral presentations or preserved in variant material forms). In two primary senses, the relationships between these performances can be described as “dialogic.” First, in a “dialogue” between manuscript producers and manuscript readers, manuscript producers sought to design their texts to visually guide their audience’s interpretive efforts. Readers, in turn, were influenced by manuscript form even when they purposefully departed from that form in their interpretations and reading performances. In another sense, every subsequent copy of a text offered to an audience was the product of a copyist’s own reading performance of the text in another form—even when the copyist was the author, himself, as in the case of Hoccleve’s holograph manuscripts. Manuscripts thus also represent a dialogue between the form of the text a scribe finds and the variations he introduces into it.⁹

My use of the terms “dialogue” and “dialogics” expands upon M.M. Bakhtin’s original use of them to describe how texts stage dialogues between various layers of

⁸ Jonathan Culler, “Prolegomena to a Theory of Reading,” in *The Reader in the Text: Essays on Audience and Interpretation*, eds. Susan R. Suleiman and Inge Crosman (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1980), 56.

⁹ Andrew Taylor, *Textual Situations*, 12, describes manuscript as a medium that is “likely to be polyvalent or dialogic, so that diverse forms of representation, both of text and image, may be enclosed with a single copy.”

voices and narrative stances and between various historically situated discourses. Bakhtin's interpretation of dialogues that occur within a text's narrative or lyric content, however, has been productively used since the mid 1980s to explain the polyvalent styles of medieval poetry.¹⁰ More recently, however, textual critics have begun to use dialogics to account for the relationships between a text's physical forms and its audiences. This is a direction Bakhtin himself seemed to anticipate for his theories when, late in his career, he proposed that: "...every literary work *faces outward away from itself*, toward the listener-reader, and to a certain extent thus anticipates possible reactions to itself."¹¹ Even though authors and listeners or readers can be separated from each other by centuries and by great spatial distances, they all form the reality reflected in the text (a text's content). Bakhtin insists that authors, performers, and "listeners or readers who recreate and in so doing renew the text" participate equally in the creation of a text's represented world.¹² While Bakhtin's primary interests were novels, and especially the elaborate worlds of their fictions that take on new dimensions as readers explore and reread them over time, his analysis applies extremely well to medieval manuscripts. His account of the shared roles played by a text's content, producers, and audiences in creating a text's "world" describes a kind of performance process.

¹⁰ See David Lawton, *Chaucer's Narrators* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: D.S. Brewer, 1985), especially 1-8, 76; William McClellan, "Bakhtin's Theory of Dialogic Discourse, Medieval Rhetorical Theory, and the Multi-Voiced Structure of the *Clerk's Tale*," *Exemplaria* 1.2 (1989): 461-88, and "Lars Engle—'Chaucer, Bakhtin, and Griselda': a Response," *Exemplaria* 1.2 (1989): 499-506; Lars Engle, "Chaucer, Bakhtin, and Griselda," *Exemplaria* 1.2 (1989): 429-59 and "Bakhtin, Chaucer, and Anti-Essentialist Humanism," *Exemplaria* 1.2 (1989): 489-97.

¹¹ M. M. Bakhtin, "Forms of Time and Chronotope in the Novel," in his *The Dialogic Imagination*, trans. Caryl Emerson, trans. and ed. Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), 257 (emphasis in original). This essay on tropes draws broad connections between literary discourses in wide-ranging texts and genres from ancient Greek romances to modern novels. While it was written in the 1930s, Bakhtin's concluding remarks (from which these quotes and paraphrases are drawn) were added in 1973.

¹² Bakhtin, 253.

Like actors interpreting a script, readers must enact a text mentally, and possibly audibly and physically (even if they are reading privately, like the reading monk in the calendar-calculating text illumination discussed above), as they seek to understand the ways a text corresponds with its visual elements. Andrew Taylor, for example, has argued that marginal manuscript illuminations depicting sins and physical monstrosities are painted in the margins of some manuscripts of sacred texts in order to portray the marginalization of the sinful and grotesque in society, and to establish the authority of the written text by framing it as a dialogue with a visually distinct “other.”¹³ With similar attention to the ways readers must interact with the visual and material aspects of texts, Robert Sturges extends Bakhtin’s theories of dialogue and polyglossia to describe readers’ perception of the relationship between a manuscript text and its glosses.¹⁴

Sturges also describes variations between manuscripts as dialogues that reveal how texts are read and copied from different perspectives.¹⁵ Although most medieval readers would not have been aware of specific variations between manuscripts or between texts and oral performances, the variations we can perceive between manuscripts are by nature dialogic, since one variant material form of a text can only be defined in its relation to other material forms. The variant reading performances that we can witness in manuscripts thus all represent “unscripted” behavior by readers and audiences. Such

¹³Andrew Taylor, “Playing on the Margins: Bakhtin and the Smithfield Decretals,” *Bakhtin and Medieval Voices*, ed. Thomas Farrell (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 1995), 17-37. Taylor builds on the work of Michael Camille in *Image on the Edge: The Margins of Medieval Art* (London: Reaktion Books, 1992), and “Glossing the Flesh: Scopophilia and the Margins of the Medieval Book,” in *Margins of the Text*, ed. D.C. Greetham (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997), 245-267.

¹⁴ Robert Sturges, “Medieval Authorship and the Polyphonic Text: From Manuscript Commentary to the Modern Novel,” *Bakhtin and Medieval Voices*, ed. Thomas Farrell (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 1995), 122-137.

¹⁵ Robert Sturges, *Medieval Interpretation: Models of Reading in Literary Narrative, 1100-1500* (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1991), 3-6.

behavior stems from individual copiers' transmission errors and choices, but also from readers' personal interpretations and individual uses for a text.

Michel de Certeau describes such idiosyncratic reading behavior in any era as “poaching” to emphasize that writers ultimately have very little control over what audiences “do” with their texts. As Certeau elaborates in his cultural theories of use and practice, one thing readers do with texts, and users do with spaces and other cultural artifacts, is forge their own creative “rhetorical figures” with their interpretations that fundamentally affect the meaning and nature of these texts. With an analogy to window-shopping in a modern city, Certeau suggests that readers of a text are “travelers” and “nomads” whose attentions wander, sometimes accidentally and sometimes strategically, as they perceive a text. Users of a space or readers of a text take in portions of it at a time, distilling it to snapshots, or exemplars and take-away points in order to understand it better and describe it to other people. Certeau calls this mode of perception *synecdoche*. Similarly walkers and readers can choose particular details or points of emphasis to help them remember a place or a text, or to represent it in other discourses (*asyndeton*).¹⁶ Readers' partial and selective interpretations of a text may alter the form of the content its writer scripted, but construing such readings as performances emphasizes that they are creative acts and constitutive features of texts.

Performances served as both foundations for and end results of manuscript reading practices, but they also had rhetoric apart from their texts. Joyce Coleman offers an illustrative example of just such a performed reading, in which Eustache Deschamps

¹⁶ Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven Rendall (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 101. The rhetorical figures of walking are from the chapter “Walking in the City,” 91-110, and the comparison of readers to travelers, nomads, and poachers is from the chapter “Reading as Poaching,” 165-176.

read and paraphrased from a short portion of Guillaume de Machaut's *Voir Dit* to the Count of Flanders' court during treaty negotiations with an English delegation at Bruges in 1375. An account of this performance can be reconstructed from a ballade Deschamps wrote to Machaut describing how the performance and the author's text were received. Coleman determines, from a line in Deschamps' ballade, that he read an excerpt from Machaut's poem that describes Fortune as an arbiter of material prosperity and ethical good, diverging from the poem's overarching narrative of Machaut's depicted love affair with the lady, Toute Belle. In this performed reading, Coleman claims, Deschamps collaborated with his audience to recontextualize the courtly-love entertainment as a *speculum principis*, an advice text for noblemen, that encouraged the court to discuss their proper responsibilities as statesmen on the occasion of their precarious diplomatic mission. And if, as Coleman postulates, the manuscript Deschamps presented to the Count after his reading was illuminated like all of the surviving copies of the *Voir Dit*, he likely would have had the opportunity to use the book as a visual aid. He could also have used its complex illustration of Dame Fortune, who is described holding a wheel that contains four smaller wheels, as "stage directions" to help choreograph his gestures as he read Fortune's description from the text.¹⁷ Essentially, Deschamps used the text of Machaut's poem as a script, dialoguing with it in both senses of the term. He made purposeful selections from the text, adapting the genre of the poem for his self-authorizing purposes and for his performance venue.¹⁸ He also may have taken physical

¹⁷ Joyce Coleman, "The Text Recontextualized in Performance: Deschamps' Prelection of Machaut's *Voir Dit* to the Count of Flanders," *Viator* 31 (2000): 233-248.

¹⁸ Deborah McGrady, in *Controlling Readers: Guillaume de Machaut and his Late Medieval Audience* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006), 157-169, critiques Coleman for not taking into account the self-authorizing dimension in Deschamps' description of his performance of Machaut's poem (which

cues from the text's accompanying images in the manuscript to help enhance his own and his audiences' interpretation of the text.

What Deschamps' performance, and his reporting back to Machaut about the performance, suggests is that writers actively wrote with an awareness that readers participated in performance processes, and that those processes included the active poets in the English-French cultural milieu in the late Middle Ages. In medieval texts, which were so materially dependent on the actions of multiple intermediaries for their transmission,¹⁹ writers and scribes anticipated that readers would continuously "renew"²⁰ their texts and thus sought to engage readers in adding creative elements to their own manuscript reading experiences. Thus, as Joyce Coleman notes, variant features of individual copies of manuscript texts like "syntax, authorial topoi, characterization, and even illumination may be viewed not (or, not only) as the idiosyncratic result of writers and artists struggling with, or against, their sources and models, but also as features meant to enhance the audience's comprehension or enjoyment, meant to take form in performance in ways we are only beginning to explore."²¹ I argue that analyzing medieval manuscripts in terms of the features of their visual layouts can reveal writers designing their texts with a long-view of how they would be read over time in private and

occurs in his own Ballade 127). According to McGrady's analysis, this self-authorization can be decoded from Deschamps' emphasis on reading practices rather than writing practices in both the Ballade he sent to Machaut and the selection from Machaut's *Voir Dit* that Deschamps describes having performed at Bruges.

¹⁹ Paul Zumthor, in *Toward a Medieval Poetics*, trans. Philip Bennett (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1992, orig. 1972), 362, claims that most medieval poetry contains elements of theatricality, and that, like medieval dramatic texts, a *community* of authors, actors, musicians, and producers transmits it to a *collectivity* of receivers, spectators, and readers. (my emphasis)

²⁰ Bakhtin, 254.

²¹ Joyce Coleman, "Aural Illumination: Books and Aurality in the Frontispieces to Bishop Chevrot's *Cité de Dieu*," in *Orality and Literacy in the Middle Ages: Essays on a Conjunction and its Consequences in Honour of D.H. Green*, eds. Mark Chinca and Christopher Young (Tournhout: Brepols, 2005), 247-8.

public performance contexts. Such features demonstrate writers attempting to initiate dialogues with their readers and attempting to direct their actions. By “scripting” reading performances, writers sought to amplify their texts’ stylistic effects and to help to preserve their texts’ meanings in a culture that they knew would introduce variation into their texts. By considering these manuscripts to represent parts of dialogues between a text’s writer and sources, between scribes and illustrators, and between all these people and the text’s future readers and copyists, we can see how all of a text’s audiences and producers collaborate in the preservation and development of its meanings over time.

Two of Hoccleve’s Scripts for Reading Performances

Along with offering an important example of English poetic and scribal practices at the beginning of the fifteenth century, Hoccleve seems to have been familiar with late-medieval French poets like Deschamps and even patterned some of his metrical structures on Deschamps’s work.²² It is probable that Hoccleve also understood the performance dimensions of reading that Coleman claims Deschamps exploited as a court poet reading Machaut to the Count of Flanders at Bruges. Furthermore, two examples from manuscripts of Hoccleve’s poetry suggest that he envisioned his texts as the subjects of reading performances facilitated by their material forms, and illustrate how he sought to shape the nature of these performances by acting as a reader and performer of them himself. The first example I will present reveals actual live performed readings of short, occasional lyrics preserved *post hoc* in one of Hoccleve’s holograph manuscripts. The second example is of a dialogic relationship Hoccleve sets up between a section of his

²² John Burrow, “Hoccleve and the Middle French Poets,” in *The Long Fifteenth Century: Essays for Douglas Gray*, eds. Helen Cooper and Sally Mapstone (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), 38.

long narrative poem, the *Regiment of Princes*, and a marginal illustration that asks audiences to recreate a performance in their readings. Both examples constitute dialogues readers were meant to follow and recreate between a manuscript text and elements of paratext in its margins.²³ And in both examples, visual and imagined vocal dialogic structures reveal that Hoccleve's forward-thinking composition relies on readers to enhance his verse with performance elements.

Performing Ballads to Henry Somer

My first example is distinctive because it preserves, in a manuscript written by Hoccleve himself, two actual readings performed before the same intended audience. In Huntington Library MS HM 111, which dates to the early 1420s, Hoccleve records, among other occasional lyrics, two *Ballads to Henry Somer* that were performed before this prominent baron of the Exchequer on different occasions separated by at least two years. The layout of these poems in this volume reveals Hoccleve attempting to communicate elements of these past performances to his readers.²⁴ By means of descriptive headings before each poem indicating their genre and original audiences, and by means of conventional performance markers like initial capitals,²⁵ Hoccleve involved audiences of his manuscript in renewing the performances with their readings.

²³ I use the term "paratext" in the sense that Gérard Genette defines it in *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), originally published as *Seuils* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1987). Paratext refers to the elements of a text's visual presentation that offer context and aid for readers, such as titles, glosses, notes, a colophon, etc.

²⁴ For matters of formatting and layout in both ballads, I have consulted *Hoccl Facs*, HM 111, f. 38v-39v, 41v-43r.

²⁵ See Ardis Butterfield, *Poetry and Music in Medieval France*, 184. Initial capitals are the most common markers Butterfield finds for songs and shifts in performance style in French manuscripts of the 13th-14th centuries, whether or not they are accompanied by musical notation. From her survey of hundreds of manuscripts and Hoccleve's established familiarity with 14th-century French forms and poet-performers, I

The first ballad follows a rather conventional pattern for a begging-poem, seeking to persuade Somer to expedite late payments of salaries to government clerks. The speaking voice compliments the patron, conveys his humble reverence, and carefully complains about his financial woes, pointing out the patron's power to relieve them. In the last stanza, Hoccleve incorporates the names of his co-petitioners into his verse:

We your seruantes, Hoccleue and Baillay,
Hethe and Offorde, yow beseche and preye,
Haastith our heruest as soon as yee may.
For fere of stormes our wit is awaye
Were our seed inned, wel we mighten pleye
And vs desporte and synge and make game.
And yit this rowndel shul we synge and seye
In trust of yow and honour of your name. (*Somer1* 25-32)²⁶

He then includes the “rowndel” on the next page. The song's refrain shows it to be structured around the same seasonal pun on the addressee's name (Somer ~ summer), that drives the agrarian imagery of the whole poem, comparing Somer's ability to increase his petitioners' wealth to the growing season (see Figure 2.3):

Somer, þat rypest mannes sustenance
With holsum hete of the sonnes warmnesse,
Al kynde of man thee holden is to blesse. (*Somer1* 33-35)

While the poem does not necessarily mention the performance occasion directly,²⁷ it does seem designed to cue other people present at an oral reading to participate—even *to sing along* with the reader—or at least to engage actively as an audience. (Perhaps Hoccleve

argue that Hoccleve drew on these formatting conventions in his manuscript to construct parameters for future performances of his ballad and song—as part of his record of their former performance context for his readers.

²⁶ Cf. Ellis, 79-81, for a slightly different interpretation of punctuation in the first ballad.

²⁷ The third verse of the song mentions only a non-specific upcoming Christmas as a time reference, i.e. probably the time of year when Somer could next deliver semiannual salary payments to Hoccleve and his cohort.

gestured to his colleagues when he mentioned their names—and perhaps they nodded or bowed to indicate their assent to his claim to speak for them.) In the written context, these cues (especially the “Somer etceteras” noting the song’s refrain) would indicate to a reader that this text was designed for a specific “live” performance—and perhaps have him or her wondering about the song’s tune.²⁸

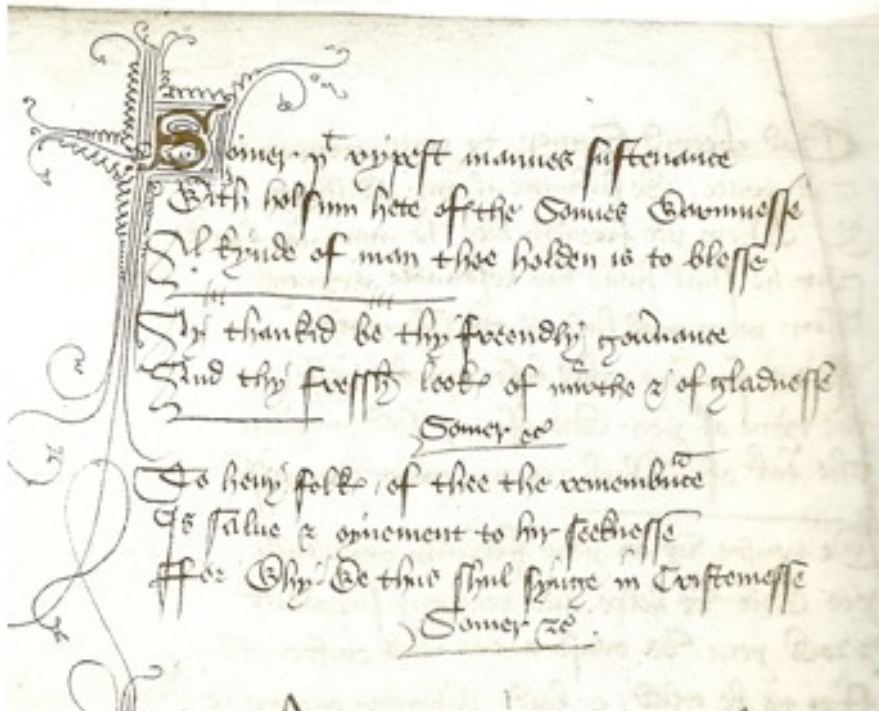


Figure 2.3: Huntington Library, MS HM 111, fol. 39v (detail)²⁹

The second ballad was written to thank Somer for pledging money to maintain the May Day feast at the Court of Good Company, a sort of guild and supper club for bureaucrats to which Hoccleve and Somer belonged, before and after Somer was promoted to a lucrative position as Chancellor of the Exchequer. While the layout of this

²⁸ As Ardis Butterfield describes, in *Poetry and Music in Medieval France*, 75-86, refrains were traditional sites of generic and formal overlap that writers used broadly to record and replicate performance conditions for readers.

²⁹ Image from *Hoccl Facs*.

poem in the manuscript does not reveal its performed characteristics, specific features of the occasion for which the poem was read are directly emphasized throughout. For example, Hoccleve acknowledges a letter Somer wrote to the organization, in which Somer offered to sponsor the Court's May Day feast while still paying the usual dinner fee expected of the attendees:

...sixe shippes grete³⁰
To yeue vs han yee grauntid and behight,
To bye ageyn our dyner flour or whete,
And besyde it, as reson wole and right,
Paie your lagh as dooth anothis wight (Somer2 29-33)

Also marking its occasional nature a few lines later, Hoccleve describes a provision of the letter in which Somer asks the Court to change its plans to cancel the feast because he would like to attend it (possibly to celebrate his promotion):

In your letter contened is also
Pat if vs list to chaunge in no maneere
Our newe gyse ne twynne therfro,
The firste day of May yee wole appeere (Somer2 36-39)

As an additional compliment, Hoccleve concludes the poem by announcing how the next Thursday (which probably was May Day) the company would honor Somer as the feast's ruler:

Reule þat day, for the thank shal be youre.
Dooth as yow list be drawe in consequence.
We trusten in your wys experience.
But keepith wel your tourn, how so befall,
On Thorsday next, on which we awayte alle. (Somer2 66-70)

³⁰ "Six ships" (line 29) refers to six imprinted royal coins—nobles, stamped with a picture of a ship—that would have totaled an amount of about 2 £. See M.C Seymour, commentary to Thomas Hoccleve, *Selections from Hoccleve*, ed. M.C. Seymour (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981), 111, n. to line 21.

While the layouts of the manuscript pages in which it is written do not give away any clues about the poem's performance, its content provides details about it. The mention of the setting and the days of the week on which certain meetings occur conveys the impression that the poem was meant to be read aloud to the addressee by the poet, himself, in the mentioned court, at the regular meeting held the week prior to this particular May Day when Somer would be honored.

The performance elements in the text and content of the ballads are clear, specifically marking the modes of presentation in the first one and the occasion of performance in the second. But what especially shows Hoccleve to have designed MS HM 111 as a "script" for future reading performances is that he gives his ballads descriptive titles in French. The title of the first describes that "Cestes balade et chanceon ensuyantes feurent faites a mon meistre H. Somer, quant il estoit souztresorer" [This ballad and song that follow were made for my master Henry Somer, when he was undertreasurer]. The second proclaims "Ceste balade ensuyante feust, par la Court de Bone Conpaignie, enuoiee a lonure sire Henri Somer, Chaunceller de leschequer et vn de la dite court" ["This ballad was made, in the Court of Good Company, to send a message of honor to Sir Henry Somer, Chancellor of the Exchequer and one of the said court"]. Such titles are partly included as a form of *ordinatio*³¹ to facilitate the anthologizing principle at work in the volume,³² which was compiled some time in the early 1420s near

³¹ M.B. Parkes, "The Influence of the Concepts of *Ordinatio* and *Compilatio* on the Development of the Book," in *Scribes, Scripts, and Readers: Studies in the Communication, Presentation, and Dissemination of Medieval Texts* (London: Hambledon Press, 1991), 35-70.

³² J.M. Bowers, in "Hoccleve's Huntington Holographs: The First 'Collected Poems' in English," *Fifteenth Century Studies* 15 (1989): 27-51, claims that HM 111 and the other Huntington holograph manuscript HM 744 were intended by Hoccleve to be bound together into a single "authorized" collection of his poems.

the end of Hoccleve's poetic career, over a decade after the first *Ballad* was presented to Somer—and from two to fifteen years after the presentation of the second.³³

The titles also show Hoccleve designing his manuscript to accommodate readers who may have been unfamiliar with Somer and his career. The titles provide information that does not come through directly in the poems themselves: for the first poem, about the compiler's relationship to the addressee (“my master,” “one of the same court”), and about the time the poem was presented to him (“when he was undertreasurer”), and, for the second poem, about the name of the court (which also notes the change in Somer's

While this idea has been convincingly challenged by David Watt in “Thomas Hoccleve's Self-Publication and Book Production,” *Leeds Studies in English* 34 (2003): 133-60, each holograph manuscript individually seems to represent an attempt by Hoccleve to collect together a range of his own verse works.

³³ I challenge John A. Burrow's accepted claim that the second ballad was written in 1421. See Burrow, *Thomas Hoccleve, Authors of the Middle Ages*, no. 4 (Brookfield, VT: Variorum Ashgate, 1994), 15-6, 28-9, for his discussion of the dating of the first ballad to early in the range of 1408-1410 (which I agree with) and the dating of the second ballad to 1421. Burrow's dating of the second ballad corrects previous estimates of 1410 by Furnivall, xiii, and Seymour, textual notes to *Selections from Hoccleve*, 111. Since the poem mentions an upcoming May Day feast scheduled on a Thursday, Hoccleve could only have written it in 1410 or 1421. The choice between the two years depends primarily on the interpretation of the two French headings Hoccleve uses to identify Somer as each ballad's addressee in HM 111. For the second ballad, Hoccleve uses the title “Chaunceller de leschequer” in a parenthetical description of Somer, whereas for the first ballad he describes Somer with the past tense phrase “quant il estoit souztresorer” (i.e. “when he was under-treasurer”). Since historical records show that Somer's appointment as Chancellor of the Exchequer began in June 1410, Seymour claims that the poem was written for the May Day immediately prior to the commencement of Somer's Chancellorship, i.e. in 1410, when Somer would probably have been most interested in celebrating his promotion. Burrow, however, considers the juxtaposition of tenses in the two headings identifying Somer as evidence that the second ballad was composed *while* Somer was currently in the higher position of Chancellor, and *after* he had left the office of under-treasurer. Thus, since Somer did not actually occupy the office of Chancellor until after May Day 1410, and was still in office during May Day 1421, Burrow chooses 1421 as the date of the poem (see Burrow, 29 n. 114). I think, however, that the 1410 dating may still be valid. Burrow incorrectly assumes that the ballad headings in HM 111 indicate the title Somer held at the time of the second ballad's composition. Rather, the headings merely indicate the title Somer held at the time of HM 111's composition (for which Burrow and Doyle establish a *terminus post quem* of September 1422, see *Hoccl Facs*, xx). Since all the headings for poems in HM 111 have explanatory functions aimed at the manuscript's readers in the 1420s, the identifications of Somer by his professional titles must be considered “current” and “former” relative to the manuscript's audience, not any one poem's possible date of original composition by Hoccleve. While I prefer the 1410 dating of the poem over 1421, due in part to Seymour's compelling narrative that portrays Somer acting generously in anticipation of his new salary and Hoccleve designing a performance to honor him, neither date should be dismissed or adopted without new evidence concerning the activities of Somer, Hoccleve, or the Court of Good Company that hosted the May Day feast mentioned in the ballad.

bureaucratic title, when compared to the first ballad's title). When put in dialogue with the content of the ballads, the titles thus set the stage to help a reader imagine the poems' original performance contexts. Such a dialogue between text and paratext requires a reader to oscillate between French and English while reading from title to text, and requires a reader to leaf through a number of pages to find the correlations between the two ballads' addressees. Both poems thus call attention to what a reader can do with the physical manuscript to help understand the text, turning the reader's actions into a performance activity that continues—or adds to—the performance represented by the ballads themselves.

Performance and the Iconography of Chaucer in the Regiment of Princes

My second example shows how Hoccleve relies on readers to perform the rhetoric in his verse by setting up dialogic relationships between visual elements of his manuscript pages, even when he is not trying to represent a past “live” performance event for his readers. In one of two earliest surviving presentation copies of Hoccleve's long poem the *Regiment of Princes*, British Library MS Harley 4866, the famous Chaucer portrait in Figure 2.4 participates in such a dialogic visual performance. While Hoccleve did not copy this manuscript himself,³⁴ he seems to have had a hand in designing the visual dialogics of the portrait's folio in which the text verbally points to Chaucer, and Chaucer visually points to the text. These reciprocal gestures between the text and its marginal illustration encourage the reader to step back from the text being read (or heard)

³⁴ It seems likely that Hoccleve arranged it to be copied for presentation to another wealthy patron besides the Prince. See Burrow, *Thomas Hoccleve*, 18-19, and Charles Blyth, introduction to *RofP*, 15-17. The other earliest known presentation copy, British Library MS Arundel 38, which is formatted very similarly, is missing the page where the Chaucer portrait would have been. A few other surviving manuscript copies of the poem also appear to be missing folios that may have once contained the Chaucer portrait.

to contemplate the function of visual imagery and the demands images place on the minds of their viewers. Through the reader's performance of the interactions between Chaucer's image and text, this manuscript folio provides material support for a political and religious argument against iconoclasm that the poem launches at this point in its narrative.



Figure 2.4: British Library, MS Harley 4866, fol. 88r (detail)³⁵

Chaucer and the potential importance of Chaucerian iconography for English culture provide Hoccleve with a secular foundation for his later religious argument. The stanza to which the portrait of Chaucer points follows two stanzas in which Hoccleve names Chaucer “my worthy maister” (*RofP* 4983) and “the firste fyndere of our fair langage” (*RofP* 4978). This stanza describes Hoccleve’s reason for including the portrait with the poem:

³⁵ Image from *BLCIM*, s.v. “Harley 4866.”

Although his lyf be qweynt, the resemblance
Of him hath in me so fressh lyflynesse
That to putte other men in remembrance
Of his persone, I have here his liknesse
Do make, to this ende, in soothfastnesse,
That they that haue of him lost thoght and mynde
By this peynture may ageyn him fynde. (RofP 4992-8)

Hoccleve's narrator claims that he is including the portrait next to the verse in order to impress the image of Chaucer on the reader's memory lest he be forgotten in death. The narrator describes the portrait as an extension of his lament, but it is also an authorizing gesture. As Ethan Knapp has suggested, Hoccleve creates a circuit of authority with this portrait—the poem honors the authority of Chaucer, and the portrait then bestows authority on the text.³⁶ I think, however, that the way this circuit of authority relies on the reader's efforts is Hoccleve's signal to readers to act on their own authority to participate in the performance and interpretation of the text. A slightly more sinister subtext in this eulogizing, authorizing circuit, however, is that the image signifies the literary patriarch's death. The manuscript page asserts the vitality of the speaker of the poem next to an image of a dead man. "Chaucer is no longer here," Hoccleve seems to be saying, "but I am, and so are you, reader." To support this, the portrait's gesture draws attention away from itself and back to Hoccleve's verse. Another version of the Chaucer portrait, in British Library MS Royal 17 D.vi, f.93v (see Figure 2.5), even more strongly emphasizes Chaucer's absence by having the author point to the last two lines of the stanza that tell how readers have forgotten him. Similarly, in the original design of MS Harley 4866, this portrait was also subordinated to a much larger and more prominently placed portrait of

³⁶ Ethan Knapp, *The Bureaucratic Muse: Thomas Hoccleve and the Literature of Late Medieval England* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2001), 123.

Hoccleve, himself, kneeling before the prince and offering him a book, that occurs much earlier in the volume.³⁷ The dynamic formed between the two illuminations compares the current and active relationship Hoccleve claims to have with his audience through this book to Chaucer’s isolation as a dead—though honored—author.



Figure 2.5: British Library MS Royal 17 D.vi, f.93v (detail)³⁸

Due to the claim in the verse for the portrait’s “likeness” and “soothfastness” (the rhymed pair to which Chaucer’s hand points in Harley 4866), many scholars have been concerned with the portrait’s verisimilitude.³⁹ Usually comparing the Harley and Royal

³⁷ The presentation illustration was excised from MS Harley 4866, but a second version of it survives in British Library MS Arundel 38, f. 37r, see *BLCIM*, s.v. “Arundel 38.”

³⁸ Image from *BLCIM*, s.v. “Royal 17 D vi.”

³⁹ See Nicholas Perkins, *Hoccleve’s Regiment of Princes: Council and Constraint* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2001), 114-25, 155-9; M.C. Seymour, “Manuscript Portraits of Chaucer and Hoccleve,” *Burlington Magazine* 124.955 (1982): 618-23; Jeanne Krochalis, “Hoccleve’s Chaucer Portrait,” *Chaucer Review* 21.2 (1986): 234-45; David Carlson, “Thomas Hoccleve and the Chaucer Portrait,” *Huntington Library*

portraits to the one of Chaucer on a horse in the famous Ellesmere manuscript of the *Canterbury Tales*,⁴⁰ researchers wonder if this is actually what Chaucer looked like. Their inquiry is warranted by how remarkable it is to find such a realistic-looking portrait in an artistic era typified by more symbolic or idealized depictions of human features.⁴¹ If indeed the portrait is an accurate depiction of Chaucer, it would suggest that cultural activities in early fifteenth-century London were significantly interrelated, since Hoccleve's limner would have had to know Chaucer's appearance as well as Hoccleve claims to have known in the poem. By concentrating on the problematic determination of the portrait's accuracy, though, I think scholars have somewhat missed the point of the accompanying verse. Hoccleve's *claim* to its accuracy is more important than the actual portrait. The claim establishes a dialogic relationship between the text and the image and between the text and the reader: asking the reader to take his or her eyes off the text, glance to the margin to see the image, accept that the image resembles Chaucer, and then follow the illustrated figure's pointed hand back to the text.

I argue that the activity that the reader must perform here, enacting the structural dialogue between text and image, also reinforces the surrounding rhetoric in the poem. Considering the text from the perspective of this performance activity can throw more light on Hoccleve's purpose for including a verbal and imagistic digression about Chaucer in the *Regiment's* narrative of political advice. Such activity sets up the reader to

Quarterly 54.4 (1991): 283-300; Lois Bragg, "Chaucer's Monogram and the 'Hoccleve Portrait' Tradition," *Word & Image* 12.1 (1996): 127-42.

⁴⁰ San Marino, Huntington Library MS EL 26 C.9, f. 153v. See *Digital Scriptorium* (New York: Columbia University Libraries), <http://www.digital-scriptorium.org/>, s.v. "EL 26 C 09."

⁴¹ Knapp, 120.

personally appraise an argument about the place of art and imagery in religious devotion that is made in the next two stanzas:

The ymages that in the chirches been
Maken folk thynke on God and on his seintes
Whan the ymages they beholde and seen,
Where ofte unsighte of hem causith restreyntes
Of thoghtes goode. Whan a thyng depeynt is
Or entaillid, if men take of it heede,
Thought of the liknesse it wole in hem breede.

Yit sum men holde oppinioun and seye
That noon ymages sholde ymakid be.
They erren foule and goon out of the weye (RofP 4999-5008)

In this passage, Hoccleve's major goal seems to be to affirm his orthodox theology concerning the practice of erecting lavish decorations in churches to encourage people to meditate on the holy things they represent—like saints, Jesus, or the Virgin Mary. Contemporary Lollard reformists objected to this practice for its parallels with idol-worship,⁴² but Hoccleve's narrator insists that *their* opinions are misinformed and deviant.⁴³ The dialogic performance Hoccleve sets up between the image of Chaucer and his text is meant to make his reader perform the very act by which an image breeds a likeness of a thing in their thoughts—showing how such a likeness does not replace or become a venerated thing but merely facilitates a person's attention to it.⁴⁴ Though

⁴² See Margaret Aston, *Lollards and Reformers: Images and Literacy in Late Medieval Religion* (London: Hambledon Press, 1984), 135-192.

⁴³ In the prologue of the *Regiment*, Hoccleve's opinion of the Lollards and confirmation of his orthodoxy is made even clearer in his description of the burning of the Lollard John Badby (lines 281-322), in which he commends the Prince for his generosity and compassion in his attempt to change Badby's mind about his beliefs prior to the execution.

⁴⁴ Hoccleve seems to be alluding to a philosophy of images, memory, and cognition that derives from Aquinas' interpretation of the Aristotelian notion of *phantasmata* (phantasms). These units of sense-experiences made perception and thought possible by their ability to be acquired, collected into concepts, stored in the mind, and then used again later by a person's intellect. See Anthony Kenny, *Medieval Philosophy*, vol. 2 of *A New History of Western Philosophy* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2005), 236-7.

Hoccleve places Chaucer in the authoritative company of saints with this dialogic textual-visual prompt, Hoccleve also relies on his readers to help him supplant that authority: acknowledging the saints' true presence as figures of imagination and Chaucer's as a figment of memory.

The importance of the dialogue between text and margin, rather than the portrait itself, for the audiences' enjoyment of the reading process, becomes clear in manuscripts where the portrait is absent. This importance is emphasized in two grumpy quatrains that a fifteenth-century reader added to the bottom margin of folio 139r, in British Library MS Harley 4826 (from which the portrait has been cut, leaving traces of paint behind):

Off worthy Chaucer
here the pickture stood
That much did wryght
and all to doo vs good

Sume furyous foole
haue cutt the same in twayne
His deed doo shewe
He bare a barron Brayne⁴⁵

This reader certainly seems to be disappointed about not being able to see a picture of Chaucer. His statement berating the previous reader seems to accuse the vandal of participating in the iconoclasm against which the poem argues with the circuit of visual reference between the text and the image of Chaucer. The graffitist's verses thus assert his own creative role as a reader and performer of the text and show him participating in the visual hermeneutics of the manuscript page. He allies himself with Hoccleve's

⁴⁵ My transcription of this piece of marginalia varies slightly from Nicholas Perkins' transcription in *Counsel and Constraint*, 158. See also Derek Pearsall, *The Life of Geoffrey Chaucer: A Critical Biography* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 1992), 289.

narrator, avowing the significance of the visual dialogue by substituting his own words for the missing portrait in the page's remaining margin.

The role of the visual dialogic of the manuscript page supersedes that of the image itself. Most copies of the poem do not offer a painting in the margins, but several mark the place for the illumination with a short gloss.⁴⁶ Such a gloss is also included with the full-body version of the portrait in British Library MS Royal 17 D.vi (see Figure 2.5). While this gloss probably was originally a placeholder for the image so that the manuscript could be illustrated some time after its original composition, it also provides a caption for the portrait—suggesting to future readers that the figure's appearance alone is not necessarily enough to convey his identity. Even when a gloss is used as a placeholder instead of the portrait to point back to the text, however, the script for the dialogue between image and text is still there, and still allows the reader to imagine performing the act of visual representation that Hoccleve defends in the verses following his eulogy of Chaucer.

Thus, the circuit of authority that Knapp reads in the interplay between Hoccleve's text and margins is also a circuit of dialogic performativity. The point of the dialogue between text and image, or between text and titles in the case of the *Ballads to Henry Somer*, is not just to authorize the poet, but also to authorize the reader. These

⁴⁶ 9 of the 39 MSS in which the corresponding passage of the poem survives contain such a gloss: Bodleian Library, MS Arch. Selden supra 53, f. 67v, MS Ashmole 40, f. 89r, MS Bodley 221, f. 127r, MS Digby 185, f. 139r, and MS Laud Misc. 735, f. 128r; British Library, MS Royal 17 D.vi, f. 93v; Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Museum, MS McClean 182, f. 131v, and MS McClean 185, f. 76r; and Yale University, Beinecke Library, MS 493, f. 127r. In three additional copies, readers from the sixteenth-century or later have added observational notes, including Bodleian Library MS Douce 158, f. 88r: "In some copies Chaucers / portrait is placed here." In British Library, MS Harley 4826, f. 139r the note is in a different hand from the earlier-dated graffitist described above, and as Perkins, 157-8 n. 29, describes, the comment noting the absence of the picture in British Library, MS Harley 372, f. 103r, is in the hand of John Stow, sixteenth-century antiquarian and editor of Chaucer. (I wish to thank Charles Blyth for access to manuscript collations that I used to compile this list.)

examples reveal Hoccleve urging his readers to supplement the text with their own actions, as if they were audiences actively listening to and watching the text being performed in front of them. They show how Hoccleve designed his texts to use the “renewing” performances of his audiences to reinforce his texts’ content. In one rather exceptional example of such a “renewing” performance, a seventeenth or eighteenth-century artist added a nearly exact replica of the portrait from Harley 4866 to Rosenbach Foundation MS 1983/10, f. 72v, a copy of the poem originally inscribed between 1425-50 without decoration.⁴⁷ Although the Rosenbach Chaucer portrait points to the text of the poem several lines earlier than the other portraits, it shows how Hoccleve’s text inspired among its readers a continual engagement with the materiality of the poem’s manuscript tradition. The Rosenbach manuscript’s owner or illustrator would have had to expend considerable effort to explore manuscript collections around England until he or she found a copy of the poem with a model portrait. Such effort underscores the kind of eager purposefulness with which readers medieval poetry wanted to participate in the pages of their books, and which medieval writers like Hoccleve tried to anticipate and script.

As I show in the rest of this chapter, however, readers’ desires to participate in Hoccleve’s books were not always so focused. Often this was due to the manner in which his texts were mediated by copyists and limners, who were relatively ambivalent to the textual content that they were reproducing and, as a result, introduced variation into a

⁴⁷M.C. Seymour in “Manuscript Portraits of Chaucer and Hoccleve,” 621, n. 8, posits the eighteenth-century date for the portrait, whereas David Carlson in “Thomas Hoccleve and the Chaucer Portrait,” 285, fig. 2, describes it as dating possibly from the seventeenth century. Both argue, with Jerome Mitchell, *Thomas Hoccleve: A Study in Early Fifteenth-Century English Poetic* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1968), 114, that the portrait was copied from Harley 4866. Burrow in *Thomas Hoccleve: Authors of the Middle Ages 4*, 51, provides the date range and shelf mark for the Rosenbach MS, which is variously referred to as Rosenbach 594 by Mitchell and MS 1083/30 by Carlson.

text. Such variation could create additional visual dynamics in a manuscript for readers that complicated or supplemented the writer's rhetoric. In the following section, with the example of Hoccleve's poem, *Lerne to Dye*, I show how Hoccleve developed a multiple-voiced narrative that, when situated in the two manuscript contexts he prepared for it, specifically challenged readers to question the ways they participated in the text through performances of the voices of its characters. By considering how the poem appears in Oxford University Bodleian Library MS Bodley 221, I show how errors by a scribe and a rubricator amplify this challenge to readers, revealing this poem to function like a script that can accommodate certain kinds of variation in reading performances. Then in the final section, I explore examples of marginal and interlinear marks left by readers in other manuscripts of Hoccleve's poetry that, when considered to be in dialogue with the content of Hoccleve's texts, reveal readers exploring the texts' additional possibilities for performance and interpretation enabled by their material forms.

Hoccleve's Performances of *Lerne to Dye* and MS Bodley 221's Reading Script

Hoccleve's poem *Lerne to Dye* is particularly interesting from the perspective of textual history because it has the distinction of being the only known medieval English poem to survive in two holograph manuscripts. In one it is the central translation in Hoccleve's copy of the *Series*, and in the other it is the final piece in a more miscellaneous compilation of his poetry. While it would seem that having two copies of the poem inscribed by the poet himself might increase the likelihood of establishing a stable notion of the poet's authority and intention behind the text, there are many metrical, orthographic, syntactic, and word-choice differences between the two copies

that prevent this. Some of these seem to be products of Hoccleve's own scribal errors, but many seem to be substantive choices representing the poet's adjustment or revision of his own material.⁴⁸ These two copies also shed light on the process of composing and copying partial texts that the narrator discusses with a friend character throughout the *Series*' frame narrative, as I discussed at the beginning of this dissertation.⁴⁹ Each copy reveals Hoccleve situating the poem in a different thematic and narrative context, essentially reperforming it twice, himself. The variations that other scribal copies introduce into the poem thus could be considered additional performances that add to Hoccleve's own. In one of these copies, MS Bodley 221, even seemingly accidental variants in the poem's layout and decoration become part of a pattern of reading performances that build upon the themes of Hoccleve's narrative in the poem.

The narrative of *Lerne to Dye* also presents an incredibly complex script for reading performances in itself. Through a nested dialogue in which the main character converses with an "ymage" of a man who is conjured from his own psyche, Hoccleve challenges readers to consider the ways in which perception and imagination can overlap. Even more deeply than the anti-iconoclastic rhetoric involving the Chaucer portrait in the *Regiment of Princes*, *Lerne to Dye* spotlights how the textual medium of a manuscript can cause perception and imagination to intersect as readers comprehend representations

⁴⁸ John Bowers in, "Hoccleve's Two Copies of *Lerne to Dye*: Implications for Textual Critics," *Papers of the Bibliographic Society of America* 83.4 (1989): 437-72, argues that these two copies show us that Hoccleve's own understanding of his text's form was fluid and disrupts any claim to be able to recover a singular "authorial" version of this poem such as editors aspire to publish in editions. For a more extensive discussion of the variations between the two copies, see John A. Burrow, "Excursus I: The Two Holographs of *Lerne to Dye*," in *Thomas Hoccleve's Complaint and Dialogue*, EETS o.s. 313, ed. John A. Burrow (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 111-18.

⁴⁹ David Watt in "'I This Book Shal Make': Thomas Hoccleve's Self-Publication and Book Production," *Leeds Studies in English* 34 (2003): 133-60, claims that the frame narrative describes how its contents were composed separately as stand-alone booklets before being incorporated into the *Series*.

of voices and people through words and images. By examining the poem's narrative in relation to its layout and paratextual elements in manuscripts, we can thus compare the ways Hoccleve and specific copyists emphasized elements of their audiences' imaginary experiences through their acts of reading.

Death Education: A Reading Performance

Lerne to Dye, which Hoccleve loosely translated from the *ars moriendi* chapter of Henry Suso's fourteenth-century *Horologium Sapientia*,⁵⁰ opens with a narrator appealing to God to open his treasure of wisdom to him. A response then comes directly from a voice that Hoccleve labels "Sapientia" (i.e. Wisdom) in the margins of one of his autograph copies.⁵¹ Sapientia offers to tell a character, who gets labeled "Discipulus" and may or may not be the same narrating voice who opens the poem, a "doctrine substantial." This doctrine consists of four parts: how to learn to die and prepare spiritually for death, how to learn to live and appreciate one's mortality, how to receive Wisdom as a sacrament, and finally how to love and honor that Wisdom. While the disciple expresses enthusiasm for this lesson, he initially balks at the first part, asking what use it is to learn how to die while living, since death itself deprives one of everything one has done in life: "What may profyte the lore of dyyng, / Syn deeth noon hauynge is but a pryuyng" (*LtoD* 34-5). Sapientia then explains how important it is for a person to be prepared for death since death could come at any moment, and to illustrate

⁵⁰ Identified by Benjamin P. Kurtz, in "The Source of Occeleve's *Lerne to Dye*," *Modern Language Notes* 38 (1923): 337-40.

⁵¹ Durham University Library, MS Cosin V.iii.9, f. 53r, see *Hoccl Facs*.

this point she turns the instruction over to a voice referred to throughout the rest of the poem as “th’yimage,” who the disciple finds or forms in his “conceit,” in his mind:

The misterie of my lore Y shal the shewe.

“Beholde now the liknesse and figure
Of a man dyyng and talking with thee.”
The disciple of þat speeche took good cure
And in his conceit bysyly soghte he,
And therwithal considere he gan and see
In himself put the figure and liknesse
Of a yong man of excellent fairnesse

Whom death so ny ransakid had and soght
Þat he withynne a whyle sholde dye. (*LtoD* 84-93)

This image of a dying young man woefully describes his pains and how much he regrets having lived a life concerned with worldly things in order to convince the disciple to spend time during his life thinking about his prospects for an afterlife. The rest of the narrative of the poem unfolds as the disciple raises an objection or sympathetic dismissal to each of the image’s complaints, and the image refutes him repeatedly. This goes on until the image demonstrates his own tormented passage into Purgatory, echoing the laments of the damned souls he passes on the way, and concludes by telling the disciple to learn from his own errors: “For a memorie leue Y this sentence / To thee, and here Y die in thy presence” (*LtoD* 739-40).

Up to this point the disciple is relatively stolid. He is not unsympathetic, exactly, but he is described as responding “with cheere stable” (*LtoD* 515) to even the most macabre pieces of the image’s advice (one example is the image’s recommendation for the disciple to envision his soul burning in a furnace in Purgatory for ten years crying out to him for help). After the image’s actual death, however, the disciple “tremblid and was

sore agast” (*LtoD* 742), and immediately cries out for fear that his initial host has forsaken him: “Wher art thou now, o Sapience eterne? / ... Thow seidest sapience Y sholde lerne, / And now Y am broght to the deeth almost, / So troublid is my spirit and my goost” (*LtoD* 744, 747-49). This delayed reaction is quite remarkable because from the moment that the image is conjured at the beginning of the poem, the source of its voice is actually the disciple himself. Lines 88-90, quoted above, describe how the disciple seeks this figure in his conceit, his mind—but these lines also use the more physical phrase “in himself put the figure and liknesse.” The writer asks the reader to envision the new speaker as a young and fair man, and then emphasizes with a stanza break how this speaker is dying. The speaker is both imaginary and definitely placed within the disciple’s “self.” The “ymage” is someone whom the disciple not only sees, but also sees through: he represents the disciple’s conscious schizophrenia, the other part in a two-part play performed by one actor.

The language of the disciple’s nervous final appeal to Sapiencia exaggerates the sense of performance to convey how the disciple *directly witnesses* the scenes of death and despair described by the image. “And now Y am brought to the deeth almost,” he says in line 748, certainly fearing his own proximity to death. He continues to describe how real the experience feels to him once the vision passes: “This sighte of death so sore me astoneth / ... But am in doute ... / ... if this be in liknesse / Or in deede, swich is my mazednesse” (*LtoD* 750-4). He is unsure if this bizarre and morbid event was imagined or if it actually happened, but he knows that it has left a physical impression on his organs: he says, “Neuere the perils of deeth vndisposid / In my lyf kneew I, as Y do now right. / Withyn myn herte been they deepe enclosid, / And so sadly therin picchid and

pight, / Þat hem foryete lyth nat in my myght” (*LtoD* 757-61). The fear of death gets contained physically in his heart, where the perils have erected a stronghold or have been driven like crucifying nails (two literal usages for *picchid* and *pight*)⁵² sapping his strength to forget.

The way the disciple “embodies” the voice of the image also draws attention to the fact that all the voices in the text are actually *disembodied* from any physical form except the manuscript text. We may get a vague sense of the disciple’s “body” through his descriptions of the pain he feels while inhabiting (or perhaps being inhabited by) the dying image, and of his abhorrence and fear after his performance of the image’s voice and vision has faded from his memory, but in the text he is otherwise just as much a voice as the supposed dying man he imagines—or as Sapiencia, himself (or herself). Significantly, he is unsure whether his experience discoursing with the dying man was an imaginary event (“in liknesse,” *LtoD* 753) or an active, perhaps embodied, experience (“in deede,” *LtoD* 754). Just like the chat he has with the allegorical figure of Wisdom after praying to God *for* wisdom, his ability to talk with a projection of his imagination blends mental fantasy and physical experience in this narrative space.

The disciple’s noticing of this blend, and being puzzled by it, parallels the reader’s own experience of reading a partially allegorical narrative poem in a manuscript. A reader’s perception of the speakers in the text with their distinct voices occurs in the imagination, but seeing them as words and lines on the manuscript page, and perceiving their metered and rhymed formal organization into stanzas (while also possibly reading the text aloud) involves a more physical performance. The two distinct manuscript forms

⁵² *MED*, s.v. “picchen.”

in which Hoccleve preserved the poem suggest that he envisioned it being open to multiple reading performance contexts. In Huntington Library MS HM 744, a miscellany Hoccleve compiled of his own work, *Lerne to Dye* adds a final solemn note to a collection of devotional poems and mirthful secular lyrics. Hoccleve's other manuscript copy of the poem is in Durham University Library MS Cosin V.iii.9, *Lerne to Dye* is the centerpiece in Hoccleve's *Series*, placed between two other translated poems inside a framing narrative that describes Hoccleve's compilation process.

The Durham manuscript even by itself shows Hoccleve's desire to facilitate multiple reading performance contexts for *Lerne to Dye* and the whole *Series*, due to a unique envoi that Hoccleve adds to the end of the *Series*' narrative frame. In it the speaker names the Duchess of Westmoreland as the book's recipient. The speaker personifies his manuscript and asks it to beseech the Duchess "on my behalve" to receive the text in such a way as will "plese hir wommanhede."⁵³ The speaker then ties the first-person voice of the narrator in the *Series*' frame narrative to the "my" that here addresses the book itself with a signature in the bottom right-hand corner of the folio: "Humble seruant / to your gracious / noblesse / T: Hoccleue." The voice that personifies the book in the envoi verse, though, presents itself as having a slightly different relationship to the *Series* than the voice that addresses the Duchess in the signature. The speaker in the envoi verse uses an imperative tone to direct the book's actions—even referring to himself in the third person—and characterizes himself as being outside the book and of a significantly lower social rank than the Duchess. The signature, however, is deferential and personal, taking the form of an epistolary salutation. While sounding a note of

⁵³ Transcribed from Durham University Library, MS Cosin V.iii.9, f. 95r, *Hoccl Facs*. Cf. *FMM* 733-42.

finality, it serves to direct the speaker's voice to a new addressee from inside the textual structure of the book, retroactively positioning the whole manuscript as a letter.

The presence of both these voices, as well as the voice that concludes the moralization to the final translation in the *Series* (known as the *Tale of Jonathas*) on the same final page of the Durham MS,⁵⁴ reveals that the author's imagination is oriented toward reception contexts. While interested in corralling his poetry together into the *Series*' single narrative frame, Hoccleve seems comfortable with the multiplicity of voices that his speakers must assume in order to relate to various audiences. For example, even with the dedication to the Duchess of Westmoreland at the end of the manuscript, the main speaker throughout the *Series*' frame narrative describes the book as being addressed to others. These addressees include Humphrey of Gloucester, who originally commissioned Hoccleve to compile the *Series* for him, the friend character from the *Dialogue with the Friend* who desires a tale for his son to read to caution him about devious women, and the women who consider Hoccleve to have a reputation as a misogynist.

While Hoccleve certainly was comfortable thinking of *Lerne to Dye* playing a versatile part in multiple reading performance contexts, the *Series* is the most widely reproduced context to have survived. Oxford University's Bodleian Library MS Bodley 221 is one of six surviving manuscripts that reproduce the *Series* context for *Lerne to Dye*, whereas the poem appears in no other non-narrative miscellany than HM 744. Bodley 221 is significant among these because it seems to have been the source, or

⁵⁴ The last 14 lines of a prose moralization to the *Tale of Jonathas* (FMM 722-32) precede the envoi on f. 95r of the Durham MS.

closely related to the source, for two of the other six that were copied by a single scribe. Thus, all three manuscripts host nearly identically formatted copies of the *Series* along with Lydgate's *Dance Macabre*, and Hoccleve's own *Regiment of Princes*, and share some unique readings and marginal glosses that do not appear in the other copies.⁵⁵ As several Hoccleve scholars have suggested, the *Series* was the most commonly reproduced context for *Lerne to Dye* because readers were interested in the personal and chatty voices that make up the *Series*' narrative frame.⁵⁶ As Christina von Nolcken has argued, though, *Lerne to Dye* also constitutes the thematic center of the *Series* texts: in which the authorial persona narrates his preparation for death while trying to settle his outstanding worldly obligations with the *Series*' other tales.⁵⁷ Von Nolcken claims that the way the texts balance around this theme appealed to the fifteenth-century market for collections of English moral texts.

⁵⁵ The scribe who read from Bodley 221 (or its close relative) copied Oxford University, Bodleian Library MS Laud Misc. 735 and New Haven, Yale University Library MS 493. See *Thomas Hoccleve's Complaint and Dialogue*, ed. John A. Burrow, EETS o.s. 313 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), xxii-xxiii, and Roger Ellis, Appendix 4 in Ellis, 276.

⁵⁶ For example, Steven Medcalf, "Inner and Outer," in *The Later Middle Ages*, ed. Stephen Medcalf (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1981), 108-71, D.C. Greetham, "Self-Referential Artifacts: Hoccleve's Persona as a Literary Device," *Modern Philology* 86.3 (1989): 242-51, John A. Burrow, "Autobiographical Poetry in the Middle Ages: The Case of Thomas Hoccleve," *Proceedings of the British Academy* 68 (1982): 389-412, and "Hoccleve's Series: Experience and Books" in *Fifteenth-Century Studies: Recent Essays*, ed. R.F. Yeager (Hamden, CT: Archon, 1984), 259-73, David Mills, "The Voices of Thomas Hoccleve," in *Essays on Thomas Hoccleve*, ed. Catherine Batt (London: Centre for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, Queen Mary and Westfield College, University of London, 1996), 85-107.

⁵⁷ Christina von Nolcken, "O, why ne had y lerned for to die?": *Lerne for to Dye* and the Author's Death in Thomas Hoccleve's *Series*," *Essays in Medieval Studies: Proceedings of the Illinois Medieval Association* 10 (1993): especially p. 42. By her account, the *Complaint* seeks to rectify the authorial persona's public image of sanity. The *Dialogue* announces his desire to make good on a promised book to Duke Humphrey. The next poem, *Jereslaus' Wife*, attempts to balance out his unintended record of anti-feminism with a poem that portrays women favorably. *Lerne to Dye* is the text translated for Humphrey that doubles as Hoccleve's own meditation on mortality. *Jonathas*, finally, seems to provide his Friend who helps him shape the book with a requested favor.

Lerne to Dye adds much to the vocal richness of the *Series*; it complicates the realistic voices in the *Series*' narrative frame by drawing attention to how they must be performed by readers. I agree with von Nolcken that every text in the *Series*' compilation thematically either leads up to or away from this poem, but I think its position as a structural focal point is as much meant to highlight the reader's own process of reading as the author's process of dying.

Situating the voices in the poem in the broader narrative of the *Series*, for example, requires the reader to separate *Lerne to Dye*'s rather allegorical narrative space from the more realistic narrative frame of the whole compilation. A reader of one of the *Series* manuscripts, especially one that also contains Hoccleve's authorial personae in the *Regiment of Princes* like MS Bodley 221, would be challenged to consider whether any one narrating voice could depict a single person across narratives addressed to different audiences. With reference to the poem's narration in line 753, quoted above, how "real" could any of such voices be "in deed"? The vocal complications in the poem are amplified by how difficult it is to pin down the narrating voice in *Lerne to Dye*. While passages of narration in the poem are infrequent (like in lines 87-93 above), and the poem primarily consists of the dialogue between the disciple and the "image" or Wisdom, it is tempting to equate the narrating voice with a similar sounding voice that crops up immediately after the poem's final "Amen." Here the narrator of the *Series*' frame returns to an overarching description of the *Series*' process of compilation from partial texts. He humbly backs out of translating the rest of Henry Suso's poem, saying: "The other iij partes which in this booke / Of the tretice of deeth expressid be, / Touch Y nat dar. Pat labour Y forsook, / For so greet thyng to swich a fool as me / Ouer chargeable is

... / To medle with ...” (*LtoD* 918-23). This statement, however, is external to the *Lerne to Dye* narrative. It is also tempting to equate the narrative voice of the poem with the one who makes the opening invocation to God and Wisdom since it “speaks” inside the poem’s boundaries. This voice, however, seems to turn into the disciple character who becomes the subject of most of the poem’s narrative descriptions. Such ambiguity invites a reader to reevaluate his or her understanding of the characterization of voices that are interlaced throughout the poem, as well as the rest of the *Series*. In turn, readers might then question how realistically voices can be performed from the words on any page.

Reading Across Scripted Stanza Boundaries in MS Bodley 221’s Lerne to Dye

In the copy of *Lerne to Dye* extant in the mid-fifteenth century manuscript Oxford University Bodleian Library MS Bodley 221, its scribe and rubricator each further complicate the poem’s reading script by haphazardly copying and decorating the text in a manner that dislodges the voices in the poem from the formal stanzas designed to contain them. This copy’s resulting muddled organization might have given its readers a skewed understanding of the voices in the whole poem.⁵⁸ As the variant contexts and textual forms in Hoccleve’s own copies of *Lerne to Dye* corroborate, on top of the shifty imagined voices and narrative spaces that readers have to juggle in the poem’s content, the text’s physical forms mediate its voices before a reader can even encounter them. For example, unlike in the Huntington Library manuscript autograph version of the poem (see Figure 2.6[a]), stanzas are not marked with spaces in any of the poems in Bodley 221 but

⁵⁸ One conventional explanation of the role a stanza pattern plays in a poem is to create a tension between metrical form and narrative or lyric development. See Alex Preminger, ed. *The Princeton Handbook of Poetic Terms* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1986), 267-8, s.v. “stanza.”

rather with a red line. Further emphasizing Hoccleve’s ABABBCC *rime royale* stanza-form, the rubricator of Bodley 221’s *Lerne to Dye* embellishes the right-hand margin of each page with brackets connecting the rhyming lines of each stanza (see Figure 2.6[b]). Also, about half the stanzas are marked by the primary hand with a little squiggle in the same ink as the text (appearing in Figures 2.8, 2.10, and 2.11 below). This at least is what it looks like Bodley 221’s producers intended.

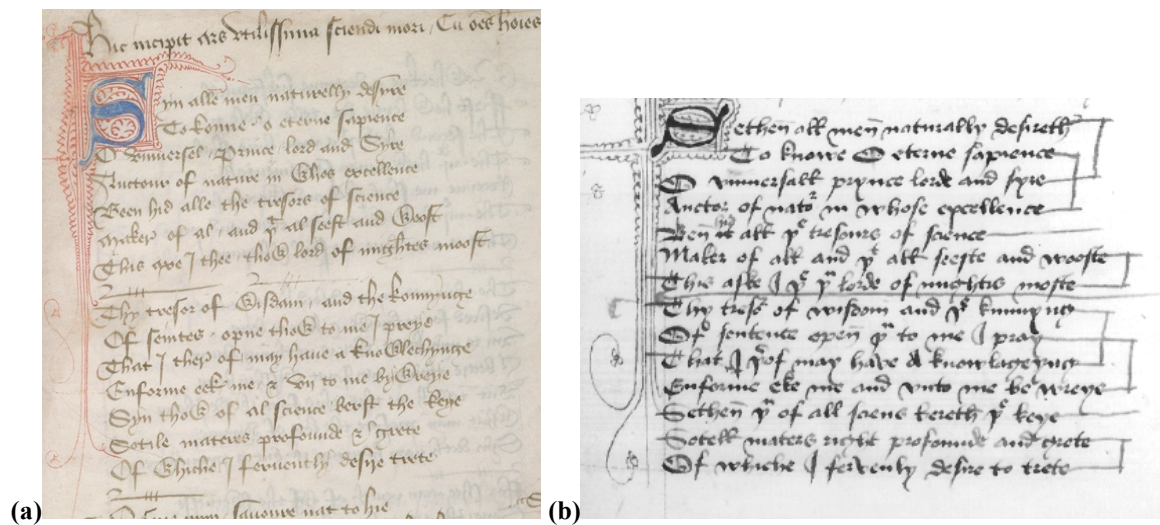


Figure 2.6: (a) Huntington Library MS HM 744, f. 53r (detail), the opening of *Lerne to Dye* in Hoccleve’s hand, showing his format for stanza breaks. (b) Oxford University Bodleian Library MS Bodley 221, f. 30r (detail), the opening of *Lerne to Dye* showing the stanza-marking lines and bracketing of the rubricator.⁵⁹

The rubricator in Bodley 221 does not seem to notice when the primary scribe drops a line in both the tenth and fifteenth stanzas of the poem. Not only does he continue to place stanza-marking lines after every seventh line of verse, but he also continues to bracket every first and third line, every second, fourth and fifth, and every sixth and seventh—even when the lines no longer rhyme. He attempts to maintain this bracketing design when stanzas stretch across folio breaks, though he generally leaves out or

⁵⁹ (a) Image from *Digital Scriptorium* (New York: Columbia University Libraries), <http://www.digital-scriptorium.org/>, s.v. “HM 744.” (b) This and all subsequent images of MS Bodley 221 are from a digital reproduction of a microfilm—both produced by Oxford University, Bodleian Library.

truncates some of the connecting brackets. It seems quite likely from this that the rubricator counts lines but is not really reading as he decorates the manuscript.

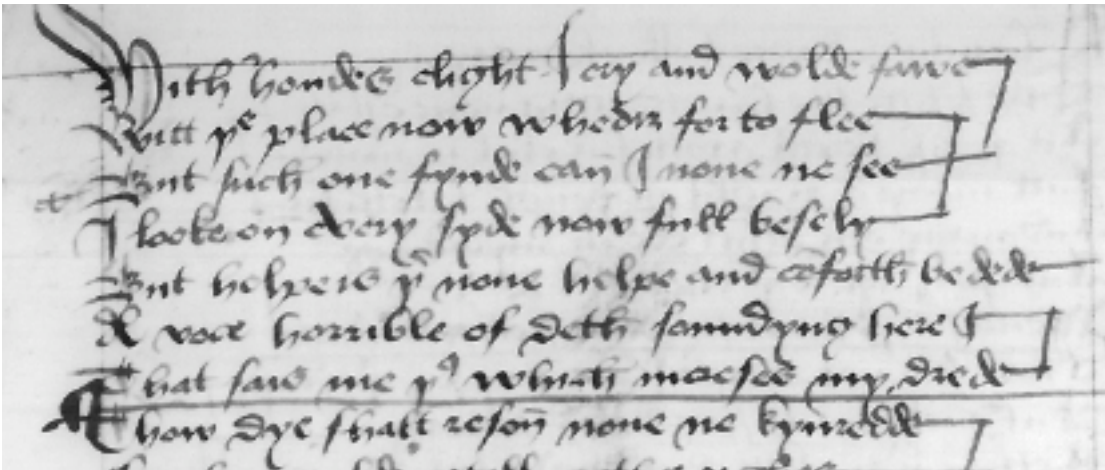
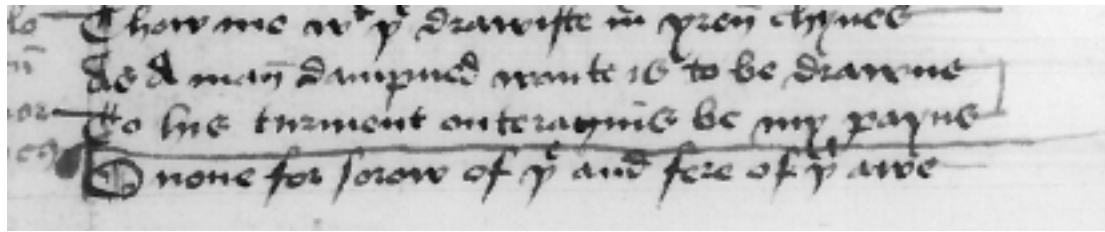


Figure 2.7: MS Bodley 221, f. 31v, 32r (details), the 8-line stanza formed between *LtoD* lines 123-130.

As further evidence of the rubricator's counting-without-reading approach, after the first dropped line, stanza-marking red lines occur after the first *A*-line in the meter. After the second dropped line, they occur after the first *B*-line. This pattern continues until the rubricator himself miscounts when placing stanza-marking lines around a stanza that is split across two folios. This forms an 8-line stanza between lines 123-130 (see Figure 2.7), causing him to form following stanzas out of the last three lines from one *rime royale* group and the first four lines of the next. This continues until the rubricator's next miscounting that forms a six-line stanza with lines 173-8 (see Figure 2.8). Until line 746 of this 900-line poem, then, the rubricator marks-out stanzas made of the BBCC lines of one metrical unit, and the ABA lines of the next.

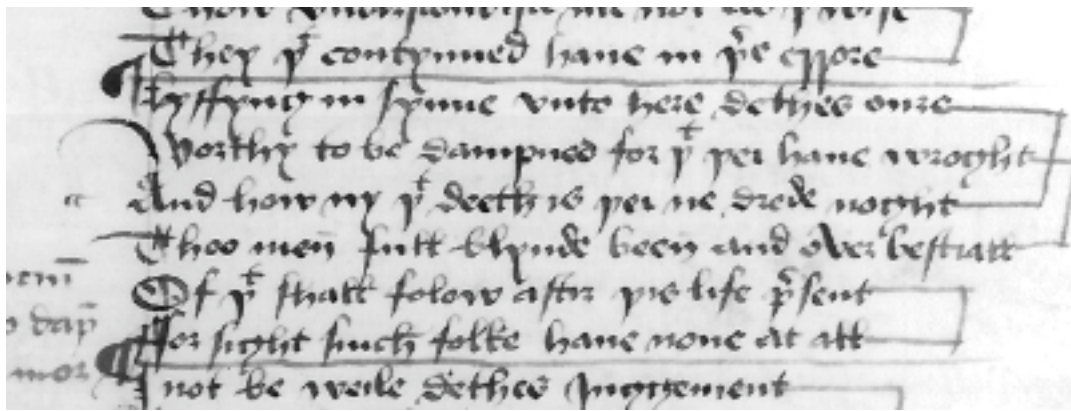


Figure 2.8: MS Bodley 221, f. 32v (detail), rubricator's miscounted six-line stanza with *LtoD* lines 173-8.

The rubricator does not seem to realize the error in his counting until he reaches a folio where the primary scribe left a space for a decorated initial capital for the stanza beginning at *LtoD* line 771: a position that emphasizes the disciple's first statement of his commitment to begin learning how to die, which signals the narrative's denouement. Counting backward from this space to line 750, the rubricator realigns his stanza-marking lines with the regular ABABBCC stanza forms. After this point, it seems like the rubricator pays more attention to the actual language of the text: he even catches lines that are skipped by the primary scribe later in the poem (in the 117th and 129th stanzas). While he initially draws erroneous stanza marks, he rubs them out and redraws them to properly enclose the lines that are present in each stanzaic unit (see Figure 2.9).

In addition to this set of stanza disrupting errors made by the rubricator, the primary scribe's flourishes mark not the stanza-initial lines of each rhyme-royal group, as is conventional when stanzas are not broken by empty space, but the stanza-final lines. While at first glance it seems like this might have been the scribe's intention, the marks do not appear until after his first two dropped lines. Halfway through the poem he notices his error and marks two successive lines in the middle of a folio, switching to

marking the first A-line of each rhyme-pattern (see Figure 2.10). Shortly after this shift, he stops marking flourishes altogether. This suggests that he, too, used the marks to help count the poem's lines rather than actually reading them—at least up to the point where he realized his mis-metering.

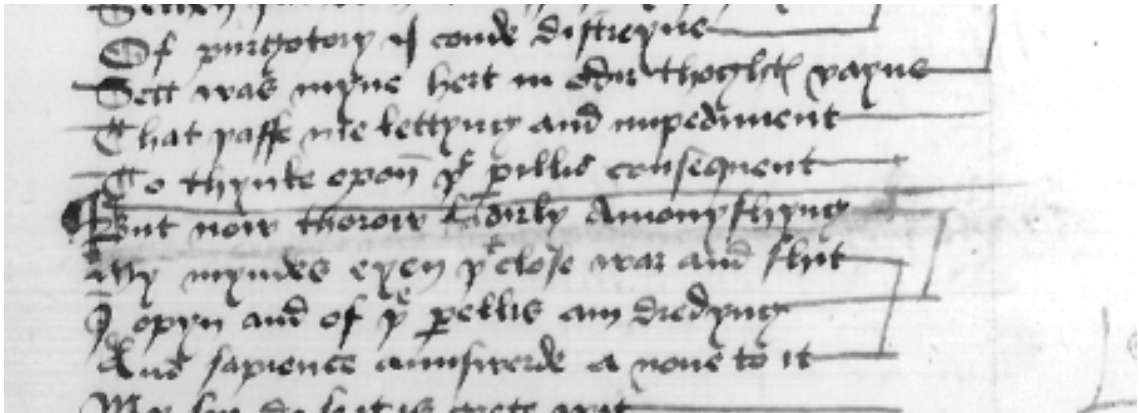


Figure 2.9: MS Bodley 221, f. 41r (detail), one of the rubricator's corrections.

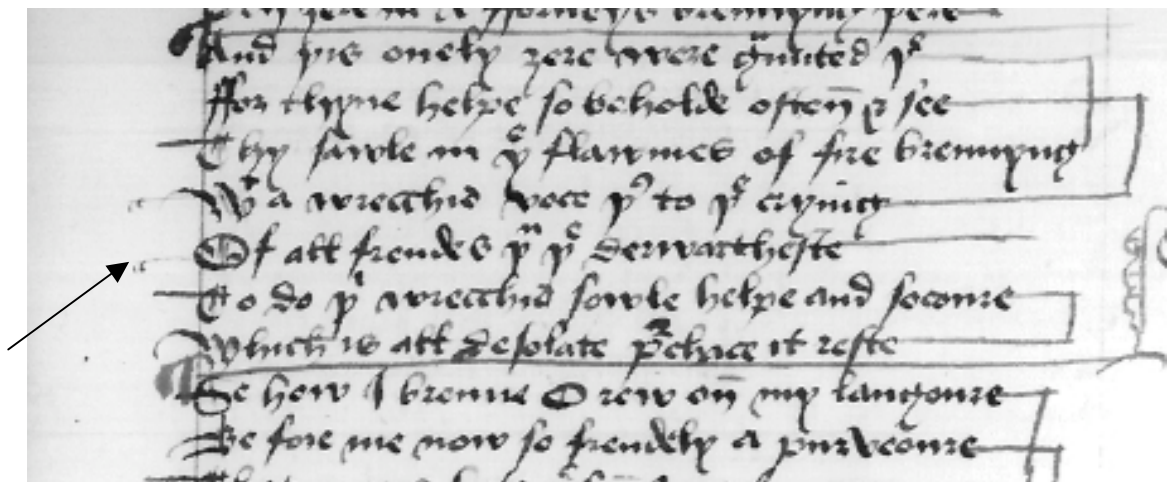


Figure 2.10: MS Bodley 221, f. 37r (detail), the primary scribal hand marks two successive lines with his left-margin flourish, shifting his pattern from stanza-final lines to stanza-initial lines.

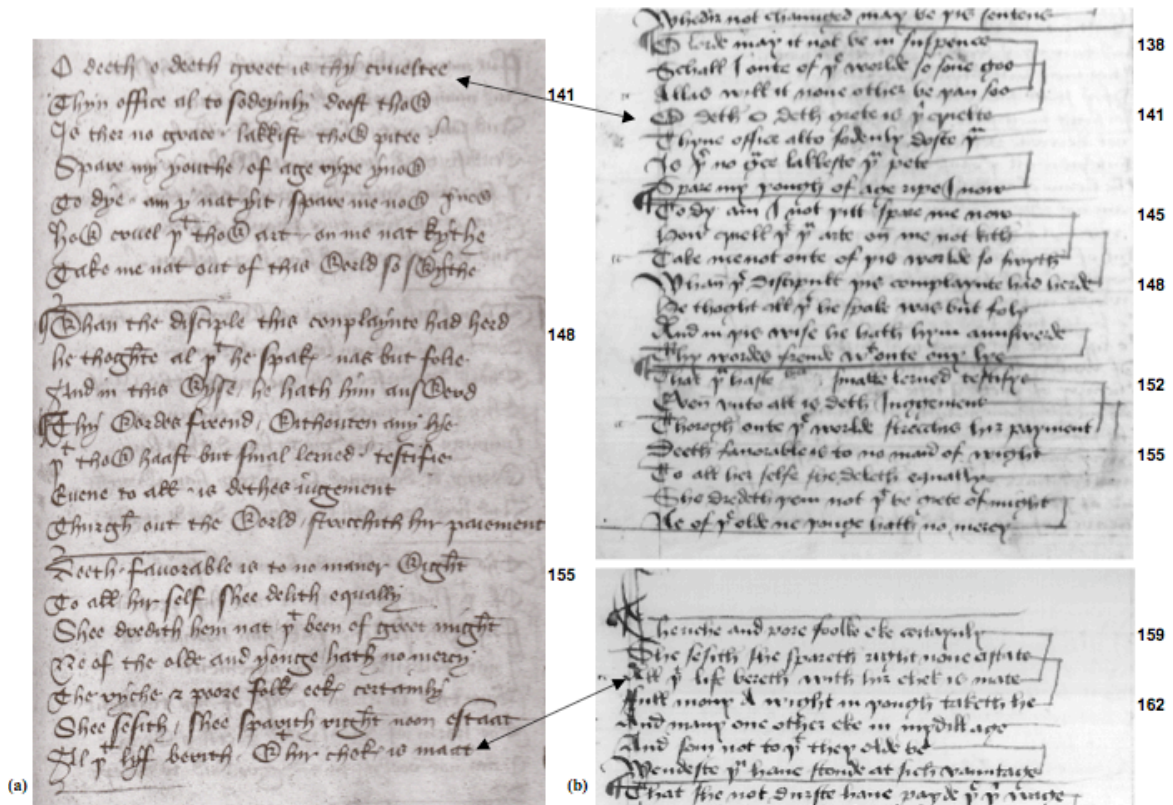


Figure 2.11: *Lerne to Dye* parallel excerpts: (a) Durham University Library MS Cosin V.iii.9, f. 56r (detail),⁶⁰ *LtoD* lines 141-161, (b) MS Bodley 221, f. 32r-32v (details), *LtoD* lines 137-165.

In Figure 2.11, I offer a side-by-side comparison of *Lerne to Dye*'s appearance in Hoccleve's own manuscript that places the poem in the *Series* compared to the stanza layout in Bodley 221. This comparison shows how the two types of stanza breaks in Bodley differently parse the speeches of the image (through line 147), the narrator (148-150), and the disciple (151-on), and how they compete with the rhyme pattern for emphasis in the narrative's structure. The visually dominant stanza organization in Bodley is obviously created by the rubrication, drawing the eye away from key moments of emphasis, such as the shift in speakers that the *rime royale* punctuates with the couplet and new A-rhyme in lines 146-8. The rubrication also shifts focus from the repeated

⁶⁰ Image from *Hoccl Facs*.

complaint against death in the A-line at 141, to the “O Lord” appeal in line 138. Line 138, in turn, seems to be enjambed with the previous stanza, even though it really is just the fifth line of its *rime royale* metrical unit. While not as visually dominant as the rubricator’s bracket-scheme, the primary scribe’s flourish marks on the left create additional distractions from the meter.

The disruption of stanza boundaries in this copy of *Lerne to Dye* would have required fifteenth or sixteenth-century readers to interpret its emphasis rather differently than readers of other manuscripts of the poem. Bodley 221 is a fairly clean manuscript, however, so it is hard to say whether this copy of the poem was read much at all, although we can definitely say that it was not read very carefully by the people who produced it. One actual response to such a reading recorded by a late fifteenth or early sixteenth-century hand was to try to add in the missing lines that set all the decorative errors in motion—but this effort is noticeable only on the pages where the two earliest scribal line-skips occur (see Figure 2.12). But just like Bodley 221’s producers seemed more interested in the affectation of a metrical form than in actually adhering to it, perhaps the poem’s readers also thought of the *rime royal* stanzas themselves more as decoration than as a framework for developing the themes and voices of the text.

Certainly the poem’s narrative continues through all this regardless of form.

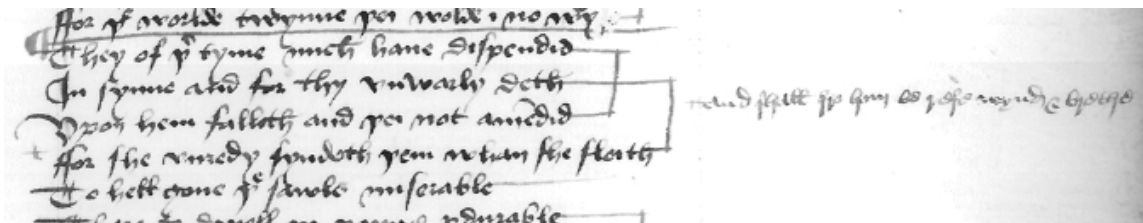


Figure 2.12: MS Bodley 221, f. 31r (detail), a reader inserts missing *LtoD* line 67.

It is also possible that readers did not ignore the visual interference in the poem's structure, but rather perceived it as an unwelcome complementary effect to the thematic disembodiment of voices in the poem. As a reader followed the poem's rhyme scheme, performing the verse orally or in his or her mind, it would be hard *not* to notice how the text marks the wrong rhymes and wrong stanza breaks; they would be visual and formal "speedbumps" for the imagination. Readers' visual perception of the text as a physical object would likely remain present while they imagined and vocalized the tale of the disciple's vision in the text. Though not intentionally, Bodley 221's mismarked rhymes would thus work in concert with the shifty voices in the poem to encourage readers to question how such voices in the text correspond to physical speakers—and maybe to question their own identification with such voices.

The evidence of Hoccleve's own scribal variations of *Lerne to Dye* in his own two manuscripts also supports reading the "errors" in Bodley 221 as variant performances of the poem's voices. In Bodley, scribal and decorating blunders seem to collaborate with the disembodied voices in the poem's narrative to promote readers' self-reflections by getting readers to critique their own reading processes. The more a reader would have to hesitate to make sure he or she assigned a voice to its appropriate speaker (whether through mental or oral performance), the more this reader would have to consider the ways he or she performs the text within themselves. Particularly with regard to the disciple's conversation with the image of the dying man that he performs in himself, readers would have the opportunity to draw a parallel to their own mental experience of imagining the disciple and his vision through words written on a page. Perhaps this is why Hoccleve seems to have been unconcerned about variations between even his own

two copies of the poem. He may have realized that *Lerne to Dye*'s verse would offer his readers chances to revivify in performance the voices that might be obscured in subsequent reproductions of the text.

Marks of Preserved Readers' Performances

As Bodley 221's *Lerne to Dye* illustrates, when we consider readers of a manuscript to be "performing" a text, the relationship between the material form and content of Hoccleve's texts appears to enrich the meaning of his verse—even when the manuscript's producers seem relatively indifferent to its content. The importance of this relationship between text and material form is confirmed by marginal annotations that certain scribes designed in order to provide readers with an analytical framework for Hoccleve's texts. For example, in Bodley 221 and related manuscripts in which the *Regiment of Princes* appears with the *Series* (Bodleian Library MS Laud Misc. 735 and Yale University Beinecke Library MS 493), some speaker changes in the *Regiment* are marked with labels in the texts' margins. As Nicholas Perkins has suggested, particularly when these speaker labels occur in the *Regiment* prologue's dialogue between the narrator and an old man, they amplify the effect of speech markers in Hoccleve's verse to "retextualize" the dialogue between the speakers.⁶¹ This aids future readers' understanding of voice changes in the poem so that they can be identified quickly and reproduced accurately, like speaker-cues in modern play scripts. In Huntington Library, MS EL 26 A 13, which was at one time owned by the famed scrivener John Shirley,⁶²

⁶¹ Perkins, 185.

⁶² Shirley's ownership is indicated by a signature frontispiece inscribed on the front flyleaf known as the "Shirley Bookplate." See Seymour, "Manuscripts," 289-90; C. W. Dutschke, R. H. Rouse, et al., *Guide to Medieval and Renaissance Manuscripts in the Huntington Library*, electronic ed., ed. Sharon K. Goetz (San

marginal notes unique to its copy of the *Regiment* take this retextualization one step further by labeling both the speaking and listening roles represented in subsequent sections of the dialogue. For example, next to line 1821 the glossator writes “Pater ad filium,” and then “ffilius ad p(at)rem” next to line 1823. This not only draws attention to the shift in dialogic roles between the old man character and the younger narrating authorial persona, but also emphasizes the hierarchy of their advisorial relationship.⁶³

As Nicholas Perkins claims in his definitive book on the *Regiment of Princes*, and as I discuss in Chapter 1, interplay between autobiographical and wholly fictional speakers enabled Hoccleve’s works to serve as a space for public dialogue and advisory discourse among a diverse, plural readership.⁶⁴ Consequently, manuscripts of his works “provide the first available evidence of people’s reactions to and engagement with Hoccleve’s text.”⁶⁵ Readers indicate their interest in the text when they interject their own written marks into the poem’s layout. These marks can take the form of non-standard marginal glosses, such as the speaker-labeling mentioned above, illustrating reading performances that scribes may have anticipated for their manuscripts. Other marks of reading performances, however, can be added after the original composition of a manuscript that illustrate readers’ interests in the text, such as sketches of hands

Marino: Huntington Library, 2003), <http://sunsite.berkeley.edu/hehweb/toc.html>. For a comprehensive account of Shirley’s activities, see Margaret Connolly, *John Shirley: Book Production and the Noble Household in Fifteenth-Century England* (Brookfield, VT: Ashgate, 1998).

⁶³ The parentheses indicate the likely expansion of the abbreviation in the manuscript on f. 50v. I would like to thank Stephanie A.V.G. Kamath for directing my attention to this manuscript and sharing her notes on its marginal glosses with me. Kamath’s work corroborates and expands on the record in the “Hoccleve *Regiment of Princes* Collation Table Archive” that I am developing from Charles Blyth’s notes.

⁶⁴ Perkins, 191-2.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 190.

pointing to particular lines and stanzas and the underlining of words and passages.⁶⁶

These marks of emphasis add an annotative function to a text's margins that seeks to draw the attention of future readers to certain passages or subjects (or to remind the same reader to attend to particular details in future readings). Like in the copy of the *Regiment* in Bodleian Library MS Arch Selden Supra 53, notes like “¶exemplum” and “nota bene” often mark Hoccleve's mention of his source texts. Along with red-underlines of Chaucer's and Gower's names in lines 1962 and 1975, Arch Selden Supra 53 also indexes the poem's “comendacion of Chaucer” and “comendacion of Gower” in its margin. This complements the reverence Hoccleve pays to his English predecessors in the poem by visually setting their names apart from surrounding text.

Tracking readers' marks through a manuscript can help us determine the nature of the individual reading performances that helped form a text's history. Bodleian Library MS Rawlinson Poet. 10, for example, which Perkins classifies (along with MS Rawlinson Poet. 168)⁶⁷ among *Regiment* copies of “relatively simple appearance [that] suggest that they were cheap copies intended for non-Latinate readers,”⁶⁸ contains few of the *Regiment*'s regular notes. Rawlinson Poet. 10, though, shows that its non-Latinate readers were interested in the politically charged statements in the narrator's dialogue with the old man. This is indicated especially by sketched hands and underlined phrases that highlight specific passages in which the narrator affirms his belief in the sacraments of

⁶⁶ British Library MS Arundel 38, for example, one of the two earliest copies of the poem and one of the copy texts for Blyth's edition, has hands drawn pointing to a seemingly idiosyncratic collection of stanzas containing *RofP* lines 421 (f. 8v), 533 (f. 10v), the word “nota” in the margin next to 1128 (f. 21r), 1345 (f. 25v), 1570 (f. 29r), 1598 (f. 29v), 3543 (f. 64v), and 5328 (f. 96r).

⁶⁷ I also mention Rawlinson Poet. 168 in Chapter 1 to explore the implications of reading its version of the *Regiment* that begins at line 2017 and truncates the entire dialogue with the old man.

⁶⁸ Perkins, 186.

the altar (*RofP* 379ff) and in which the old man launches a diatribe against vain clothing that exceeds practical necessity and the station of the wearer (*RofP* 442ff).⁶⁹ By similar methods of marking the text, a reader of Bodleian Library MS Digby 185 actively expressed his interest in the earliest portions of the *Regiment* in which the narrator describes his restless anxieties about the world, particularly including his financial circumstances. This reader's frequent underlining and bracketing of passages all but ceases shortly after Hoccleve's narrator meets the old man character, only picking up again near the end of the poem in the exemplary sections advising kings to seek good counsel and work toward peace.⁷⁰ It is unclear what exactly motivated the Digby reader to mark these two far-flung sections of the poem while not marking the rest; however, the marks do suggest that the reader's attention shifted significantly between the poem's beginning, middle, and end.

Even the marks that seem to have nothing to do with readers' appraisals of Hoccleve's texts can reveal readers' sense that his manuscripts were sites where they could interact with the material book itself. In Bodleian Library MS Eng. Poet. d. 4, for example, which contains only the two tales from Hoccleve's *Series* that were translated from the *Gesta Romanorum* (*The Tale of Jereslaus' Wife* and *The Tale of Jonathas*), a

⁶⁹ Sketched hands and underlined phrases emphasize stanzas containing *RofP* line 379 on f. 5v, 422 on f. 6r, 472, 495 on f. 6v, 505 on f. 7r. Underlined words and phrases also occur in passages that describe the burning of the Lollard John Badby and the Prince's offer of mercy: "wyte," (line 257), "brent was" (287), and "body of our lord Jhu" (288) on f. 4r, and "prynce" (295), "liege lord" (303) on f. 4v. Though less consistent with a pattern of political interest, there is also an 'x' drawn next to the stanza containing lines 239-45 on f. 3v, in which the old man guesses that the narrator's malaise is due to unrequited love, and an 'x' is drawn through the entire stanza around line 2910, which discusses the manner in which new churches formally appeal to the Pope to be officially sanctioned. See M.C. Seymour, "The Manuscripts of Hoccleve's *Regiment of Princes*" *Edinburgh Bibliographical Society Transactions* 4.7 (1974): 279, for the ownership history.

⁷⁰ Reader marks in MS Digby 185 include underlines of or brackets around *RofP* lines 32-3, 37-40 (f. 80r); 52-3, 55-6, 64-8, 81-4 (f. 80v); 85-6, 92-8, 99-105 (f. 81r); 147 (81v); 205-6 (f. 82r); 225-30, 239-40, 248-52 (f. 82v); 267-8, 270-3 (f. 83r); 609 (87r); 4894-5 (138r); 4946-7, 4950-2 (138v); 5018, 5056-61 (139r).

reader has sketched lutes in the margins with arms and hands playing some of them. These doodles may have very little to do with the actual text of the *Gesta* tales, but they show how a reader had musical performance on his mind while reading through, or at least flipping through, Hoccleve's verse. Another reader of this manuscript (though it could be the same reader) repeats the name "George" and two or three partial versions of a sentence about him, suggesting that this "reader" sought out blank spaces in the manuscript in order to practice or refine a line of text he intended to copy elsewhere.⁷¹ This practical use of the margins of Hoccleve's poems as "scratch paper" even occurs in the Durham autograph manuscript of the *Series*, in which numerous fifteenth-century hands scrawled pen-trials, arithmetic problems, exemplars from classical works and other notes on its pages.⁷²

Relatively common doodles in *Regiment of Princes* manuscripts include heads and faces, such as in British Library MS Royal 17.D.xviii, in which three old monks appear on f. 58r.⁷³ Similarly, in Bodleian Library MS Digby 185, a wisened old-man with long hair is drawn at the end of a booklet on f. 135v so that it looks like the inscribed catchwords: "senek seith," are pouring from his mouth.⁷⁴ Dry-point skeletal faces also appear in the margins of Bodleian Library MS Arch Selden Supra 53, f. 54r, 73r, 78r, and

⁷¹ Lutes appear on f. 18r and 22v. This paper manuscript has sustained a lot of damage that has been repaired by the library. Lots of lowercase 'g's have been scrawled in margins as if they were pen trials. On f. 18r the name "Georgis" is written in the same hand, f. 18v is blank except for the line "[G]eorges [shei] for a payne thyt whas syet" and what seems to be an extended version of the same attempted inscription, on f. 26v: "Syer geor snar for a payne thyt wass yet when he whas / the orders that se and he ha brokyne and for sit the vane." (brackets indicate approximate transcriptions)

⁷² For descriptions of the manuscript See A.I. Doyle and A.J. Piper, *Medieval Manuscripts in the Durham University Library*, <http://www.dur.ac.uk/library/asc/theme/medmss/apviii9/>, and *Hoccl Facs*, xxviii-xxxiii.

⁷³ Jottings on the flyleaf and opening folios in this manuscript also include a collection of notes concerning birthdays and an ad hoc dedicatory verse. See M.C. Seymour, "The Manuscripts of Hoccleve's *Regiment of Princes*" *Edinburgh Bibliographical Society Transactions* 4.7 (1974): 273.

⁷⁴ Seymour, 277, suggests that this drawing is meant to represent Seneca.

98r—the one on 78r is depicted with a torso and seems to be waving at the reader. These doodles of speakers, people, and musical instruments seem to express audiences’ desires for audible and imagistic accompaniments to their written texts—desires for elements of performance. Recorded names and other incidental inscriptions suggest that the people who came into contact with manuscripts thought of them as active documents, with usable blank spaces that could become sites of potential communicative energy to preserve personal comments for later readers or prepare other comments to be transferred to another space in a more polished form.

Among the most extensive readers’ marks in manuscripts of Hoccleve’s *Regiment* are the attentive annotations in British Library MS Harley 4826, which I mentioned earlier for its excised Chaucer portrait and accompanying anti-iconoclastic graffiti. In this copy of the poem, which is prefaced by a biographical title page composed by a seventeenth-century reader and owner,⁷⁵ two different sets of marks signal attention paid to different passages of the poem. One reader places two tick marks in the margin next to each line in a selected passage, and the other underlines. The former seems to be mostly interested in marking short aphorisms that occur throughout the poem, while the latter usually marks longer passages that have broader thematic significance. Sometimes the two readers’ selections overlap.⁷⁶

⁷⁵ See Appendix A for transcription. Seymour, 268, posits that this reader/annotator/binder was in the Drury family who also at one time possessed the Ellesmere Chaucer (Huntington Library MS EL 26 C.9).

⁷⁶ The tick-mark annotator marks ‘exemplary’ lines in *Ro/P* like “Betwene you and your men no difference / Be in array, lesse is your reverence” (447-8), “The feend, men seyn, may hoppen in a pouche / What that no crois theyynne may appeere” (684-5), and “In hy estat, man God and himself knowe, / And releve hem that mescheef hath doun throwe” (916-7). Examples of the underlining annotator’s selections include the old man’s diatribe against excessive clothing (414-511), the old man’s commentary on courtiers’ double duty to be attentive to the labor at court as well as their spiritual well being (1415-45, overlapping the tick-mark annotator’s selection of the first stanza in this passage: 1415-21), a stanza that claims men can learn

On top of these marks of emphasis, another annotator (who I think may be the same seventeenth-century reader who composed the added title page) has punctuated the whole manuscript with modern periods, commas, semicolons, colons, and question marks; he even dots the original scribe's *i*'s. These marks tend to follow but also to augment the manuscript's existing punctuation (which employed just the virgule and punctus), and do so in a way that occasionally alters the vocal structures in the text. For example, in lines 1048-50 that conclude a stanza of rapid dialogue in which the old man presses the narrator for more information about his troubles, the original scribe concludes the exchange without punctuation:

Fadir I can noo more telle yowe
Thanne I beforne haue spokyn and saide
A goddis halfe sonne I am welle a payde

The lack of original scribal punctuation in these lines allows some flexibility in interpretation, but speakers can be assigned to the three "I-voices" based on their addresses to each other. Blyth models this in his modern edition's punctuation with a period at the end of the second line (and appropriate quotation marks). This punctuation indicates that the first two lines are spoken by the narrator, who addresses the old man respectfully as "father," and that the last line is spoken by the old man, who addresses the narrator parenthetically as "sonne," assuring the him that "By God's name" he is satisfied with the narrator's response. The Harley 4826 punctuator, though, adds a simple punctuation scheme that organizes these lines into a single sentence:

to be "wise and aware" by playing chess (2115-20), and remarks on the competitive ambitions for power and wealth that fuel wars among Christians (5226-9).

Fadir I can noo more telle yowe,
Thanne I beforne haue spokyn and saide,
A goddis halfe sonne I am welle a payde.

The lack of both a full stop at the end of the second line and parenthetical commas around “sonne” suggests that the punctuator was not familiar with the self-contained expression “a goddis halfe” and interpreted the last line to be spoken by the narrating voice—still responding to the old man’s query about whether or not he has completely unburdened his conscience. While seemingly a small detail, placing the “I” of the last line in the voice of the narrator could cause his voice to carry over as the speaker of the next three stanzas. In these stanzas the narrator tells his interlocutor that the latter should not fear poverty but “be thow ryche or poore, or seek or qwert, / God thanke alway of thyn ese and thy smert” (*RofP* 1061-2). Although the old man is characterized as being impoverished throughout the 2,000 lines of his dialogue with the narrator, if this lesson were attributed to the narrator, the old man’s practiced and otherwise carefree mendicancy would be colored with a hint of anxiety about destitution.

Though this example shows that the early modern punctuator’s efforts could occasionally obscure the Middle English dialogue in the text, it reveals his interest in modernizing Hoccleve’s verse and language. The punctuator essentially works to bring the manuscript’s texts out of obscurity, as is advocated in the inserted title page to the *Regiment*, so that they can be reperformed in his own time. Plus, while he may have modified nuances of characterization in the *Regiment* unknowingly, the Harley 4826 punctuator continued the tradition by which performed readings of Hoccleve’s poems were folded into the production and circulation of their manuscripts since the early fifteenth century. The evidence that multiple readers physically marked up their copies of

his texts to aid or to preserve particular readings suggests that Hoccleve's readers actively sought to participate in the visual dialogics that he initially designed for them. From our perspective, these readings should be considered constitutive features of texts that add to their already rich meanings, rather than merely variations or corruptions of authorial versions.

As Hoccleve's work demonstrates, author-produced manuscripts of a text are just as much reading performances as later written copies and live recitations from them. The visual dialogics Hoccleve sets up on manuscript pages show him communicating aspects of his content to readers partly through the actions they must perform to discern the relationship between visual elements and the text on a page. Especially with the *Regiment's* Chaucer portrait and standard glosses, and Hoccleve's use of page layout in his own manuscripts, paratextual elements help prime readers' generic and thematic expectations for a text so that they are able to participate in its realization. Although Hoccleve attempts to guide readers towards particular uses for his texts, the examples in this chapter show how Hoccleve mainly tries to get his readers to create their own performances of texts out of the images and voices that manuscripts of his poems open up to their memories and imaginations. In this sense, the inevitable variations that result from each new copy and each new performance of his texts can be framed in positive terms: the variant versions *are* the versions of the text that Hoccleve intended to create.

Hoccleve's use of a "poetics" dependent on reading entailed that he, himself, could only perform variant readings of his intended poems when he rendered them into material, written forms. Since writing always entailed a risk that a text's copies and

performances would diverge more and more over time from their initial forms, Hoccleve usually embraced this risky, readerly agency. By relying on his readers to follow the dialogic structures he set up in his manuscript layouts to aid and guide the process of reading, Hoccleve designed his texts to leave space for readers and copiers' inevitably variable interpretations, while also attempting to absorb them. This is what makes the material copies of his texts "scripts." They encode the framework for the kinds of reading performances that Hoccleve seeks but knows that he can never fully control. As I show in the next chapter, though, with respect to his early poem the *Letter of Cupid*, Hoccleve was aware that this lack of control allowed readers to open up his texts to misinterpretations of both his and their own authority over his poems. This prompted him not only to criticize his readers in the *Dialogue with a Friend*, like I describe in Chapter 1,⁷⁷ but also to revise the poem in one of his holograph manuscripts to clarify its portrayal of textual authority for future reading performances.

⁷⁷ See Chapter 1, pp. 61-4.

Chapter 3: Hoccleve's Conflict with Readers' Authority in the *Letter of Cupid*

As shown in the previous chapters of this dissertation, the ways readers are influenced by the material forms of their texts are central themes in Hoccleve's poems. By designing his poems and manuscripts to illustrate how manuscript readers contribute to ongoing performances of his texts, Hoccleve collaborates with his readers in the production of the texts' meanings even as each reader introduces variations into them. He locates his authority over his texts (his responsibility for their content, their moral or aesthetic value relative to other texts, and their interpretation) in the network of readings and readers that form around his texts.

In this chapter, I explore how Hoccleve's reliance on his readers sometimes brought him into conflict with them, suggesting limitations for the authority he vested in his readers. As I have shown with examples of irregular envois in manuscripts of his *Regiment of Princes* and *Series*, and with examples in which he played a role in designing his texts' visual layouts, Hoccleve was actively engaged in managing some of his texts' circulation, often recasting them in anticipation of new audiences. Specifically in Hoccleve's earliest datable poem, the *Letter of Cupid* (1402), we can witness his antagonistic response to the ways the poem was understood by contemporary readers.

In the first section of this chapter, I show how Hoccleve provokes readers to create their own intertextual reading performances by his particular adaptations of the *Letter's* content from his source-texts and allusions to sources of literary authority. Hoccleve's response to his readers can then be discerned directly in later verse, in which he provides narrative commentary about the *Letter*. Readers' actual interpretations of the

poem and Hoccleve's response to them can also be decoded from the *Letter*'s manuscript history. As I note briefly in Chapter 1, in passages of Hoccleve's *Dialogue with a Friend* (the second of the five poems in the *Series*) the narrator critiques readers for their approach to reading the poem.¹ In his criticism, he suggests that these readers have ignored their own role in shaping his text's meaning, and that he should be absolved from responsibility for their feeling offended by the *Letter of Cupid*. In the rest of this chapter, I explore Hoccleve's claim that the *Letter* was misread to show how it was probably justified. The narrative of the *Letter of Cupid* seems to have been designed, like his other poems, to draw attention to readers' authority and to encourage audiences to participate in constructing its meaning through the interactions between the text, its intertexts, and its material form. The poem's widely variant forms in its textual record, however, suggest that readers would have had numerous opportunities to misread Hoccleve's intended participatory narrative.

The variant forms of the *Letter of Cupid* are characterized especially by differing stanza orders and differing modes of self-reference by Cupid, who narrates the text. They survive in nine fifteenth-century manuscript copies, in all sixteenth-century print editions of Chaucer's *Works* beginning with William Thynne's in 1532 (without attribution to Hoccleve), and in two sixteenth-century manuscripts indebted to these editions.² The

¹ See Chapter 1, pp. 61-4.

² One of these sixteenth-century manuscripts is National Library of Scotland Advocates' MS 1.1.6, also known as the Bannatyne Manuscript, which I discuss later in this chapter. The other is British Library Additional MS 17492, also known as the Devonshire Manuscript, which extracts four stanzas of the *Letter of Cupid* (stanzas 50, 10, 11, and 44) along with eight stanzas from other poems in Thynne's edition. For a transcription of these extracts see items 43-54 in Kenneth Muir, "Unpublished Poems in the Devonshire Manuscript" *Proceedings of the Leeds Philosophical and Literary Society, Literature and History Section* 6.4 (1947): 26-47. Nos. 43, 44 and 48 are from the *Letter*. Ethel Seaton originally identified all 12 of these items in "The 'Devonshire Manuscript' and Its Medieval Fragments" *Review of English Studies* n.s. 7.25 (1956): 55-56. Richard Harrier, in "A Printed Source for 'The Devonshire Manuscript'" *Review of English*

earliest of the fifteenth-century copies, in Huntington Library MS HM 744, dates to the early 1420s and was written by Hoccleve himself. Contrary to prevalent readings of the poem's manuscript history, which treat Hoccleve's autograph copy as the authoritative version of the poem from which all other manuscript versions were derived,³ I argue that most other versions were derived from the first version of the poem Hoccleve composed in 1402. I read HM 744 as Hoccleve's revision of the poem that he attempted to release in response to the misreading of the original version. In this new version in HM 744, Hoccleve reengages the *Letter of Cupid* as a reader and editor nearly two decades after its original composition, tweaking the way the poem positions readers' authority relative to the voices in its narrative.

The other surviving copies of the poem that post-date HM 744 indicate that his effort to circulate this new version ultimately failed in his own time and succeeded only partly later on. They also show that Hoccleve so successfully located authority in this poem's readers that his efforts to revise its rhetoric were mitigated by the material forms in which the poem was already circulating. These existing forms restricted his capacity to popularize his "re-authorized" version of the poem in fifteenth-century manuscripts. Instead, he became just another one of the poem's editors and readers. As a consequence,

Studies n.s. 11.41 (1960): 54, corrected Seaton's identification of item 45. Rather than being from a lyric called *Loke Wel Aboute* printed in *Chaucerian and Other Pieces Edited from Numerous Manuscripts*, ed. Walter W. Skeat (Oxford: Clarendon, 1897), 296ff, it is from *The Remedy of Love*, which, like the *LofC*, was printed in Thynne's 1532 edition of Chaucer's Works. With this information, Harrier claims that Thynne was the source for all of the medieval extracts in the Devonshire manuscript. From my own analysis of the manuscript, I agree with this assessment. For additional support, it should be noted that the scribal punctuation of the verses in the manuscript identically matches Thynne's use of virgules in the printed edition of the corresponding stanzas.

³ HM 744 has been used as the authoritative copy text for the poem since Israel Gollancz's 1925 contribution to Furnivall, 20-34. Subsequent editions follow suit: Fenster/Erlor, 159-218, and Ellis, 93-111 (my source).

subsequent readers of the *Letter of Cupid* in the sixteenth through eighteenth centuries subsumed his authority into that of Chaucer.

Staging an Intertextual Game: Christine de Pizan Meets Chaucer

At the core of Hoccleve's deferral of authority to his readers in the *Letter of Cupid* is the way the poem is positioned relative to its main source and contemporary generic intertexts. Primarily, Hoccleve's poem is a very liberal translation and adaptation of Christine de Pizan's *Epistre au dieu d'Amours* (1399). The textual and thematic similarities between Hoccleve's *Letter* and Christine's *Epistre* are well documented by scholars.⁴ Christine's poem is viewed as a sort of preface for the *Querelle de la Rose*, in which she decries misogynist courtly behavior and clerical writing as exemplified by Jean de Meun. The *Epistre* is thus seen as her first significant assertion of her poetic ability and her right to question the bases of her culture's intellectual authority.⁵ Most scholarship on Hoccleve's poem has sought to understand how sympathetic Hoccleve's version is with Christine's anti-misogynist argument, as well as how Hoccleve forms his

⁴ See Frederick J. Furnivall, introduction to *Hoccleve's Works*, EETS e.s. 61 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1892), xi, xliv, 243-8, for comments and a list of lines Hoccleve may have translated directly from Christine de Pizan's poem. For additional comparisons of the two poems, see Jerome Mitchell, *Thomas Hoccleve: A Study in Early Fifteenth-Century Poetic* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1968), 22-3, 72, 77-84; Fenster/Erlor, 160-2, 167-8, 170-2; Ethan Knapp, *The Bureaucratic Muse: Thomas Hoccleve and the Literature of Late Medieval England* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2001), 61-4, 74-5.

⁵ See Fenster/Erlor, 3-15, and Knapp, 46-8, 56-9, 71-3. Kevin Brownlee, in "Genealogies of Power and the New Vernacular Canon: From the *Rose* and Dante to Christine de Pizan" (paper presented for the Lara Lecture at Washington University, St. Louis, Missouri, March 24, 2009), has asserted that Christine de Pizan sets about deriving her authority in a manner unique among her French contemporaries, from master Italian vernacular writers like Dante and Boccaccio. See also Brownlee, "Christine de Pizan: Gender and the New Vernacular Canon," in *Strong Voices, Weak History: Early Women Writers and Canons in England, France, and Italy*, ed. Pamela Benson and Victoria Kirkham (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2005), 99-120.

authority as a vernacular poet in relation to hers.⁶ However, the distinctions between Christine's poem and Hoccleve's adaptation show Hoccleve intertwining his own interpretation of her text into her narrative. Hoccleve highlights the demands the poem places on its readers, urging them to recognize their roles in performing its generic and intertextual connections to existing poetic discourses. Hoccleve partly achieves this effect with an allusion to Chaucer's *Legend of Good Women*, as well as by evoking language from Chaucer's other works. Hoccleve does this partly to appeal to English readers, promoting a sense of an English literary canon that he eventually makes explicit in the *Regiment of Princes*,⁷ but he does this also to expose the shared debts Chaucer and Christine owe to their own sources, drawn from a tradition of medieval defenses of women.

Both Christine's and Hoccleve's poems are letters written by the God of Love to his subjects in response to complaints lodged by women about how they are mistreated by men, who deceive them in love and slander them in learned discourse. Christine's poem unfolds as a systematic argument that directs criticism to the first and second medieval social estates. In it, Cupid first critiques courtiers who cheat at love and

⁶ Knapp, 48-51, 54-6, surveys the history of criticism on these issues to demonstrate the lack of consensus about Hoccleve's sympathy with Christine's anti-misogynism and to claim that Hoccleve's relationship to Christine is better understood in the broader context of the intertextuality central to medieval translation practices. See also John Fleming, "Hoccleve's 'Letter of Cupid' and the 'Quarrel' over the *Roman de la Rose*," *Medium Aevum* 40 (1971): 21-40; Diane Bornstein, "Anti-feminism in Thomas Hoccleve's translation of Christine de Pizan's *Epistre au dieu d'amours*," *English Language Notes* 19 (1981): 7-14; Glenda McLeod, "A Case of *Faux Semblans*: *L'Epistre au dieu d'amours* and *The Letter of Cupid*," in *The Reception of Christine de Pizan from the Fifteenth Through the Nineteenth Centuries: Visitors to the City*, ed. G.K. McLeod (Lewiston, N.Y.: Edwin Mellen, 1991), 11-24; Karen Winstead, "I am al other to yow than yee weene": Hoccleve, Women, and the *Series*," *Philological Quarterly* 72 (1993): 143-55; Roger Ellis, "Chaucer, Christine de Pizan, and Hoccleve: *The Letter of Cupid*," in *Essays on Thomas Hoccleve*, ed. Catherine Batt (London: Centre for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, Queen Mary and Westfield College, University of London, 1996), 29-54.

⁷ See Chapter 1, p. 49.

disparage women among their friends, then reproaches clerks who discredit women in the books they write (especially Ovid and Jean de Meun). He finally attempts in the last third of the poem to put to rest misogynist arguments by celebrating women's virtues. In each section of the poem, Christine's Cupid offers positive and negative examples of men and women's conduct, balancing accounts of the vicious with accounts of the virtuous and weighing their relative importance to characterizing their sex.⁸

Hoccleve's poem follows a shorter and reordered version of Christine's argument, structured around exemplary cases of male wrongdoing rather than both sexes' records of misconduct. One of these cases, in which Cupid indicts all men for the inherent duplicity that led to the betrayal of great realms and the overthrow of kings, citing Troy and Priam, occurs much earlier in the poem relative to Christine's. As Robert Meyer-Lee argues, this particular restructuring sharpens the poem's rhetoric into a critique of England's recent Lancastrian usurpation that would have been much less noticeable had it come later in the text.⁹ Also differing from Christine, Hoccleve does not offer examples to demonstrate how men can be virtuous to women, nor does he operate from her premise that the sexes are fundamentally equal.¹⁰ But along with these exclusions, Hoccleve also augments Christine's material. Occasionally, Hoccleve offers supplementary examples from other texts in English, like a reference to Chaucer's *Legend of Good Women* (which

⁸ Rosalind Brown-Grant, "Christine de Pizan as a Defender of Women," in *Christine de Pizan: A Casebook*, eds. Barbara K. Altmann and Deborah L. McGrady (New York: Routledge, 2003), 83, 90, identifies several medieval male writers as sources for Christine's arguments in defense of women, including but not limited to Peter Abelard, Jean le Fèvre, Eustache Deschamps, and (for certain theological glosses) Hugh of St. Victor and Peter Lombard.

⁹ Robert Meyer-Lee, *Poets and Power from Chaucer to Wyatt* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 97.

¹⁰ Ellis, "Chaucer, Christine de Pizan, and Hoccleve," in *Essays on Thomas Hoccleve*, 45-7.

Hoccleve calls the “legende of martirs” in *LofC* line 316) and like two stanzas in praise of St. Margaret that Hoccleve’s Cupid uses to bolster his claim about women’s virtue.

Hoccleve also occasionally expands on points of Christine’s argument to qualify such praises: for instance, when Christine’s Cupid defends Eve for not having intended to deceive Adam when she offered him the fruit (*Epistre* 604-16),¹¹ Hoccleve’s Cupid adds that despite this innocence, she was guilty of disobedience for approaching the tree despite having been forbidden from doing so (*LofC* 376-92).

As Mary Carpenter Eler describes in the introduction to her 1990 edition of the poem, Hoccleve often begins a stanza with a line or two directly translated from Christine’s poem, and then expands on it to make Cupid’s narrative voice more vivid and specific or to add innuendo. This kind of adaptation can be seen in the following two correlating passages. In Hoccleve’s version, Cupid mimics courtiers in order to denounce them for encouraging their friends to deceive women. Cupid assumes the voice of the “other wrecche” and rants for thirteen lines about women’s inconstancy before resuming his critique of men in his own voice in line 113:

To his felawe anothir wrecche seith,
“Thow fisshist fair. Shee þat hath thee fyrid,
Is fals and inconstant and hath no feith.
Shee for the rode of folk is so desyrid,
And as an hors fro day to day is hyrid,
That whan thow twynnest from hir conpaignie,
An other comth, and blerid is thyn ye.

“Now prike on faste and ryde thy iourneye.
Whyl thow art ther, shee, behynde thy bak,
So liberal is shee can no wight withseye,
But qwikly of anothir take a snak,

¹¹ Parenthetical citations to the *Epistre* refer to line numbers in the facing page edition/translation: Christine de Pizan, *Epistre au dieu d’Amours*, trans. and ed. Thelma Fenster, in Fenster/Eler, 3-91.

For so the wommen faren, al the pak.
Whoso hem trustith, hangid moot he be!
Ay they desiren chaunge and noueltee.”

Whereof procedith this but of enuye? (LofC 99-113)

In Christine de Pizan’s verse, however, her Cupid’s depiction of the friend’s voice is quite limited compared to Hoccleve’s Cupid’s:

S’entredient: “Je sçay bien de tes fais:
Tele t’aimē, et tu le jolis fais
Pour seue amour, mais plusieurs y ont part;
Tu es receu quant un autre s’en part!”
La diffament les envieux la belle
Sans achoison ne nul mal savoir d’elle.
Et lors celui qui en est rigollé
Monstre semblant qu’il en soit adolé;
Mais moult lui plaist de ce qu’on l’en rigolle, (*Epistre* 127-35)

(Exchanged, they say: “I know what you’re about:
Your sweetheart’s such a one, you play the beau
To have her love; but many get their part,
For you are greeted as another parts!”
The lady’s slandered by the envious,
Who have no cause, who know no ill of her.
And then the object of their taunting glee
Contrives a great display of dole and pain;
And yet, their teasing pleases him quite well.)¹²

Christine’s speaker’s sexual innuendo in the homonymic pun on “part” in lines 129-30 quickly dissipates into Cupid’s admonishment of men who libel women out of envy.

Hoccleve’s Cupid, on the other hand, runs with the innuendo for much longer. He seems to revel in the perspective of his assumed voice before turning to admonish his depicted speaker for envy.

The way Hoccleve lingers on Cupid’s portrayal of the misogynists and false male flatterers, despite his eventual reproach, has convinced several scholars that Hoccleve’s

¹² Translation by Thelma Fenster in Fenster/Erlor, 41.

text is intended to parody Christine's poem and that it subtly participates in the same brand of clerkly antifeminism she confronts.¹³ Lee Patterson, however, sees Hoccleve's dilution of some of Christine's strongest claims to be a sign that Hoccleve kept his text open to a variety of interpretations, asserting his authority to comment on clerkly discourse while still leaving himself room to participate in it. This, Patterson postulates, gave Hoccleve greater access to the real-life male-dominated courtly circles in which he found his patrons—who favored such discourse.¹⁴

With his adaptation of Christine's poem, Hoccleve models a way to bring various sources of authority in his culture together without fully committing himself to their gender politics. Even Christine's Cupid's original mimicking of the slanderous suitors seems designed to shield the poet from antagonistic audiences. As Andrea Tarnowski describes, Cupid's voice "acts as a screen and alibi" for Christine—allowing her to form a strong critique of antifeminism while also maintaining a personal distance from such exhortations.¹⁵ This rhetorical distancing attained by nesting voices inside one another in the text allows Ethan Knapp to suggest that Hoccleve's adaptation of Christine's poem shows how "the construction of textual authority is so often predicated on ventriloquistic games."¹⁶ Knapp claims that Hoccleve co-opts voices from Christine's poem to

¹³ Bornstein, 14, Winstead, 143-4, and Anna Torti, "Hoccleve's Attitude Towards Women: 'I shoop me do my peyne and diligence / To wynne hir loue by obedience,'" in *A Wyf Ther Was: Essays in Honour of Paul Mertans-Fonck*, ed. Juliette Dor (Liège, Belgium: Université de Liège, 1992), 264-74, each imply that Hoccleve's lively depiction of misogynists makes it easy to forget that his overall argument does at least pretend to support women.

¹⁴ Lee Patterson, "'What is Me?': Self and Society in the Poetry of Thomas Hoccleve," *SAC* 23 (2001): 453.

¹⁵ Andrea Tarnowski, "The Lessons of Experience and the *Chemin de long estude*," in *Christine de Pizan: A Casebook*, eds. Barbara K. Altmann and Deborah L. McGrady (New York: Routledge, 2003), 183.

¹⁶ Knapp, 60.

demonstrate how authority fragments itself in the three-way tug-of-war she instigates between traditional clerkly authority, popular vernacular authority, and the authority she can claim from her marginalized experience as a woman.¹⁷ Hoccleve holds these fragments of authority together in his reading and writing.

I largely agree with Knapp's point, but I also see Hoccleve as building significantly on Christine de Pizan's example. Hoccleve reshapes her poem to draw attention to a burgeoning English literary tradition and also to critique Christine's engagement with the literary tradition shared by all late-medieval European secular poets. Hoccleve's reference to Chaucer's *Legend of Good Women* in line 316 of the *Letter of Cupid*, when considered in light of the *Letter's* broader parallels to the *Legend*, is one example of how his "Englishing" of Christine's *Epistre* also subtly critiques her poem. The *Legend of Good Women* is a dream narrative in which Chaucer's authorial persona is accused by Cupid of committing heresy against Cupid's law (*LGW* F.324-330) by portraying women unfavorably in *Troilus and Criseyde* and his translation of the *Romance of the Rose*. As penance, the narrator must submit to the will of Alceste, Cupid's wife, who makes the narrator agree to translate tales in praise of women into English. Hoccleve's *Letter* portrays Cupid issuing similar accusations against writers—he also delivers his criticism with his wife, who is in this case Lady Nature—and Hoccleve's Cupid bolsters his argument with tales that praise or at least defend women. While Hoccleve follows the narrative in Christine's *Epistre* quite closely in the *Letter* and only seems to allude to Chaucer's penitential narrative in the *Legend*, Hoccleve's structure for

¹⁷ Knapp, 72-75. See also, Mary Anne C. Case, "Christine de Pizan and the Authority of Experience," in *Christine de Pizan and the Categories of Difference*, ed. Marilyn Desmond (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), 71-87.

the *Series* poems later in his career amplifies this allusion. Although he complains in the *Dialogue with a Friend* that his audiences have misread the intent of the *Letter of Cupid*, he offers atonement for their perception of his misogyny by incorporating a poem favorable to women into the *Series* (i.e. *The Tale of Jereslaus' Wife*, which follows the *Dialogue*). Hoccleve's response to critics of the *Letter* is to model his realistic narrative frame in the *Series* off of Chaucer's dream-narrative frame in the *Legend of Good Women*. He acquiesces to the same punishment Chaucer depicts in the *Legend* and for the same reason, despite his claim that the *Letter* was misunderstood.¹⁸

The *Letter of Cupid* shows Hoccleve playing with established forms of literary convention and authority by drawing a line between Christine's lyrical and diplomatic epistle and Chaucer's own adaptations in the *Legend of Good Women*. In the *Legend*, after all, Chaucer derived his texts from several probable sources, but most notably among them was Ovid's *Heroides* and its series of complaints by famous women of antiquity against the men who jilted them. The intertextual connections formed between Chaucer and Ovid and between Hoccleve's and Chaucer's poems, through Hoccleve's favorable reference to the *Legend*, complicate the extremely unfavorable treatment Ovid receives in both Christine's *Epistre* and Hoccleve's *Letter*. Christine's Cupid cites both Ovid's *Remedy of Love* and *Art of Love*, which were common school texts for learning Latin grammar, to support a claim that learned clerks traditionally sought to prejudice young men against women. The *Remedy of Love*, Christine's Cupid claims, falsely generalizes the vileness of women to keep boys from seeking out a woman's love

¹⁸ Fenster/Erler, 163, also note the possibility that Hoccleve's structuring of *Jereslaus' Wife* as a palinode for the *Letter of Cupid* may be a deliberate imitation of Chaucer's *Legend of Good Women*.

(*Epistre* 281-94), while the *Art of Love* attempts to teach courtiers how to deceive women into affairs (*Epistre* 365-78). Christine's Cupid also makes an argument *ad hominem* that Ovid and clerks following him wrote their books dispraising women based on their own sordid and deceptive pursuits of the worst women in their societies (*Epistre* 309-40). While Hoccleve's Cupid also makes this claim about Ovid's love life, he, by comparison, limits the scope of this critique somewhat by only adapting Christine's critique of the *Remedy of Love* (*LofC* 204-17).

Through this less-harsh treatment of Ovid, and by referring to the *Legend of Good Women* as "our legende of martirs" (*LofC* 316), Hoccleve refers not specifically to Chaucer's text but to its substance, namely, the retold tales at the core of the *Legend* that are derived from or at least shared with Ovid's *Heroides*. Especially when compared with Hoccleve's direct mention of Chaucer in other works, this Chaucer reference gestures more to the tradition of defense-of-women narratives that Chaucer makes available to English readers than to the *Legend*, itself. Hoccleve thus draws attention to the act of translation and adaptation in Chaucer's work that he, himself, continues with his adaptation of Christine de Pizan.

One effect of Hoccleve's reference to the *Legend* is to extend or at least underscore Christine's critique of established authors in her poem by pinpointing a text that undertakes an allied project. The gesture signals the attention to intertextuality at the core of such a narrative, by which Hoccleve confirms that his source text's defense of women and censure of men and male authors fits within his own view of English literary culture. Another effect of Hoccleve's gesture, however, is to implicitly critique his source text for not acknowledging its indebtedness to precedents, that is, the tradition of defense-

of-women narratives to which even Ovid contributed. Even if Hoccleve, himself, did not realize that one of Chaucer's specific sources was Ovid, this critique would stand more generally as a challenge to the novelty of Christine's project—a novelty that Hoccleve rejects for his own poem when he responds to complaints about his alleged endorsement of the misogynistic speeches his Cupid mimics.

Hoccleve's use of Chaucerian expressions in the *Letter of Cupid* also demonstrates how Hoccleve seeks to bring Christine's poem into concordance with Chaucer's. As Mary Carpenter Erler describes in the notes to her edition of the *Letter*, Hoccleve borrows certain phrases, rhyme patterns, and rhetorical strategies from the *Troilus and Criseyde*, *Legend of Good Women*, and selections from the *Canterbury Tales*. For example, the phrase "thow fisshist fair," from *LofC* line 100 quoted above, is also used in *Troilus and Criseyde* in the ironic sense of "you'll have done well." Pandarus tries to convince Criseyde that she will be culpable for both his and Troilus' deaths if she does not return Troilus' love: "If that ye don us bothe dyen / Thus gilteles, than have ye fished fayre!" (*TC* 2.327-8). A scriptural anecdote from Mathew 7:17 in the *Letter* (176-7), that wicked fruit only comes from a wicked tree, seems also to recall the opening of the "Legend of Phyllis" in the *Legend of Good Women*, in which Chaucer's authorial persona offers to prove the anecdote both by example and by citing a textual authority: "By preve as wel as by autorite, / that wiked fruyt cometh of a wiked tre" (*LGW* 2394-5).¹⁹ And as M.C. Seymour notes for the phrase "to rollen vp and doun" (*LofC* 285), meaning "mulling over and exploring a range of ideas," this idiom is used elsewhere in

¹⁹Fenster/Erler, 207-208.

Hoccleve's work, and is quite widespread in Chaucer.²⁰ We should not interpret these associations as attempts by Hoccleve to get readers to recall specific moments in his predecessor's texts, but rather as attempts to evoke more generally the language and themes with which his English-reading audience would be familiar.

Hoccleve's linguistic, formal, and thematic affinity with other figures in his literary culture—like Thomas Usk and John Gower—have been well-documented by Erler and other scholars.²¹ With the links to Chaucer, these associations place Hoccleve's *Letter of Cupid* in a network of lover's complaints, defenses of women, and portrayals of Cupid. The play with language from *Troilus and Criseyde*, too, singles out moments in which Hoccleve seems to be interested in connecting with the authority-adapting project Chaucer undertook in that grand epic. While actually derived from Boccaccio's *Il Filostrato*, Chaucer builds *Troilus* around a narrative premise that it was translated from a fake Roman writer (one "Lollius") in order to give the Trojan story more authority by making it seem proximal to Virgil and the *Aeneid*.²² Beyond the associations that Hoccleve draws to English texts and their sources, his associations with French sources also extend beyond Christine de Pizan to other French writers like Froissart and

²⁰ M.C. Seymour, commentary to Thomas Hoccleve, *Selections from Hoccleve*, ed. M.C. Seymour (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981), 116, lists *TC* 2.659, the *Summoner's Tale* (*CT* I [D] 2217), the *Pardoner's Tale* (*CT* VI [C] 838), and Hoccleve's own *RofP* 50. See also Fenster/Erler, 209.

²¹ See Fenster/Erler 205-11. On Usk, see R. Allen Shoaf, introduction to *Thomas Usk, The Testament of Love*, ed. R. Allen Shoaf, TEAMS (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 1998) and Andrew Galloway, "Private Selves and the Intellectual Marketplace in Late Fourteenth-Century England: The Case of the Two Usks," *NLH* 28 (1997): 291-318. On Gower see especially Charles Blyth, "Thomas Hoccleve's Other Master," *Medievalia* 16 (1993): 349-59. On the proximal relationship of Gower, Usk, Chaucer, and even Sir John Clanvowe, see Lynn Staley, *Languages of Power in the Age of Richard II* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2005), 1-74.

²² Chaucer's references to Lollius as his source text occur in *TC* 1.394 and 5.1653.

Deschamps.²³ Collectively these references underscore Hoccleve's own intertextual debts while exposing Christine's somewhat disingenuous lack of acknowledgment of her predecessors and contemporaries who wrote complaints in defense of women.

Hoccleve's Case for the *Letter of Cupid's* Misreading

While the *Letter* seems to represent Hoccleve's attempt to carve out a place for himself among his English and French contemporaries at the turn of the fifteenth century, it is also the place where he outlines the essential intertextuality of contemporary literary authority. His claim for authority through this complex network of textual connections, however, is meaningless if his readers do not recognize how the *Letter* fits into this network or how they play a key role in articulating the *Letter's* intertextual connections through their own reading performances. Hence, when Hoccleve defends his personal reputation in the early 1420s in the *Series* from readers who misinterpreted his claims for authority in the *Letter*, he critiques his readers' failure to recognize the poem's derivation from external, pre-existing sources and its situation within the literary genre of complaint.

When the friend in the *Dialogue with a Friend* details the accusations of misogyny levied against Hoccleve by female readers of the *Letter*, Hoccleve's narrative persona defends himself by correcting his audiences' understanding of the relative agency he claims for his writing and their reading of the poem. Though I cite some pieces of the following passage in Chapter 1, I include it here as a whole unit to show how the narrator attempts to establish the difference between his own reading of his sources (his

²³ See John A. Burrow, "Hoccleve and Middle French Poets," in *The Long Fifteenth Century: Essays for Douglas Gray*, eds. Helen Cooper and Sally Mapstone (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), 36-49; and James Wimsatt, *Chaucer and his French Contemporaries: Natural Music in the Fourteenth Century* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991).

rehearsal or reporting of “folkes tales”), and readers’ involvement in the interpretation of his text:

“Considereth, therof was I noon auctour
I nas in þat cas but a reportour
Of folkes tales. As they seide, I wroot.
I nat affermed it on hem, God woot.

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

“He misauysed is, and eek to blame.
Whan I it spak I spak compleynyngly.
I to hem thoghte no reproof ne shame.” (D 760-773)²⁴

In Chapter 1, I argue that this passage allows the narrator to stake his claim as a translator who adheres to the law of truth. With the indication of genre “I spak compleynyngly” (D 772), he also marks his superior experience with the genre of complaint compared to his readers. In addition to this, by pointing out that *he* was speaking “compleynyngly” in the *Letter*, he communicates his desire for his audience to understand how that genre entails a separation between what the speaking voice expresses in the narrative of the poem and the actual sentiments held by the writer who composes that voice. Drawing attention to the text’s content and to his claim to be a practitioner of the complaint genre is problematic, since, in the *Letter*, Cupid accuses men of misusing complaints when they

²⁴ Cf. *Thomas Hoccleve’s Complaint and Dialogue*, ed. John A. Burrow, EETS o.s. 313 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), for punctuation based more closely on Hoccleve’s use of virgules and paraphs in Durham University Library MS Cosin V.iii.9 (also cf. *Hoccl Facs*, Durham fol. 25r-v).

* words (*MED*)

woo women by falsely exaggerating the pains of their love.²⁵ So, in line 772, when the *Dialogue* speaker describes his agency in creating the voices in the *Letter*, the adverb “compleynyngly” indicates his adherence to the generic conventions of vocal role-playing, rather than tropes of exaggeration: “When I spoke, I spoke in a particular affected manner”—implying that he was *performing* both the God of Love’s censure of men and the poor male conduct Cupid mimics in his argument. In line 773, he emphasizes this by signaling that he, himself, disarticulated from that performance, had no mal-intent.²⁶

The run-up to this commentary on the complaint genre also underscores the narrator’s claim that the whole *Letter* is derived from a source over which he claims agency only as a “reportour” (*D* 761). This juxtaposes the portrayal of his accurate reading and transmission of his source against his readers’ impression that the *Letter* was a “report” (*D* 770) against them. This is where the narrator’s blaming of the audience comes into effect. The female readers who claim Hoccleve disparaged the demeanor and disposition of their sex (*D* 769) were misguided both in terms of their perception of the poem’s generic conventions and in their perception of Hoccleve’s role in the process of textual transmission. Hence, the *Dialogue* speaker defends the quality and conditions of how he “spak” before the content of the poem, itself. But even when he moves to clarify

²⁵ See for example *LofC* lines 26-28: “They seyn so importable is hir penance, / þat, but hir lady list to shew hem grace, / They right anoon moot steruen in the place.”

²⁶ Wendy Scase, *Literature and Complaint in England, 1272-1533* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 183, notices the generic claims in this line, too. Following a textual note in Ellis, she clarifies her interpretation of the generic signal as an attempt by Hoccleve to mark his alliance with Christine de Pizan’s defense of women in her version of the poem. See also Knapp, 64, who notices that Cupid’s reproach of false complainers is nested in the form of a complaint poem, making the *Letter of Cupid* “a self-reflexive meditation on its genre.”

the *Letter*'s content, he does so in the context of his female audiences' acts of reading.

To his friend, the narrator asks a series of frustrated questions:

“What world is this?” “How vndirstande am I?”
Looke in the same book. What stikith by?
Whoso lookith aright therein may see
Pat they me oghten haue in greet cheertee,

“And elles woot I neuere what is what.
The book concludith for hem, is no nay,
Vertuously, my good freend, dooth it nat?”
“Thomas, I noot, for neuere it yit I say.”
“No, freend?” “No, Thomas.” “Wel trowe I, in fay,
For had yee red it fully to the ende,
Yee wolde seyn it is nat as yee wende.” (D 774-84)

If the offended women had simply “looked rightly” (D 776) at the text and read the poem “fully to the ende,” observing his complete report of his source, the narrator claims that they would have realized that his Cupid concludes his letter with a proclamation in favor of womankind. In the *Letter*'s penultimate stanza, after all, Cupid decrees “Pat of the men vntreewe, our rebel foon / .../ Voide hem our Court and banisshe hem for euere” (LofC 466-8).

The exchange between the narrator and his friend challenges Hoccleve's audience's assumption that social criticism found in his text's voices could be attributed directly to the poet who composed them. The narrator first attacks the premise of such an attribution and then claims that his audience's impression of the text's social criticism was a misinterpretation brought about by improper reading. The exchange also shows how these audience misimpressions are compounded by the fact that the friend has never actually read the *Letter* himself, a caveat revealed only after the narrator makes his frustrated argument. This portrays the women's claim against Hoccleve as hearsay, and

sets up the friend as merely a passive reporter of their rumored interpretations without truly understanding their basis in Hoccleve's text. The friend's poor reporting is thus juxtaposed against the narrator's own claims for accurate reporting. The friend is also portrayed as a poor reader, whom the *Dialogue*'s audience is encouraged not to emulate because he accepts others' conclusions about texts without evaluating them for himself. As such, the narrator can only offer a conditional statement about the *Letter* in *Dialogue* lines 783-4: "had you read it fully to the end, you would see it is not as you presume" (my translation). This is somewhat redundant with the statement in *Dialogue* line 779 that the book concludes in favor of women, which implies that the text is not as its readers presume, emphasizing the distinction between the friend's reading practices and those of the women he claims to represent. As a consequence, this statement is also partly directed at readers of the *Dialogue* and the rest of the *Series*, warning them to be wary of the prejudices they may hold concerning Hoccleve and inviting them to read the *Letter* for themselves.

It is particularly important that Hoccleve makes a fuss about misreadings of his claims for authority in the *Letter* because the *Letter* is designed to draw readers into a potentially antagonistic relationship with its text. Although a reader may not be the target of Cupid's accusations, the content and severity of Cupid's complaints might encourage the reader to take sides in them. A reader might sympathize with the accused men or their female victims, and, if the latter, might even feel like Cupid's treatment of men is not harsh enough. Perhaps the female readers Hoccleve criticizes in the *Dialogue* felt Hoccleve gave the accused men too much of an opportunity to express their ill-will toward women before being condemned for these expressions. Rather than attempting to

challenge this possible interpretation of the text, Hoccleve argues that he, himself, should not be the subject of his readers' ire.

It is also especially important for Hoccleve's readers to understand the *Letter* properly because it stages the fundamental authority dynamics upon which he bases his entire career of translating, adapting, and designing poetic texts for reading performances. The complaint that readers did not understand the implication of his transmission of "folkes tales" to them in the *Letter* is a complaint not only about their interpretation of his own authority, but also their failure to recognize that the medium and genre of the *Letter* sets a stage for the collision of various sources of authority in readers' own performances of the text. The genres of complaint, defenses of women, and retelling of antique tales in the *Letter* fundamentally rely on readers to draw on their own knowledge and experience to situate it in a network of other known texts. So when readers read the *Letter* literally—or at least connect the text directly back to its most immediate authorial source (i.e. Hoccleve, himself), they miss the point of the *Letter*'s performances of gender roles and allegorical censure. Such an interpretation also obscures Hoccleve's commentary about the places of the writer and reader in the cycle of performances indicated by Cupid's proclamation.

Hoccleve draws attention to misreadings of the *Letter of Cupid* in his later work because the *Letter* was his first assertion of his place in a secular literary tradition and the only secular poem from his early career in which he specifically does not write in the voice of his autobiographical persona. It thus carries the greatest potential to maintain the status of a "folkes tale," divested of personal authority and given over to its readers and performers as an exploration of Cupid's voice to be added to other medieval and ancient

examples. With the friend's lack of direct knowledge of the text, Hoccleve points out that readers are mistaken if they think they can know the authoritative intentions behind texts like his *Letter* without performing them themselves and situating them in the long traditions to which they are indebted. By insisting that the friend could go and verify the narrator's claim about the conclusion of the *Letter*, Hoccleve shows that readers can only come close to understanding the authoritative intentions behind a text through their own acts of reading, through charting and constructing a text's intertextual connections, themselves.

Hoccleve's Attempt to Reshape the *Letter's* Representation of his Authority

The *Dialogue* narrator's claim to have reported his source texts accurately in the *Letter* is the foundation of Hoccleve's claim to be a better reader than his audiences—to have positioned his treatment of “folkes tales” appropriately in the context of their continued performances and rereadings. While this criticism of his readers is quite severe, it still shows Hoccleve situating his own poetic authority not so much in relation to Christine de Pizan, or to Chaucer and other English writers, but in relation to English readers and their acts of reading. The only responses available to Hoccleve when he realizes that his readers have misrepresented his authority and misinterpreted his intentions in the *Letter* are post-hoc corrections and the production of new texts. The *Dialogue* itself offers one such correction and, as I mention above and in Chapter 1, the *Tale of Jereslaus' Wife* that follows the *Dialogue* in the text of the *Series* is Hoccleve's attempt to offer women readers conciliation for having offended them; it provides them with a new text that portrays women in a favorable light. These acts of interpretive

correction and textual production are linked in the surviving autograph copy of the *Letter of Cupid*, in Huntington Library MS HM 744, a manuscript that Hoccleve assembled around the same time he composed the *Series*. This is the copy of the *Letter* from which Hoccleve hoped his future readers' copies would be derived. Differences between this copy and later fifteenth-century manuscript copies of the poem, however, especially in terms of the narrative voice's first-person pronouns and the whole poem's stanza arrangement, suggest that most versions were derived from the poem's earlier manuscript traditions. These differences, however, reveal that Hoccleve attempted to reshape the narrative of the poem in HM 744 to prevent future misinterpretations of his claims for authority in it. With these edits, Hoccleve tries to strike a balance between his desire to authorize his work through readers' actions and readers' perception of intertextuality, and his desire to direct the kind of reading he wants for his text.

Royal Pronouns in HM 744

While Huntington Library MS HM 744 is predominantly thought to contain the authoritative copy of the *Letter*, since it is written in Hoccleve's own hand,²⁷ few modern scholars and editors have considered the implications of the fact that it was written in the early 1420s, almost two decades after the *Letter* was originally composed.²⁸ This dating

²⁷ HM 744 consists of two parts: the first (fols. 1-24) is a collection of devotional texts mostly in English prose likely compiled after Hoccleve's death in the mid-fifteenth century, and the second (fols. 25-68) is Hoccleve's holograph in which the *Letter of Cupid* appears on fols. 39v-50v. The two parts may have been bound together in the third quarter of the century, the likely time frame when pen-trials by the same hand were written on folios of the first part and on rear flyleaves. See John A. Burrow and A.I Doyle, introduction to *Hoccl Facs*, xxiii-xxvi.

²⁸ The composition date of 1402 is derived from the last line of Cupid's proclamation in the poem: "Written in th'eir the lusty monthe of May / In our paleys, wher many a milion / louers treewe han habitacioun / the yeer of grace ioieful and iocunde / M CCCC and secounde" (*LofC* 472-6). This concluding gesture follows Christine de Pizan's own weaving of her year of composition into the last two lines of her poem "L'an de grace mil trios cent quatre vins / Et dix et neuf, presens dieux et divins" (*Epistre* 795-6). In HM 744, there

strongly suggests that Hoccleve recopied the text of the poem into HM 744 from an exemplar written earlier in his career and used the opportunity to reread and revise it in the process. Variants in Cupid's use of self-referential pronouns in the poem compared to other surviving manuscript copies, however, provide evidence that Hoccleve approached the HM 744 copy of the *Letter* as a revision. I argue that the new version of the poem was intended to sharpen the poem's anti-misogynist rhetoric and to correct readers' impressions of the *Letter*'s portrayal of his own authority relative to Cupid's voice.

In HM 744, Cupid usually uses the plural first person when referring to himself. This pronominal use is an example of *pluralis maiestatis* or the "royal we" that a single sovereign can use to mark his or her status and draw attention to the dual voice with which he or she speaks.²⁹ As I illustrate in the collation tables in Appendix B, this is different from all other manuscripts of the poem. In other manuscripts, Cupid uses the *pluralis maiestatis* only in the first two and last two stanzas, during a formal epistolary salutation and concluding proclamation. Besides contributing to a regal rhetorical styling, Cupid's plural reference to himself in HM 744 also has the effect of distinguishing his voice more clearly than in other manuscripts from the voices of the men he parrots in order to criticize: these voices refer to themselves in the singular in all

is also a smudged superscription between the M and first C of the date that Erler discounts as unnecessary scribal abbreviations, as she remarks in her textual notes (see Fenster/Erler 203), and deletes in her transcription. The inserted characters, however, resemble Hoccleve's graphs for "& xx." If this is indeed what the insertion is meant to say, it could very likely represent an afterthought by Hoccleve meant to update the poem's date from 1402 to 1422. See *Hoccl Facs*, HM 744, fol. 50v.

²⁹ For a brief history on the use of the *pluralis maiestatis* as a contrastive and emphatic rhetorical device see Wolfgang U. Dressler and Lavinia Merlini Barbaresi, *Morphopragmatics: Diminutives and Intensifiers in Italian, German, and Other Languages* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1994), 67-8. The seminal study of how a sovereign ruler was understood, in the medieval and early modern periods, as a plural entity speaking both as an individual and as the voice of the body-politic is Ernst Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Mediaeval Political Theology* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1957).

manuscripts. Additionally, it distinguishes Cupid's voice more clearly from the voices of Hoccleve's own scribal, authorial, and compiling personae, which always refer to themselves in the first person singular in his prefatory titles and other poems in the volume.

Emphasizing Hoccleve's revisions of the *Letter of Cupid*'s content in HM 744, some of the instances of *pluralis maiestatis* appear to be Hoccleve's own scribal revisions written over erasures in the manuscript. In these cases "we," "us," or "our" are squeezed into a space that seems narrow enough to originally have been a place for "I" or "y," "me," or "my" (listed in Appendix B, Fig. B.1). Even more of the plural pronouns appear to have been written in Hoccleve's initial inscription of HM 744 (listed in Appendix B, Fig. B.2).³⁰ Along with the fact that no other manuscript of the poem has such a widespread use of Cupid's plural pronoun, these variants suggest that Hoccleve copied HM 744 from an earlier version of the poem in which Cupid consistently used the singular first person when referring to himself, and that Hoccleve chose to revise most of these to the plural in the process of producing his manuscript. His corrections over erasure show that he intended to regularize the use of *pluralis maiestatis* for Cupid throughout the text, but that he only did so after his initial inscription of the poem. For the few instances where Hoccleve maintains the first person singular in the version of the poem in HM 744 (which, as Appendix B, Fig. B.3 shows, align with all other copies of the poem), I propose three possible explanations: they may have resulted from lapses in his editorial procedure, they may have been his deliberate attempt to maintain a more

³⁰ Burrow and Doyle, in their introduction to *Hoccl Facts*, xxv, describe the appearance of the erased and overwritten plural pronouns. The overwritten form of "We" generally uses a bipartite W, whereas a W written on the first pass through the manuscript generally takes the shape of Hoccleve's preferred rounded W, because the former is easier to squeeze into gaps created by an erasure.

direct translation of Christine de Pizan's original (such as Erler notes for *LofC* line 206),³¹ or he may have chosen to leave them singular in order to create an oscillation in Cupid's tone. The last option is most probable, supported by the fact that all five "I" statements occur in comments in which Cupid makes a personal observation or a subjective claim that emphasizes his individual rather than official voice (e.g. "I see wel," "as I suppose," etc.). Four of these are even syntactically parenthetical and marked at least partially with punctuation by virgules—which Hoccleve generally uses only irregularly and for emphasis—suggesting that he used these phrases to shift Cupid's voice briefly from a regal tenor to a more personal one.

Line 221 clearly demonstrates the effect of Hoccleve's manipulation of Cupid's tone using pronouns. In this line, Cupid introduces Lady Nature as co-enforcer of his policy against clerks who slander women, leading into the next lines that establish how neither he nor she will tolerate such offensiveness: "For, betwixt vs and my lady, Nature, / Shal nat be souffred, whyl the world may dure / Clerkes, by her outrageous tyrannye, / Thus vpon wommen kythen hir maistrye" (*LofC* 221-4). Cupid refers to himself as "vs" and to Nature as "my lady," easily shifting between two formal conventions despite the fact that the object and possessive pronouns disagree in number. Reinforcing the likelihood that Hoccleve chose both forms consciously and was aware of their grammatical disagreement, "vs" is among the plural pronouns that appears to be written over an erasure—suggesting that he had originally written the same "me and my Lady" that is extant in all other manuscripts, but then changed "me" to its plural form. Along with the other instances of first person singular pronouns, this shows Hoccleve adhering

³¹ Fenster/Erler, 205 n. 7.

to a default voicing strategy for Cupid in which the deity's stance is primarily formal and regal (requiring *pluralis maiestatis*) except for occasions personalized for emphasis with singular pronouns—in this case both to show respect for Lady Nature and to claim her as his peer.³²

Hoccleve's editorial work also clarifies the distinction between the poem's "character" voices and those of his own personae. For example, when Cupid defends Eve with the statement: "Wherefore we seyn, this good woman Eeue / Our fadir Adam ne deceyued noght" (*LofC* 365-6), HM 744's "we seyn" appears as "I sey" in all other surviving versions. Hoccleve's adjustment to "we" helps to clarify that the possibly subversive interpretation of Genesis, by which Eve is partly excused for her original sin, is assigned in the text to the royal Cupid rather than the humble writer whose narrating persona names himself "I" elsewhere in the manuscript. The formality of the royal plural here also distances Cupid, himself, from full responsibility as an individual for the poem's rhetoric—emphasizing that his reading of the Adam and Eve story is a component of his official judgment of the complaint against men, rather than a personal sentiment. In *LofC* line 446, this effect also takes place without the *pluralis maiestatis* to distance Cupid from a harsh anti-masculine statement: he declares that he will prove from a reading of scripture that men are full of "chaunge and variance" (*LofC* 448) while "in

³² Roger Ellis, in his introduction to Thomas Hoccleve, *My Compleinte* (Ellis, 17), notes the inconsistent pronouns in line 221, but claims only that Hoccleve is copying from an exemplar of his poem that has the "me and my Lady" form of the line—without suggesting its rhetorical implications. He does, however, suggest that the line in HM 744 is part of Hoccleve's attempt to make Cupid's royal presence more consistent throughout the poem. This stylistic royal presence is drawn on again in George Sewell's eighteenth-century adaptation/translation of the poem to enhance its archaic and regal tone by using the *pluralis maiestatis* in Cupid's speeches throughout the text, imitating HM 744, even though Sewell was likely unaware of the manuscript. For Sewell's translation, see Fenster/Erlor, 219-37, and for discussion of his preface see pp.209-12 below.

woman regneth al the constaunce” (*LofC* 447). This edit replaces a personal declaration by Cupid that “I may wel preve herby” (extant in other manuscripts) with the passive-voiced and impersonal “it may preeved be ther by” in HM 744.

Hoccleve’s decision to shift pronouns to be more dominantly plural and impersonal in the text emphasizes how severe critique of men stems from his official responsibilities as arbiter in disputes among lovers rather than from his sympathy for women. The edits in HM 744 make the artifice of the narrative more pronounced, throwing the fictiveness of the poem’s narrative premise into higher relief by depersonalizing Cupid’s voice. His more formal tone also helps to distinguish his voice from Hoccleve’s narratorial/compiling “I”-voice that traces throughout his other texts in the manuscript and its paratextual *ordinatio* (i.e. headings, titles). And in addition to serving as a stylistic marker, Cupid’s “nosism” reaches out to and includes the reader in his proclamation. Through an implicit encouragement to form a consensus with the voice in the text, the pluralized self-referring pronouns have antecedents that are not fully determined so that readers might be able to place themselves among the lovers for whom Cupid speaks.

Although it may seem overly speculative to consider the largely unique variants in the HM 744 version of the poem to be authorial corrections when it is the earliest surviving copy, such speculation has a significant precedent in scholarship on Hoccleve’s literary influences. In two articles over a century ago, John Livingston Lowes demonstrated that two authorial versions of Chaucer’s *Legend of Good Women* prologue exist, known as F and G, and this has been confirmed by a consensus of present-day

editors.³³ Despite surviving in only one copy that is also the earliest extant witness to the poem,³⁴ the G-version is thought to be a revision of the F-version that excludes a reference to Queen Anne, Richard II's wife, who had died between the composition of the two versions.³⁵ The revised prologue seems to show Chaucer reframing his poem for a new courtly audience who might consider the F-version's reference to Queen Anne to be in poor taste. G, however, also more strongly emphasizes the fact that Chaucer's earlier poems indicted by Cupid for "committing heresy" against the laws of love come from external sources, deemphasizing the authority Chaucer claims for himself in them.³⁶

³³ John L. Lowes, "The Prologue to the *Legend of Good Women* as Related to the French Marguerite Poems, and the *Filostrato*," *PMLA* 19.4 (1904): 593-683 and "The Prologue to the *Legend of Good Women* Considered in Its Chronological Relations," *PMLA* 20.4 (1905): 749-864. See also A.S.G. Edwards and M.C.E. Shaner, explanatory notes to *The Legend of Good Women*, in *Riverside Ch*, 1065.

³⁴ This unique copy of the G-version of the *Legend of Good Women* in Cambridge University Library Gg 4.27 is considered an authorial revision even though it is the earliest extant manuscript witness to the poem. Since Lowes, however, editors consistently have found the other copies to be descended from an earlier source despite the later provenances of their manuscripts. I argue that a similar situation exists for Hoccleve's *Letter of Cupid*, which has caused editors and scholars to hesitate in considering HM 744's variants as possible authorial revisions. See A.S.G. Edwards and M.C.E. Shaner, textual notes to *The Legend of Good Women*, in *Riverside Ch*, 1178-9. Like Gg 4.27 for the *Legend of Good Women*, HM 744 should not be viewed as the only possible authorial version of the *Letter* that circulated in the fifteenth century (even if it is the version Hoccleve settled on late in his career).

³⁵ The F-version concludes the narrator's sentencing by Cupid's wife, Alceste, with her directive: "And whan this book ys maad, yive it the quene, / On my byhalf at Eltham or at Sheene." (*LGW* F. 496-7). See A.S.G. Edwards and M.C.E. Shaner, explanatory notes to *The Legend of Good Women*, in *Riverside Ch*, 1065, who argue that these lines refer to Queen Anne's primary residences—the latter of which a grieving Richard II ordered to be razed upon Anne's death. The lines' absence in the G-version has allowed scholars to conclude that Chaucer removed the lines from the poem in a revision to tactfully avoid referring to the late Queen.

³⁶ See *Riverside Ch*, 588-603, for a parallel edition of both the F and G versions of the *LGW* prologue. See especially p. 597 for an example of how the G-version of Cupid's accusations against the narrator show Chaucer distancing himself from his translation of the *Romance of the Rose*. The G-version (in line 264) also draws more attention than the F-version to Chaucer's act of "making" the English *Troilus and Criseyde* from another book. G also more strongly dramatizes the sense that Chaucer's transgression against Cupid's law was in his failure to remember other stories about "wemen that were goode and trewe" (*LGW* G.270-2). The F-version (*LGW* F.332), in contrast, places the onus of creativity on Chaucer's own voice: "And of Creseyde thou hast seyde....", making him seem more culpable.

The fact that Hoccleve revised the 1402 *Letter* in the 1420s manuscript, HM 744, can be pretty clearly established.³⁷ The revision is also not surprising, since Hoccleve is known to have revised another of his translation poems, *Lerne to Dye*, for two very different contexts and to have addressed his *Regiment of Princes* to at least two different noblemen.³⁸ My argument about this revision, however, is that it was motivated by Hoccleve's desire to sharpen the poem's antimisogynist rhetoric and to clarify the kinds of agency over this rhetoric that are assumed by the voices in its narrative and manuscript context. Compared to other manuscript copies, Cupid's use of plural self-referential pronouns in HM 744 emphasizes the distinctions between the voice Hoccleve conveys as the scribe compiling the manuscript and the voices depicted in the poem. In this copy, Hoccleve thus attempts to re-narrate his work to help correct the misimpressions that he complains about in the *Dialogue*. In other words, HM 744 or one of its descendents may be what Hoccleve hopes the readers of *Dialogue* lines 774-84 will seek out if they take his lesson to heart and want to see for themselves whether his writing is misogynistic.

A History of Shuffled Stanzas

The other manuscripts that post-date HM 744 in the *Letter of Cupid's* textual history, however, show that Hoccleve's effort to edit the poem probably had little effect in reshaping its form for his medieval audiences, and probably continued the poem's

³⁷ Wendy Scase, *Literature and Complaint*, 180; Ellis, introduction, 17, also notes the likelihood that in contrast to HM 744, "the non-holograph copies witness better to an earlier version of Hoccleve's text."

³⁸ One of which was as a stand-alone poem at the end of HM 744 and the other was as an integrated part of the *Series*, which exists in holograph in Durham University Library MS Cosin. V.iii.9. See John Bowers, "Hoccleve's Two Copies of *Lerne to Dye*: Implications for Textual Critics," *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America* 83.4 (1989): 437-72. The noblemen were Edward, Duke of York, and John, Duke of Bedford, see M.C. Seymour, commentary to *Selections from Hoccleve*, ed. M.C. Seymour (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981): 126-8.

history of misreading. No manuscripts reproduce Hoccleve's revision of Cupid's narrating voice and all but two preserve the poem in alternative stanza arrangements that seem to derive from exemplars produced *prior* to HM 744. Although editors and commentators on the manuscript variants of the *Letter* have noted the variations in stanza order, they have generally treated these more prevalent forms as aberrations of the authoritative HM 744 copy of the poem and not explored their potential consequences for interpretation.³⁹ While I do not challenge the treatment of HM 744's stanza ordering as an authoritative copy text for the poem, I do question whether HM 744 presents the best representation of the poem as it was read in its time. I posit that the patterns of stanza order variation that circulated through and after the fifteenth century offer a picture of how scribes and other readers encountered Hoccleve's poem. These audiences would likely not have been aware of any different stanza organization, and thus can offer insight into the readings of the poem that Hoccleve sought to revise.

In order to understand the alternative readings offered by the stanza ordering in non-autograph manuscripts, it is necessary to compare them to the narrative of Cupid's argument as it is arranged in the 68 stanzas of HM 744's version of the poem. In HM 744, the narrative of the poem unfolds more-or-less along the same broad arc as Christine's *Epistre*, with Cupid's formal epistolary complaint at the beginning, his climactic critique of slanderous writers in the middle, and his edict and signature at the

³⁹ Ellis, Appendix 4 to Thomas Hoccleve's *My Compleinte*, 276 (hereafter abbreviated to "Ellis") is partly an exception. He offers the possibility that Hoccleve was responsible for the arrangement of verses 60-64 of the poem, "in which case the version in [the holograph copy] would represent an accidental miscopying by Hoccleve of his own text, or an instance of Hoccleve having second thoughts about its ordering." But this does not characterize what may have motivated Hoccleve's second thoughts. Ellis follows all other editors of the poem in attributing the different order of stanzas 20-59 in the majority of manuscripts to a faulty archetype—which I discuss and problematize below.

end. Within this narrative arc, groups of stanzas form short episodes in the poem's rhetoric that are useful to gauge how stanza reordering can affect the poem's meaning. In stanzas 1-19, an initial complaint against men, Cupid lays out his main grievances against men on women's behalf, namely that men deceive women into love affairs with falsely amplified protestations of lovesickness and loyalty, attracting pity, trust, and affection from naturally naïve women. Moreover, the God of Love describes how men boast about their conquests among their friends in order to make each other envious and justify their disloyalty to the women they woo by claiming that all women lack virtue. In stanzas 20-27, an appeal to reason and respect for mothers, Cupid declaims boasting and lying as slander, criticizing men for violating the "ordre of gentillesse" (*LofC* 137) that should inspire them to defend women rather than disparage them. Such a defense is warranted, he claims, because vice-ridden women who deserve men's scorn represent only a small minority of their sex, and because men should remember their own mothers before making generalizations about all women. This is where the reference to Mathew 7:17 is situated, to claim that men who argue that women are all bad must accept that they are themselves wicked by virtue of their own matriarchal lineage. Stanzas 28-29 then initiate the sustained general critique of clerks and their books who defame all women's works, using the examples of David's, Sampson's, and Solomon's betrayals. This sets up the critique of bitter men, in stanzas 30-39, in which Cupid suggests that Ovid in the *Remedy of Love* and those who extend his rhetoric in other texts are merely bitter, old men whose years of being deceitful to women have made them unsuccessful in love. He shames them for poisoning the minds of young men who learn these texts in school and believe them. To punish these clerks, Cupid determines with his Lady Nature to make them fall in love

with the very vicious women against whom they have written, suggesting, in stanza 39, that even these women could be faithful if men would be faithful to them.

After placing agency for virtue in love squarely on men, Cupid goes on to challenge a common misogynist claim that the ease with which women are won over by love complaints indicates their inherent gullibility and lack of virtue. In stanzas 40-43, a critique of courtly deceits, Cupid argues that if this was the case men would not need to expend such effort to deceive women as they do, singling out Jean de Meun's *Roman de la Rose* as the most telling, long-winded example of this foolishly wasted effort. In stanzas 44-49, a demonstration of womanly virtues, Cupid argues that the vices clerks critique in women are rather the virtues of constancy and pity, using Medea's betrayal by Jason and Dido's betrayal by Aeneas, along with the "martyrdom" stories in Chaucer's *Legend of Good Women*, as examples for how men reward this devotion with their malice. Stanza 50 continues this thread with Cupid's claim for women's kindness, elaborating on how women's hearts are not naturally inclined to cruelty. From the premise of inherent kindness, in stanzas 51-56 Cupid defends Eve from clerks' accusations that her actions in Eden were maliciously deceitful, a variation on traditional defenses of Eve. Rather than being blamed for deceit, he claims, the innocent and simple Eve was merely disobedient, primarily due to Satan's intervention: she was not so by her own will. Cupid follows this defense with an argument about the "happy fall" in stanzas 57-59, claiming that Eve's disobedience eventually led to a joyous event for mankind. The original sin, after all, initiated the series of events that would bring God to life as Christ—who chose Mary, a woman and a paragon of virtue, as his conduit. Stanza 60 continues the praise of Mary's virtue begun in 59, and then stanza 61 describes the martyr

St. Margaret as another example of women's inherent virtues. These virtues, Cupid explains in stanza 62, are not her chastity or virginity—which as the god of lovers he detests, but rather constancy and loyalty. He then praises Mary for her constancy and loyalty in stanzas 63-64, and compared to the men who forsook Jesus while she did not. In the last four stanzas of the poem, Cupid clarifies his intent not to flatter women but to stand-up for them, and issues a formal edict to banish untrue lovers from his court, dated to May 1402.

This narrative is not the one that many fifteenth and sixteenth-century readers of the poem would have read. While two of the other eight fifteenth-century manuscripts of the poem do reflect HM 744's stanza order, the other six do not. And even though the early sixteenth-century printed editions of the poem, and a manuscript whose scribe seems to have been aware of these editions, is closer to HM 744's ordering of the first 60 stanzas, they reflect a different ordering of the poem's final eight stanzas. The group of six fifteenth-century manuscripts of the rearranged poem, though, are what Roger Ellis calls the "main subgroup": Durham University Library MS Cosin V.ii.13, Cambridge University Library Ff.1.6 (which is also known as the Findern Manuscript), and Oxford University Bodleian Library MSS Digby 181, Bodley 638, Tanner 346, and Fairfax 16. The latter three of these comprise the group of manuscripts known as the Oxford Group, so named by Eleanor Hammond in 1908 to suggest their close affinity with each other due to significantly overlapping contents.⁴⁰

⁴⁰ Eleanor Prescott Hammond, *Chaucer: A Bibliographical Manual* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1908), 338-9.

Manuscripts / Editions	Stanza Orders (numbers from HM 744)
Durham U.L. Cosin V.ii.13 Digby 181 Bodley 638 Tanner 346	1-19, 30-39, 50-59, 20-29, 40-49, 60, 63-64, 61-62, 65-68 (Digby follows this order but begins with stanza 11 due to missing folio)
Findern (Cambridge U.L. Ff.1.6)	1-19, 30-39, 50-59, 20-28
Fairfax 16	1-6, 17-19, 30-36, 7-16, 57-59, 20-26, 37-39, 50-56, 27-29, 40-49, 60, 63-64, 61-62, 65-68
Shirley (Cambridge, T.C. R.3.20) Arch Selden B.24	1-68
Thynne's Edition (1532) Bannatyne (1568- Nat'l Library of Scotland Advocates' MS 1.1.6)	1-60, 63-64, 61-62, 65-68

Figure 3.0: The ordering of stanzas in full non-holograph copies of the *Letter of Cupid*

The stanza sequence employed by the manuscripts in the main subgroup is as listed in Figure 3.0; all significantly alter the narrative sequence of the poem. Synthesizing comments by previous editors of the poem, Ellis argues that the consistent rearrangement of stanzas throughout the main subgroup suggests that its members seem to be derived from an archetype of the poem that contained a scribal or binding error.⁴¹ Stanza order variations, however, still reveal crucial information about how the poem was read in these manuscripts, even if they did result from a transmission error. A reader would be forced to perceive a text in whatever form their manuscript copy offered, and the scribes of this group of manuscripts likely were unaware that the copies they were transmitting had variant organizations from Hoccleve's own copy from the 1420s. Instead of dismissing these variant readings for their lack of authorial intention, we can incorporate them into our understanding of the consequences of Hoccleve's placement of

⁴¹ Ellis, 275, claims that the archetype for the main subgroup "had ten stanzas per leaf, with a blank final leaf, and swapped the third and fourth bifolia of the quire of eight leaves on which the text was copied (the fourth bifolium must have been reversed)." This builds upon and specifies the original assessment of the scribal error in Hammond, 337. I show below that the folio shuffling gets more complicated in Fairfax 16.

authority in his readers and their acts of performing for the interpretation and transmission of his text.

The most similar of the copies of the main subgroup manuscripts, Durham, Digby, Bodley, and Tanner, all suggest that their original readers encountered a poem that begins with Cupid's nineteen-stanza critique of men's deceitful and slanderous behavior toward women. The first significant difference from the HM 744 stanza order occurs when Cupid's critique of courtly slanderers segues directly into his admonishment, in stanza 30, of Ovid's *Remedy of Love* and the bitter old clerks who use the *Remedy* to propagate misogyny in their students. Cupid's claim in stanza 39 that men who are truly loyal would attract faithful women, then, transitions directly into stanza 50's praise of women's kind nature, the defense of Eve, and following praise of Mary. Despite the fact that these manuscripts break off the Marian praises early compared to HM 744, following stanza 59 with 20, the break does not initially disrupt the sense of the verse. Its narrative is merely differently organized: lauding Mary for possessing the "key of mercy" (*LofC* 413) in the middle of the poem rather than the end, and following it with another query about men's improper courtly behavior (asking what profit gentlemen gain from slandering women when they ought to be defending them, *LofC* 134-40). This may create a sense that the narrative's thematic arc is a bit bumpy, but without directly comparing it to HM 744 or an archetype based on its stanza order, a reader would not necessarily even notice. The same is true for the "skip" from stanzas 29 to 40, and 60 to 63. The former creates a fairly a logical transition between stanza 29's critique of clerks and their "wikkid bookes" (*LofC* 197), and 40-43's critique of Jean de Meun and courtly decepts. The latter narrative difference is similarly logical: consolidating the Marian

praises into a sequence of the stanzas 60, 63, and 64, and then proceeding to the praise of St. Margaret in 61 and 62 as a more local and recent example, rather than treating Margaret as a momentary digression.⁴²

What is remarkable about this variant stanza order is how generally smooth it is. It shifts the poem's emphases slightly and shuffles together some of the anecdotal and textual examples Cupid criticizes. The only potentially jarring moment in the narrative would occur when readers of one of these manuscripts encounter the pronouns of stanza 60, which are meant to refer to Mary in 58-9 but instead must relate to the subject of stanza 49. The parallel transcriptions in Figure 3.1 show Bodley 638's version of the stanza sequence, which is representative of the main subgroup manuscripts. It refers to women's nature generally and in the plural, creating a slight syntactic disconnect with the references to "she" and "hir" in its version of stanza 60. The singular pronouns in HM 744's stanza pairing, by contrast, clearly match up with the same antecedents, and connect the two stanzas' descriptions of the Marian virtue of mercy. A reader of Bodley might still have understood the praise formulas in 60 to be referring to Mary, since stanza 59's depiction of her as the keeper of mercy's key would have been read earlier in the poem, but the more general and plural praise of women in 49 opens up other interpretive possibilities, too. One of these is that "mercy" in the first line of stanza 60 could be interpreted as the antecedent for the singular pronouns that follow it. In this context, mercy seems to be personified—taking on some of Mary's traditional characteristics while also representing a sort of every-woman with the qualities described in the

⁴² Ellis, 275, suggests that the swapping of stanzas 63-4 for 61-2 may have been an attempt to organize the transition from Mary to Margaret chronologically.

preceding stanza. The effect of this is to deflect some of the vengeful aspects of Marian mercy suggested in the second half of stanza 60 (“displese hir not ... And but ye do, youre sorrow shall awake”) away from the figure of Mary herself. Such a

HM 744 (stanzas 59-60), Fol. 49r

Hir hepid vertu / hath swich excellence
Pat to weyk is mannes facultee
 To declare it / & therefore in suspense
Hir due laude put moot needes be
 But this we witen verrailly / pat **shee**
 Next god the best freend is pat to man longith
 The keye of mercy / by **hir** girdil hongith

And of mercy hath euery man swich neede
pat cesyngge it farwel the ioie of man
 Of **hir** power / it is to taken heede
Shee mercy may / wole & purchase can
 Displese **hir** not / honurith pat womman
 And othir women all / for **hir** sake
 And but yee do / youre sorwe shal awake

Bodley 638 (stanzas 49, 60), Fol. 44v

Trust parfyte loue & entere charite
 Fervent will & entalentid corage
 To thewis good as it syt well to be
 Han women ay of custome & vsage
 And well thei kan a mannys yre aswage
 With softe wordis discrete & benigne
 What thei be inward shewith owtward signe

And of **mercy** hath euery man such need
 That cesyngge that fare well the ioy of man
 Of **hir** power^e now takith right good hede
She mercy may wull & purchase kan
 Displese **hir** not honourith that woman
 And other women all for **hir** sake
 And but ye do youre sorow shall awake

Figure 3.1: Parallel transcriptions of lines 407-420 of the *Letter of Cupid* from Huntington Library MS HM 744 and Oxford University Bodleian Library MS Bodley 638⁴³

deflection would carry over to the following stanzas 63 and 64, which celebrate the women who attended on Jesus for being more constant and loyal than his apostles. HM 744’s direct reference to Mary in stanzas 58-60 makes her the implied focus of these compliments, whereas in the other ordering of stanzas, the absence of an explicit focus on Mary here seems to allow for a more literal reading that distributes the praise among the female characters of the New Testament and women overall.

Within the main subgroup of the letter’s manuscripts, readers of Digby, Findern, and Fairfax would each have had differing impressions of the poem’s stanza order from

⁴³ I have transcribed the verses in HM 744 from *Hoccl Facs*, and the verses in Bodley 638 from Pamela Robinson, ed., *Manuscript Bodley 638: A Facsimile* (Norman, OK: Pilgrim Books, 1982).

readers of the other manuscripts. Readers of Digby after the loss of its first ten stanzas would have seen a similar poem as readers of Durham, Tanner, and Bodley—but might have started out a bit disoriented, not knowing who was speaking or why. Readers of Findern, however, would have had the opposite experience. As Figure 3.0 shows, the Findern manuscript’s stanza order is identical to the others in the main subgroup, but is cut short. While the abbreviation of Findern’s *Letter of Cupid* narrative was not likely originally intended, it is likely that it appeared to even some of its late-medieval readers in its current form.⁴⁴

The difference between the readings offered by Findern and those offered by both HM 744 and the rest of the main subgroup can be illustrated by stanza 28. In Findern, this stanza in which Cupid assesses clerks’ antifeminism is the final one of the poem:

Thes ladyes eke compleynen hem on clerks
That thei haue made bookes of hir defame
In swich despisen ther women werks
And speken of hem grete reprefe and shame
And causeles yev hem a wikked name
Thus they despised ben on eu^{er}y syde
And sclaudred / and blowne on full wyde⁴⁵

⁴⁴ The reasons proposed for this truncation have been varied. The nineteenth-century rebinder of the manuscript, Henry Bradshaw, initially proposed that the ending of the *Letter* and the beginning of the next item in the manuscript (a tale from Gower’s *Confessio Amantis*) were lost through the excision of a gathering of four folios; inserted blank sheets to fill the gap. Rossell Hope Robbins, in contrast, suggests that the poem cuts off early because the scribe of the poem in Findern inadvertently copied only the recto sides of his copy text’s folios before realizing his error and returning to copy only stanzas 20-28. Richard Beadle and A.E.B. Owen, in their introduction to the facsimile edition of the manuscript, seem to support this theory, noting that no physical evidence supports the existence of Bradshaw’s missing quire. Kate Harris, however, arguing from both the incidence of watermarks and the shared stanza order with rest of the main subgroup manuscripts of the poem, returns convincingly to the theory that four leaves of the manuscript were lost. Harris’s point about the *Letter* is corroborated by her analysis of other texts in Findern which seem to share exemplars with Chauceriana in Tanner 346, Bodley 638, and Digby 181. See Robbins, “The Findern Anthology,” *PMLA* 69.3 (1954): 631, n.119; Beadle and Owen, introduction to *The Findern Manuscript: Cambridge University Library MS. Ff.1.6* (London: Scolar Press, 1977), ix-xi; Harris, “The Origins and Make-Up of Cambridge University Library Ff.1.6,” *Transactions of the Cambridge Bibliographic Society* 8.3 (1983): 328-9, 311-2.

⁴⁵ My transcription of Cambridge University Library MS Ff 1.6, fol. 76v, from the facsimile (eds. Beadle and Owen).

The complete copies of the poem in the rest of the main subgroup manuscripts, however, show that scribes positioned the stanza about two-thirds of the way through the text (number 48 of 68). Like Findern, this places the stanza after both Cupid's defense of Eve and his appeal to men's reason and respect for their mothers. But unlike Findern, the main subgroup follows this stanza with the critique of Jeun de Meun and courtly deceits, the general demonstration of womanly virtues (including the mention of the *Legend of Good Women*), and the commendations of Mary and St. Margaret. Findern and the rest of the main subgroup differ from HM 744, in which Hoccleve places the stanza right before the middle of the narrative (as number 28 of 68), which is the appropriate place for the rhetorical climax of a French complaint poem.⁴⁶ In Hoccleve's final version, then, Cupid sets up his denunciation of clerks at the focal point of his argument with the claim that men should honor all women as they would honor their mothers, and follows it with more examples of clerkly defamation.

In the Findern copy, Cupid offers all his examples of bad male conduct before the appeal for matriarchal love, while in the rest of the main subgroup, he intersperses the slander by clerks with his other examples before the defense of Eve. In Findern then, the reader's sense of reading "fully to the end" would not, however, have achieved what Hoccleve intended in his conditional critique of readers at the end of the *Dialogue with a Friend* (D 783). Rather, the Findern excerpt emphasizes Cupid's most direct statement of complaint in the text in a way that no other manuscripts do, building up to it in a grand crescendo and ending the poem there, even if such an ending is premature and does not

⁴⁶ Knapp, 63-64.

fully elaborate his defense of women. While other copies in the main subgroup build to this point, too, they contextualize it within Cupid's counterargument to clerkly antifeminism (the tales of female virtue) in a sort of denouement.

Of the manuscripts in the main subgroup, Fairfax 16's copy of the *Letter* presents to its readers the stanza ordering that varies most wildly from Hoccleve's version in HM 744. This is because, as Frederick Furnivall commented in the first modern edition of the poem that was based on Fairfax, the manuscript's leaves were "shuffled like a pack of cards."⁴⁷ Although Furnivall does not report any further investigations into the nature of this shuffling and subsequent observers have only offered vague analyses of the pattern of the stanza ordering,⁴⁸ my own analysis of the structure of the quire in which the *Letter of Cupid* is written convinces me that the Fairfax stanza order was the result of a single physical binding error.⁴⁹ This means that the Fairfax scribe originally intended to reproduce the same structure for the poem as can be found in the rest of the main subgroup manuscripts.⁵⁰ I think this binding error, however, gives us the opportunity to see the differences between the version of the poem that the Fairfax scribe intended to

⁴⁷ Frederick J. Furnivall, introduction to *Hoccleve's Works*, EETS e.s. 61 (London, 1892), xliv: "the Fairfax man (or an earlier transcriber) had copied from a MS of which the leaves had been shuffled like a pack of cards."

⁴⁸ Such as Daniel Mosser in "A New Collation for Bodleian Digby MS 181," *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America* 82.4 (1988): 611 n.21, who comments that Fairfax's "disarrangement is far more chaotic ... than [an] orderly 'misplacement of leaves' hypothesis can account for. In Fairfax, the disarrangements seem to have progressed to groups of sevens and threes."

⁴⁹ See Appendix C.

⁵⁰ Ellis, 275, elaborating on Hammond, 337, uses the groupings of stanzas 17-19 with 30-6, 57-9 with 20-6, 37-9 with 50-6, and 27-9 with 40-9 as evidence that Fairfax 16 is derived from the archetype of Tanner 346, Bodley 638, and the rest of the main subgroup manuscripts. He does not, however, offer an explanation for how or why the Fairfax variant ordering of stanzas between these groupings could stem from the same archetype.

transmit to his audience and the version that his readers did, in fact, receive (including John Stanley, the first owner of the codex.)⁵¹

While the *scribal* rendering of Fairfax's copy of the poem ought to be considered equivalent, at least in intent, to those in the rest of the main subgroup manuscripts, its readers would have had access to a strange alternative reading of the poem. For example, the Fairfax Cupid's mimicry of the male slanderers in the initial complaint against men (stanzas 7-16) occurs between Cupid's reproof of Ovid and bitter men (stanzas 30-36) and his argument for the "happy fall" (stanzas 57-59), instead of in the midst of his critique of men's poor conduct. The resulting break in the poem's narrative is actually fairly minor in the progression from stanza 6 to 17, which follows the sentence "O feithful womman, ful of innocence, / Thow art betrayed by fals apparence" (*LofC* lines 41-2, stanza 6) with "Wherof procedeth this but of enue?" (113, stanza 17). The demonstrative pronoun in line 113 could find a reasonable antecedent in women's betrayal by false appearances rather than the innuendos of the "wretch's" speech in lines 99-112, stanzas 15-16. A passably logical transition would also occur between stanza 56 and 27 in which Cupid's defense of Eve against men who say she is more to blame for the Fall than Adam (stanza 56) could be understood as the example of the churlish male behavior Cupid decries in stanza 27 before he moves on to voice women's general complaint against clerks and their books.

⁵¹ The John Stanley who is believed to have owned and possibly even commissioned Fairfax 16 was a nobleman in the courts of Henry V and VI, who, for good service, was granted a manor at Anglesey in Wales where he was Sheriff from 1427-60. In London, he held posts as Serjeant of the Armoury in the Tower from 1431-60, Usher of the Chamber from 1440-55, and was a member of parliament for Surrey in the late 1440s. Due to the "cosmopolitan" appearance of Fairfax 16, Stanley is believed to have spent the majority of his time and energy at court. See John Norton-Smith, introduction to *Bodleian Library MS Fairfax 16* (London: Scholar Press, 1979), xiii.

The other shifts in stanza order caused by the binding error created much more noticeable narrative disjunctions. Cupid's boast in stanza 36 that even resistant clerks like Ovid are easily trapped by his power to influence lovers is followed by his description of women falling for false men by virtue of their kind hearts in stanza 7. Stanza 16's bawdy repartee between the two envious courtiers is followed by 57's description of the happy fall. Cupid's appeal to men's reason and respect for mothers in stanza 26 is followed with stanza 37's descriptions of the wicked women with whom Cupid intends to make his clerkly detractors fall in love. All of these passages might have created a sense of confusion for Fairfax's readers if they were reading closely and able to notice the non-sequiturs and contradictions in the flow of Cupid's argument. If Fairfax's copy of the *Letter* was performed aloud, however, it would have given the reader and audience a chance to explore and perhaps converse about the possible problems in the narrative flow.

The main subgroup manuscripts, thus, illustrate a very different narrative structure available to fifteenth-century readers of the *Letter* than what HM 744 suggests Hoccleve designed in his revision. Two sixteenth-century versions of the poem, however, have a much closer affiliation with the HM 744 stanza structure. The first printing of the poem, in William Thynne's 1532 edition of *Chaucer's Works*, and the only full sixteenth-century manuscript copy of it in National Library of Scotland Advocates' MS 1.1.6, known as the Bannatyne Manuscript—for its compiler, George Bannatyne, who self-dated it in 1568—have a stanza order that agrees with HM 744 through stanza 60. These versions maintain the rhetorical crux of Christine de Pizan's poem at the *Letter's* midpoint, but then replicate the main subgroup's narrative from 60-68: they consolidate the praise of Mary in stanzas 60, 63, and 64 before offering the "limited" praise of St.

Margaret in 62-3. Despite the way the later Bannatyne Manuscript agrees with Thynne's edition in terms of stanza order, Roger Ellis claims that Bannatyne's variant readings of the poem's language (which agree with some of the main subgroup instead of Thynne) indicate that Bannatyne did not necessarily base his copy of the *Letter* exclusively on the Thynne edition.⁵² These sixteenth-century witnesses to the poem seem to suggest that a whole other scribal tradition for the poem circulated independently of Hoccleve's attempted revision and the main subgroup. This tradition was possibly based on a copy related to the archetype of the main subgroup, before the disarrangement of the poem's stanzas, a copy that, in other words, might have been derived from Hoccleve's 1402 original.⁵³

If Thynne and Bannatyne are indeed derived from an independent scribal line that may have run parallel to that of the main subgroup's and HM 744, Hoccleve's revision of the original 1402 version of the poem in HM 744 would have been characterized not only by his attempt to reshape Cupid's voice with pronoun references, but also by an attempt to reshape the structure of the poem's ending. This restructuring involved surrounding the praise of St. Margaret (stanzas 61-2) with the praise of Mary (stanzas 60, 63-4), instead of placing Margaret's praise after those three Marian stanzas. This rewrite considerably softens the rhetoric of stanza 62 in its praise of Margaret. In this stanza, Cupid backpedals from his praise of a virgin saint in order to maintain his credibility as the

⁵² See Ellis, 275.

⁵³ While most editors tend to construe HM 744 as an authorial witness to the 1402 version, Ellis is the exception, suggesting in his introduction to Thomas Hoccleve, *'My Compleinte'* (Ellis, 40) that the non-holograph witnesses to the poem better reflect the 1402 original version. From this supposition, he suggests the possibility that Hoccleve revised the ordering of stanzas 60-68 in HM 744. He thinks this order could result from the author's accidental miscopying (Ellis, 276), but I think the authorial corrections and emendations throughout the poem show a level of attention to detail in HM 744 that indicates a purposeful reordering and revision.

sovereign ruler of lovers. First, he claims that he does not praise Margaret because of her chastity (*LofC* 428-30), then he affirms that he will always wage war on celibacy (*LofC* 431-2). Lastly, he clarifies that he commends her instead for her loving and constant heart (*LofC* 432-4). By following this sequence of statements with two stanzas that return to praising the loving and constant heart of the Virgin Mary as the example for women to emulate, his reasons for praising St. Margaret *despite* her chastity seem clearer (treating chastity here more as an unfortunate but excusable side effect of virtue). The alternate and perhaps original 1402 version reflected by the Thynne edition and Bannatyne manuscript, includes a transition directly from stanza 62 to 65 (in which Cupid describes how his praise of women does not extend to flattery). This version thus offers readers a rhetorical sequence that emphasizes Cupid's caveats to his praise of women over his actual praise. This could leave the reader with a slightly exaggerated sense of the limitations of Cupid's defense of women. The HM 744 revision of the poem's ending may have been another part of Hoccleve's editorial solution for the problem of misreading that he complains about in his *Dialogue*, emphasizing Cupid's praise of women over the exceptions to that praise.

This discussion of the motivation behind Hoccleve's pronoun editing and stanza reorganization in HM 744 raises key questions about the two copies of the *Letter* that most closely replicate HM 744's version of the poem: Trinity College Cambridge MS R.3.20, a miscellaneous manuscript written by John Shirley in the mid-fifteenth century,⁵⁴ and Oxford University Bodleian Library MS Arch Selden B.24, which was

⁵⁴ See Margaret Connolly, *John Shirley: Book Production and the Noble Household in Fifteenth-Century England* (Brookfield, VT: Ashgate, 1998), 69-101. Shirley's manuscript is unique in attributing the *Letter of Cupid* to Hoccleve (see n. 77 below for a transcription from Cambridge, T.C. MS R.3.20, p.116).

assembled closer to the end of the fifteenth century.⁵⁵ Despite being the only manuscript copies of the poem to fully agree with HM 744's stanza order, neither Shirley's copy nor the Selden manuscript preserve Hoccleve's pluralizing editorial work. This could suggest that Hoccleve produced the HM 744 copy from an archetype in which he had already altered the ordering of the last eight stanzas of the poem but not the pronouns, and that that archetype may have circulated independently. Alternatively, if the archetype Shirley and Selden's scribe used descended from HM 744 directly, they may have re-edited Cupid's self-referential pronouns back to the first person singular for several possible reasons. Among these reasons, (1) they may have noted that it was one pagan deity speaking, who served much more in the capacity as an allegorical character than as a regal figure, and thus did not require the honorific, (2) they may have not perceived the need to distinguish the pronouns representing the speaker of the poem from the voices present in their manuscripts, due possibly to their own anthologizing or miscellaneous compilation premises, and/or (3) they may have simply found the *pluralis maiestatis* confusing. All the non-holograph witnesses to singular pronouns, though, lend credence to the possibility that Hoccleve's original 1402 version of the poem, which had circulated for close to twenty years prior to his inscription of HM 744, had a singular pronoun voicing structure that looked much more like the surviving non-holograph copies than HM 744. HM 744 was a rhetorically motivated revision of that version.

Ultimately, despite the Shirley and Selden manuscripts, Bannatyne's and Thynne's witness to the text of the *Letter* and the prevalence of the main subgroup

⁵⁵ See Julia Boffey and A.S.G. Edwards, introduction to *The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer and the Kingis Quair: A Facsimile of Bodleian Library, Oxford, MS Arch. Selden B. 24* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1997), 3-4, 21-3.

version testify to the vitality of the pre-HM 744 version of the text—even after the HM 744 rewrite was produced. These eight copies indicate that the manuscript tradition of the poem as it existed prior to the early 1420s may have presented alternative narratives and rhetoric for the poem that caused the misreadings Hoccleve complains about in the *Dialogue*. Even though the Shirley and Selden manuscripts reproduce HM 744’s revised stanza order, they also suggest that the HM 744 rewrite of Cupid’s narrative voicing failed to fully “catch on.” We should not dismiss these variant readings of the poem as “erroneous,” though. Rather, we should consider them for what they are: the most common fifteenth and sixteenth-century impressions of the poem we know about—that may, actually, represent the form of the poem before Hoccleve rewrote it. The “shuffled” interpretations of the poem each of these versions offered to readers must be thought to have had in their own time as much authority as we grant to HM 744 today.

The Success of the *Letter*’s Displacement of Authority

The evidence of stanza variation and plural-pronoun usage in the manuscript and early print tradition of the *Letter* suggests that the specific revision Hoccleve was trying to circulate with HM 744 may not have caught on; he ended up having little control over the *Letter*’s reception and readers’ interpretations of the poem’s argument. The compilation contexts in which non-holograph textual witnesses situate the poem, however, do suggest that some of the motivations behind Hoccleve’s revision may nevertheless have been addressed over time. Namely, these manuscripts and Thynne’s early edition of the *Letter* address Hoccleve’s desire to connect the authority he claimed for himself in the poem with the authority of his predecessors and contemporaries, by

situating the poem in collections of texts by these authors. These collections show Hoccleve's authority being displaced more and more over time by readers' impressions of the *Letter's* generic and thematic affiliations. Even if they significantly altered the narrative of the *Letter*, each book preserved, transmitted, and successively amplified Hoccleve's goal of setting out parameters for English readers to recognize their role in authorizing and reconstructing the extensive intertextuality of their native poetry. While HM 744 shows Hoccleve attempting to redirect impressions of his authority in the poem by contextualizing it in a collection of his own different works, the other manuscripts and editions of the *Letter* contextualize the poem within a growing tradition of popular, courtly, and largely secular poetry. Eventually this grafted the authority of Hoccleve and other individual writers onto that of Chaucer, as their works came to be identified in relation to those of Chaucer's with which they were compiled.

Although Hoccleve alludes to Chaucer in the *Letter* and treats Chaucer as the cornerstone of English poetics throughout his career, HM 744 as a whole shows Hoccleve trying to offer his readers a comprehensive package of readings from his own oeuvre. HM 744 and another Huntington Library holograph manuscript of Hoccleve's (HM 111) have been characterized by John Bowers as the first "authorized collected works"⁵⁶ by a writer in English. While David Watt has convincingly challenged Bowers' postulation that the two manuscripts were originally intended to be bound together,⁵⁷ both volumes have paratextual features that resemble anthologies, especially explanatory titles in

⁵⁶ John Bowers, "Hoccleve's Huntington Holographs: The First 'Collected Poems' in English," *Fifteenth Century Studies* 15 (1989): 27-51.

⁵⁷ David Watt, "'I This Book Shal Make': Thomas Hoccleve's Self-Publication and Book Production," *Leeds Studies in English* 34 (2003): 133-60.

French. As I describe in Chapter 2, these titles are meant to guide a reader through each volume of poems with a sense of their coherence and, for occasional lyrics written for distant earlier events, with a sense of what their original reading performance contexts might have been. Hoccleve's compilation of the *Letter* together with these occasional poems suggests an attempt to recast his poem's narrative so that audiences will understand it to be limited to specific fictional and rhetorical contexts.

The *Letter of Cupid* is positioned in HM 744 following a sequence of devotional lyrics, one each addressed to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and then three to the Virgin Mary—the last of which Hoccleve notes in the margin as having been commissioned by or for a man named Thomas Marleburgh.⁵⁸ The *Letter* is then followed by a few secular poems, including a ballade to King Henry V commemorating his victory in France,⁵⁹ three humorous roundels, and a partial copy of *Lerne to Dye*, which, as I note in Chapter 2, also survives in a third Hoccleve autograph manuscript as the central poem in his *Series*.⁶⁰ *Lerne to Dye* is introduced prior to its title with the couplet: “After our song our mirthe & our gladnesse / heer folwith a lesson of heuynesse” (fol. 52v). This note

⁵⁸ This poem, known in HM 744 as “Item de beata virgine” or the “Story of the Monk who clad the virgin by singing Ave Maria,” also appears as a Canterbury Tales continuation known as the “Ploughman’s Tale.” See John M. Bowers, ed., *The Canterbury Tales: Fifteenth-Century Continuations and Additions* (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 1992), 23-32. The note on fol. 36r identifying Marleburgh is “Ce feust faite a linstance de . T. marleburgh.” Marleburgh was stationer in London, and warden of the Limners and Textwriters Guild in 1423. See *Hoccl Facs*, xvi, and Jerome Mitchell and A.I. Doyle’s additional notes to Furnivall, 272.

⁵⁹ The full title on fol. 50v is “Cest balade ensuante feust faite pur la bien venue du tresnoble Roy . H. le .V^t . que dieu pardoint hors du Royialme de France / cest assauoir sa dareine venue.”

⁶⁰ The truncation of this copy of *Lerne to Dye* appears to have occurred in Hoccleve’s manuscript prior to binding with HM 744’s other half. This poem’s most common context is as the fourth poem of the *Series*, and its appearance in Durham U.L. MS Cosin V.iii.9 makes it the only medieval English poem known to survive in more than one autograph copy. See John Bowers, “Hoccleve’s Two Copies of Lerne to Dye: Implications for Textual Critics,” *Papers of the Bibliographic Society of America* 83.4 (1989): 437-72. See also John A. Burrow, “Excursus I: The Two Holographs of *Lerne to Dye*,” in *Thomas Hoccleve’s Complaint and Dialogue*, EETS o.s. 313 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 111-118.

suggests that Hoccleve's compilation is organized around a central juxtaposition. The three nouns of the couplet's first line not only refer to the roundels, but also cast all the preceding texts in a light of mirthful celebration: showcasing the poet's joyful parallel duties to engage in religious devotion and courtly discourse on love (i.e. the *Letter*), as well as his festive responsibility to honor his patrons and entertain their audiences. All these life-affirming poetic expressions are then contrasted with the solemn story of a young man who is made to experience a vision of what it is like to die, in which he realizes how his enjoyment of life has left him ill prepared to meet such a fate.

The whole of Hoccleve's holograph portion of HM 744, then, can be read as making a case to its audience to keep a "lesson of heaviness" in mind to balance out life's joy and activity. The *Letter*'s placement in the mirthful part of this thematic arc underscores how it is meant to be taken lightly, as does its position between two poems marked as having been written for contexts outside the present collection. These bookends emphasize the *Letter*'s occasional nature, inscribed in the fiction of the *Letter*'s concluding remarks that Cupid's decree is "writen in th'eir the lusty monthe of may / In our paleys, wher many a milion, / louers treewe han habitacioun / the yeer of grace ioieful and iocunde / M CCCC and secunde" (*LofC* 472-6).⁶¹ This marks it as a text written while the poet-scribe himself was in the peak of life, offered here twenty years later in HM 744 as an example of the joys of thinking about love, tempered with the knowledge that such joys are temporary.

⁶¹ See n. 28, above for my discussion of Hoccleve's possible emendation of the date in his revision of HM 744.

It is difficult to discern comparable programmatic themes in the collections of texts compiled with the *Letter* in most other fifteenth-century manuscripts because they are miscellanies of English and sometimes French verse from numerous sources. The miscellaneous contexts, however, suggest that before and after Hoccleve's revision and recontextualization in HM 744, the poem may have circulated on its own as a booklet or in smaller assemblages of courtly or occasional verse.⁶² The likelihood of such booklet production is supported in part by the overlap between the contents of these manuscript miscellanies. In particular, the *Letter* is anthologized with courtly verse that includes poems by Chaucer, John Clanvowe, and John Lydgate. Of the eight fifteenth-century manuscripts that contain the *Letter* besides HM 744, six contain a copy of Chaucer's *Parliament of Fowls* or *Anelida and Arcite*, and five contain Chaucer's *Complaint of Venus*, Chaucer's *Legend of Good Women* (at least in part), Clanvowe's *The Cuckoo and the Nightingale* (also known as *The Boke of Cupid*), or Lydgate's *Complaint of the Black Knight* (also known as *The Complaint of a Lover's Life*).⁶³

These compilation similarities have caused editors and critics to treat these manuscripts as anthologies of secular, courtly entertainment and formularies of love complaints.⁶⁴ Within this paradigm, though, the manuscripts each exhibit their own idiosyncratic emphases. In the closely related Oxford Group (Bodley, Tanner, and

⁶² See Ralph Hanna III, "Booklets in Medieval Manuscripts: Further Considerations," in *Pursuing History: Middle English Manuscripts and their Texts* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 1996), 21-34, for his explanation of the various forms of booklet production in which short late Middle English poems like the *Letter* circulated.

⁶³ See Appendix D for a complete list of the overlapping contents and a summary of the non-overlapping contents of these eight fifteenth-century manuscripts.

⁶⁴ Especially with regards to Findern, see Beadle and Owen, xii, and Robbins, 611. With regards to Fairfax, see Wendy Scase, *Literature and Complaint*, 184.

Fairfax), for instance, Bodley is distinguished from Tanner with the inclusion of a few extra complaint lyrics.⁶⁵ The absence of the *Complaint of Venus* in Bodley also gives its compilation a slightly darker tone about worldly events and fortune than Tanner's.⁶⁶ Fairfax, in turn, is much more expansive than Tanner and Bodley—suggesting a more ambitious, even encyclopedic, collecting motivation. While Fairfax has most of the same contents as both Tanner and Bodley,⁶⁷ it also has the majority of Chaucer's short poems that they lack as well as an additional occasional poem by Hoccleve, Richard Roos' *La Belle Dame sans Merci*, several Lydgate poems, and a group of short lyrics and ballads in its final booklet, including one by Charles d'Orleans.

The Findern manuscript and John Shirley's manuscript (Cambridge, Trinity College, MS R.3.20) follow broad collecting impulses similar to Fairfax but with different overarching themes. Findern is predominantly constructed as an assembly of complaints, situating the *Letter of Cupid* among numerous anonymous lovers' complaints as well as the Chaucer, Lydgate, Roos, and Clanvowe texts it shares with the Oxford Group manuscripts.⁶⁸ Unlike any of the other manuscripts in which the *Letter* survives, this compilation theme also includes John Gower, or at least excerpts from several segments of the *Confessio Amantis* that appear as stand-alone poems throughout the volume. Shirley's manuscript, on the other hand, excludes Gower, but compiles the

⁶⁵ Viz. the anonymous *Complaint D'Amours* and *Complaint Against Hope*, and even Chaucer's *Fortune*. These three poems are also in Fairfax 16.

⁶⁶ Pamela Robinson suggests that *Complaint of Venus* could originally have been included in a missing quire at the beginning of Bodley, in her introduction to *Manuscript Bodley 638: A Facsimile*, ed. Pamela Robinson (Norman, OK: Pilgrim Books, 1982), xxxvi.

⁶⁷ All but two of Tanner's and all but one of Bodley's texts appear in Fairfax. See Hammond, 338, and Appendix D, Figure D.1.

⁶⁸ Kate Harris, "The Origins and Make-Up of Cambridge University Library Ff.1.6," 308.

Letter and a few of Chaucer's complaints and lyrics along with a massive collection of Lydgate's complaints, mumblings, occasional verse, and hagiography (especially including the *Legend of St. Margaret*, the exemplum of female virtue heralded at the end of the *Letter*). This suggests that both the *Letter* and even certain works of Chaucer's appealed to Shirley in this volume as examples of Lydgatean themes and styles.

In contrast to these extensive collections, Durham and Digby offer a different sort of compiling strategy. The hallmark of their strategy is the inclusion of Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*, which has elements of the courtly love complaint genre in its account of Troilus's love sickness, but presents a more epic narrative accompaniment for the *Letter*. The pairing of *Troilus* with the *Letter* is especially emphasized in Durham because the *Letter* follows a complete copy of *Troilus*, leaving room for only two short, anonymous lyrics on either side of the pair. Thematically, the *Letter* seems to be offered as a conciliatory gesture to women in this pairing, counterbalancing the epic known for depicting Criseyde's ultimate betrayal of her lover. Whereas the variants in the text of Durham's *Letter* align most closely with those in Digby's,⁶⁹ Digby's arrangement of the two poems creates quite a different dynamic, especially because the manuscript opens

⁶⁹ A.I. Doyle and A.J. Piper, in *Medieval Manuscripts in the Durham University Library* (Durham, U.K.: Durham University Libraries), <http://www.dur.ac.uk/library/asc/theme/medmss/apvii13/>, suggest that this manuscript's provenance and handwriting dates from the mid-fifteenth century, and that its variant readings of the poem most closely align with Digby, align occasionally, but less frequently, with Tanner, and only rarely align with Findern. They imply that Durham could be Digby's source or at least represent an independent copy from a shared source, and that Durham or the Durham-Digby source possibly, in turn, could represent the source for the "disarranged" version of the *Letter* that got transmitted throughout the whole main subgroup of its manuscripts. They also berate the Durham copyist for a high level of carelessness that they suggest could explain the displacement of stanzas throughout the whole main subgroup, if Durham was indeed their source for the *Letter*. This source relationship could also be supported by David Arbesú's revision of the *Parlement of Foules* stemma, with which he suggests the same order of independence between Digby and Tanner as Doyle and Piper. See Arbesú, "Geoffrey Chaucer's *Parlement of Foules: A New Codicological Stemma of the Hammond Manuscripts*," *SELIM* 11 (2001-2): 66.

with the *Letter*, ends with an incomplete copy of *Troilus*,⁷⁰ and contains seven other items that offer contrasting perspectives on gender roles in love, most of which also occur in Findern and the Oxford Group.⁷¹ *Anelida and Arcite*, for example, offers a complaint about love from the perspective of a woman, while Lydgate's *Complaint of the Black Knight* is a lament about being a male lover that is largely aligned with the male bitterness about love and women in *Troilus*. In that the *Letter* is followed in Digby by both Lydgate's *Pain and Sorrow of Evil Marriage* (which also appears near the end of Findern) and the short poem *Miserere Mei Deus* that laments the deceit of women that brought sin into the world, one of the central arguments Cupid makes in Hoccleve's epistle about women's inherent virtues gets summarily rebutted.

If Digby and Durham represent different general compiling strategies than Findern, Shirley, and the Oxford Group, the Selden manuscript seems to combine them all. Selden is an interesting case study that shows how the *Letter*, with its usual Chaucer and Lydgate accompaniments, gets transmitted late in the fifteenth century along with emerging "Scottish Chaucerian" verse. Probably written for Lord Henry Sinclair who was a fairly distant grand-nephew of King James I of Scotland,⁷² the manuscript is particularly known for preserving the only surviving manuscript witness to James I's

⁷⁰ Digby's *Troilus*, however, is written in a separate hand on a different paper stock than the rest of the volume—suggesting that *Troilus* was added to the volume at a later date—or at least that it existed separately from the rest of the texts (possibly in its own booklet) before getting bound together with them. This allows us to describe two separate readers or at least two separate collecting impulses at work in the volume (the one copying Hoccleve along with Lydgate and Chaucer, and the other adding *Troilus* as a unit to the end of this copyist's work). See Daniel Mosser, "A new collation for Bodleian Digby MS 181," *The Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America* 82.4 (1988): 605.

⁷¹ Viz. Chaucer's *Parlement of Foules* and *Anelida and Arcite*, which also exist in Fairfax, Bodley, Tanner and Findern, and Lydgate's *Complaint of the Black Knight* (also known as *A Complaint for a Lover's Life*), which exists in the first three but not in Findern

⁷² Julia Boffey and A.S.G. Edwards, introduction to *The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer and the Kingis Quair: A Facsimile of Bodleian Library, Oxford, MS Arch. Selden B. 24*, 21-22.

poem, *The King's Quair*, and promotes a reading of the *Letter* that strongly emphasizes the cautiousness in Hoccleve's defense of women.

The copy of the *Letter* in Selden at first seems to be out of place in its position in the last fifth of the manuscript. While some of the Chaucer and Chaucerian texts usually compiled with it, and even Hoccleve's own poem, *Mother of God* (though it and several other poems are misattributed to Chaucer here), constitute the first 190 folios, the section containing the *Letter* follows this section and is written by the manuscript's second contributing scribe. Thematically, though, the second scribe's placement of the *Letter* between *The King's Quair* and three anonymous love complaints also unique to this manuscript makes it very much at home.⁷³ The *Quair*, after offering up a prayer for the souls of Chaucer and John Gower in a narrative frame, chronicles a Boethian dream vision its narrator has during a long imprisonment that, when he turns it into a poem, gives him hope to pursue the love of a woman in the real world who is able to free him through marriage. The narrator ends with a prayer to Venus to help other men who are true lovers as she helped him, echoing the gesture at the end of the *Letter* when Cupid welcomes "louers trewe" (*LofC* 474) to his court. The first of the love complaints, "The Lay of Sorrow," shares the *Letter's* sympathies for women wronged in love by offering

⁷³ According to Boffey and Edwards, introduction to *Facsimile*, 6, the second scribe's stint in MS Arch Selden B.24 includes fols. 209v-228v. See also Boffey and Edwards, "Bodleian MS Arch. Selden. B. 24 and the 'Scotticization' of Middle English Verse," in *Rewriting Chaucer: Culture, Authority, and the Idea of the Authentic Text, 1400-1602*, eds. Thomas Pendergrast and Barbara Kline (Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press, 1999), 166-185, in which Boffey and Edwards suggest that the manuscript was assembled gradually over a number of years and that the second scribe's portion is the latest and adheres to a different set of collection principles than the first. The *Letter* is on fols. 211v-217r. For descriptions of the King's Quair and the poems that follow the *Letter*, see the introductions preceding *The Kingis Quair* and *The Lufaris Complaynt* in *The Kingis Quair and Other Prison Poems*, eds. Linne Mooney and Mary-Jo Arn, TEAMS (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 2005).

the voice of a female speaker who mourns being deserted by an inconstant lover.⁷⁴ The next piece, “The Lufaris Complaynt,” is a much more conventional complaint by a man bemoaning his unrequited love. It resembles the kind of over-blown wooing critiqued so heavily in the *Letter* for its endemic insincerity, but to bolster his claim of earnestness, the speaker enlists Chaucer for support:

And gif that worthy Chaucere wer on lyve,
Quhilk was of poetis the honour and the glore,
Myn unresty turment to discrive,
He wald have put it rather in memore
Than ony othir that he wrate before:
The accident is trew and more pitouse
Than was the double sorou of Troilus. (*Lufaris Complaynt* 29-35)⁷⁵

Here the speaker claims that if Chaucer were still alive, he would have wanted to write his complaint, and that it would make an even more pitiful and true complaint than the story of Troilus—which also happens to be the first text in the Selden volume. The last of the love complaints is known as “The Quare of Jelusy” which purports to take up women’s complaints against their untrue lovers, but, like Cupid in Hoccleve’s *Letter*, the defense the speaker offers against jealous slanderers seems to imply certain veiled criticism of women as well.⁷⁶

The grouping of the *Letter* with *The King’s Quair* and these other poems, then, forms a small corpus of complaints that would give its readers the impression of their shared advocacy for the plights of women in love and the plights of the honorable lovers

⁷⁴ See Kenneth G. Wilson, “The Lay of Sorrow and the Lufaris Complaynt: An Edition,” *Speculum* 29.4 (1954): 708-26.

⁷⁵ Quoted from *The Lufaris Complaynt*, in *The Kingis Quair and Other Prison Poems*, eds. Linne Mooney and Mary-Jo Arn, TEAMS (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 2005), 191-7.

⁷⁶ Instances of such potential criticism in this poem and the history of scholarly opinions about them are surveyed by Dana Symons in her introduction to *The Quare of Jelusy*, in *Chaucerian Dream Visions and Complaints*, ed. Dana Symons, TEAMS (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 2004), 201-14.

who truly love them. Selden's second scribe, thus, seems to have had a complex understanding of the *Letter* that was sympathetic with the cautiously pro-woman stance Hoccleve's narrator claims for the *Letter* in the *Dialogue with a Friend*. The separation of the *Quair*, the *Letter*, and the *Lufaris Complaynt*, which all specifically cite Chaucer or his works, from Chaucer texts in the manuscript places less emphasis on the texts' incorporation into the Chaucer canon, and greater emphasis on how that canon can help establish the credibility of texts with related themes and providing an anchor in English for the intertextuality of the courtly love complaint genre.

Despite the different contextualizations for the *Letter* provided by each of these fifteenth-century manuscripts, the common thread in all of them is that they associate the *Letter* closely with a tradition of courtly Chaucer and Chaucerian texts. This association becomes much more significant than Hoccleve's authority in the poem over time. And while Selden draws an implicit distinction between Chaucer's works and Chauceriana with its organization and contributions by two scribes (despite misattributing some poems by Hoccleve and other writers to Chaucer), the only fifteenth-century manuscript that explicitly attributes the *Letter* to any specific writer is John Shirley's. In both a prefatory title and running titles, Shirley identifies Hoccleve by his day job as a clerk of the Privy Seal and by his dual roles in both compiling and "making" the text.⁷⁷ Since Shirley attributes all other texts in the volume to their known authors in a similar manner, this identification of Hoccleve aids the scheme of his Lydgatean collection—and in fact

⁷⁷ Shirley's prefatory title for the poem on page 116 is: "Nowe here folowing / beginneþe a lytel traytis made and compyled by Thomas Occeleue of þoffice of þe priue seel specifying þe maners and þe convisacons boope of men and wymmen / conuersantes in þis lytell yle of Albyone." His running titles vary but generally offer the label: "a gode parable made by Occeleue," split across the facing pages of the poem. (Transcribed from Cambridge microfilm.)

makes it seem more comprehensive, by naming the poets who he thinks complement Lydgate's works. The *Letter's* association with the Chaucerian canon, however, was continued and regularized in the sixteenth-century by William Thynne in his 1532 edition of *Chaucer's Works*. The three printings of Thynne's edition and John Stow's edition that followed them closely in 1561, however, seem to have convinced some readers in the sixteenth century and later that the poem was actually written by Chaucer.

Among these readers was George Bannatyne, who likely used the Thynne or Stow edition of Chaucer's works as a source for his version of the *Letter* in National Library of Scotland Advocates' MS 1.1.6. His response to the contextualization offered by the edition was to categorize and classify many of its texts along with key Scottish and English works of the fourteenth through sixteenth centuries for the use of his readers.⁷⁸ Echoing the same sort of thematic juxtaposition of works in many of the earlier manuscripts that contain the *Letter*, but on a much grander scale, Bannatyne places the *Letter* in a section titled "Ballatis of the Prayiss of Wemen, and to the Reproche of vicious men," which follows a section of "Ballatis againis Evill Wemen."⁷⁹ In this large anthologizing project, Bannatyne accepts Thynne's (or Stow's) implicit attribution of the *Letter* to Chaucer, and reproduces it explicitly. At the bottom of folio 274v, upon which the *Letter* concludes, Bannatyne inscribes "Finis quod Chauseir" to signal its relationship to the nine other poems distributed throughout his volume that he attributes to Chaucer in

⁷⁸ Bannatyne actively addresses his audience several times in the manuscript: including explanatory titles and short verses describing the themes of following material at each section transition, an attempt at an index, and a final original verse titled "The Wryttar to the Redare" (fol. 375r) which dates the compilation to 1568.

⁷⁹ For a transcription of the manuscript in modern typeface, see *The Bannatyne Manuscript: Compiled by George Bannatyne, 1568*. 4 vols., eds. George Panton, J.B. Murdock, David Laing (Glasgow: Hunterian Club, 1896), 765, 782. Facsimile edition by Denton Fox and William A. Ringler, eds., *The Bannatyne Manuscript: National Library of Scotland Advocates' MS.1.1.6* (London: Scolar Press, 1980).

the same manner (and to distinguish them from poems he cites as “quod” by Dunbar, Henryson, and others). As Fox and Ringler point out in the introduction to their facsimile edition of the manuscript, the attribution of the *Letter* and all but two of the rest of the manuscript’s Chaucer attribution are erroneous, probably representing Bannatyne’s assumptions about authorship derived from his use of a Thynne edition.⁸⁰

The implied attribution of the *Letter* to Chaucer in the early editions, its tradition of association with the Chaucer canon, and its thematic and generic affinities with Chaucer’s *Works*, continued to affect readers’ impression of Hoccleve’s authorship of and authority claimed in the *Letter* into the eighteenth century. Even though Chaucer editions that reprinted the *Letter* began to record Hoccleve’s authorship of the poem in the seventeenth century, George Sewell translated it in 1718 as “The Proclamation of Cupid: or, A Defence of Women, A Poem from Chaucer.” This poem, originally issued as a pamphlet and then reprinted in a collection of Sewell’s own poetry in 1720, shows how Sewell shares the Augustan interest in translating and republishing the works of old poets for modern audiences. Sewell seems to consider his work to be adding to the Chaucer canon that writers like John Dryden and John Urry were already modernizing. As the title suggests, Sewell firmly believes the *Letter* to be Chaucer’s, but in his preface he acknowledges “that in some Editions of *Chaucer* this Work is attributed to *Thomas Occleve*, a Scholar of his, and is said to have bore this Title, *A Treatise of the Conversation of Men and Women in the little Island of Albion*, But this in all Probability

⁸⁰ See Fox and Ringler, prefatory material to *The Bannatyne Manuscript: National Library of Scotland Advocates’ MS.1.1.6*, xli. Some of Bannatyne’s misattributed Chaucer texts include *The Remedy of Love*, *A Praise of Women*, and *The Complaint of the Black Knight*, all printed for the first time by Thynne in 1532.

is a mere Fiction.”⁸¹ This demonstrates Sewell’s familiarity with Thomas Speght’s editions of Chaucer that first identified the poem to be Hoccleve’s in print,⁸² but as an additional guarantee of Chaucer’s authority for the *Letter*, Sewell also cites John Leland’s catalog of English literature, which had been published in 1709.⁸³ Sewell also attempts to add support for the claim of Chaucer authorship by arguing for the poem’s intertextual and thematic affiliations with Chaucer’s texts. He remarks: “*Chaucer* refers to his *Legend of good Women* in this Poem, and to the *Romaunt of the Rose*.... I know the common Story of *Occleve’s* Recantation [i.e. likely the critique of women readers in the *Dialogue*], but I believe this Authority enough to overbalance that; besides that *Chaucer* in his *Praise of Women* has much the same Thoughts, and goes upon the same Topicks as in this *Letter of Cupid’s*.”⁸⁴ Although *A Praise of Women* is not Chaucer’s,⁸⁵ we see Sewell attempting to establish the grounds here to read the *Letter* as if it were Chaucer’s despite claims to the contrary and despite how he, himself, adapts it to suit his own

⁸¹ George Sewell, “The Proclamation of Cupid: or, A Defence of Women. A Poem from Chaucer,” in Fenster/Erlor, 222-23.

⁸² Thomas Speght’s edition of Chaucer, London 1687, p. 552 (which reprinted the same attribution from his 1602 edition, STC 5080), offers the following explanation beneath the title for the *Letter* (EEBO image no. 296): “This Letter was made by *Thomas Occleve* of the / Office of the privy Seale, *Chaucers* Scholar; / and was by him termed, A Treatise of the Con- / versation of Men and Women in the little / Island of *Albion*; which got him such hatred / among the Gentlewomen of the Court, that he / was enforced to recant in that Book of his, cal- / led *Planitas propius*.” This “Book” containing his recantation of the *Letter* probably refers to the *Dialogue*. Speght may also have known of John Shirley’s manuscript, or may have connected the *Letter* with the several copies of the *Series* and *Regiment of Princes* that circulated (sometimes together) through the fifteenth century.

⁸³ John Leland was the first antiquarian to perform a survey of English libraries before Henry VIII’s dissolution of the monasteries in the 1530s and 40s, but his results were only first printed in 1709 as *Commentarii de scriptoribus britannicis* (by Anthony Hall). See James Simpson, *Reform and Cultural Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), especially chapter 1: “The Melancholy of John Leland and the Beginnings of English History.”

⁸⁴ Sewell, 223.

⁸⁵ Its authorship is unknown, but it is included in the seventeenth-century Speght editions: either under the title “how all thing in this world is variable, saue women onely” or “A pleasant ballade of women.”

readers' linguistic tastes and abilities. Sewell's motivation for doing this is to show his audiences, who would have been familiar with contemporary satires and complaints about love relations such as Alexander Pope's *Rape of the Lock*, the historical consistency of the follies people commit in love:

If we wanted a Proof of this we might find one in the following Piece; where we may see that our Ancestors play'd the same Game over before us which we are now playing, and our Children will act when we are gone. *Men* were as falsely promising, *Women* as unwarily complying *three hundred Years* ago as they are at present; *Lyes* and *Oaths* were then as Staple a Commodity in *Love's-Merchandise* as now, and the Mutual Recriminations of the Sexes to a Tittle as many and as true in the Days we call Barbarous, as in this more refined and polite Age. ... *Chaucer* knew the State of the Case between the Sexes as well as the best Poets of any Age and in this Piece has plainly shewn what a Master he was of Human Nature.⁸⁶

Chaucer's renown as the standard-bearer for medieval English poetry about love and gender relations would have helped Sewell set up his own authority for this translation much more than Hoccleve, who was known only by his relationship to Chaucer.

Chaucer's status as a "master of human nature" allows Sewell to position himself as the mediator of "ancient" wisdom, while also positioning the culture of the medieval period as a foil for the refinements and advancements of eighteenth-century "modernity."

Sewell's argument for Chaucer authorship, thus, also makes a strong claim for the masterful artistic quality of the *Letter*: a testament to Hoccleve's success at subsuming his own authority into the text's Chaucerian style and traditional themes.

Sewell demonstrates how the association of the *Letter of Cupid* with Chaucer was so compelling for readers who sought to connect to and broaden the roots of English literary history, that later readers could act opposite to the readers Hoccleve corrects in

⁸⁶ Sewell, 222.

the *Dialogue with a Friend* and exclude Hoccleve's authority from it altogether. Rather ironically, Hoccleve's significantly diminished authority in the poem's history of reproductions shows how successfully he was able to disburse authority to his readers with the poem's stylistic and thematic design. While Sewell may have insisted that he was translating a hitherto misattributed Chaucer poem, he was actually continuing the project of audience-conscious adaptation that Hoccleve initiated with the original 1402 version of the *Letter* and in which he continued to participate in the HM 744 version. The ancestors' "game" that Sewell presents to his readers from his anthropological posture is not only concerned with the follies of genteel lovers like he claims, but also extends to the essential intertextual games of adaptation that proliferate among authors and readers of lover's complaints.

The *Letter of Cupid* reveals Hoccleve's attempt to adapt Christine's *Epistre au dieu d'Amour* for an English audience in light of the inherently unstable claims of authority in its genre that foreground the reader's role in constructing authority out of intertextuality. The various readings of Hoccleve's poem evinced by scribal variants and compilation contexts reveal how readers encountered the *Letter* and participated in its adaptation to changing contexts. New copies of the poem shifted the relationship of Hoccleve's text to popular discourse on women's places in the traditions of courtly love and shifted Hoccleve's relationship to Chaucer in the first representations of a canon of English vernacular Literature. But while Hoccleve explicitly expresses his frustration in the *Dialogue with a Friend* at how audiences wrest control from him over his intentions for the text, he does not just acquiesce to that control like his agreement to translate the *Tale of Jereslaus' Wife* into the *Series* might suggest. Rather, in his new version of the

Letter in HM 744 he responds to his audience's interpretations by reperforming and adapting his poem, himself, in a context of his own choosing.

Conclusion **Hoccleve in the House of Rumor**

As I have argued in this dissertation, Thomas Hoccleve's poetics can best be understood by examining the ways in which he actively involves readers in the construction of literary authority in his texts. Especially in *La Male Regle*, the *Regiment of Princes*, and the frame narrative of the *Series*, Hoccleve makes the processes of reading and writing into some of his principal subjects. For these poems as well as his shorter occasional ballads, he designs manuscripts that encourage readers to behave as intervocally connected performers, enacting relationships between his texts and their social, material, and intertextual contexts. Particularly from the manuscripts that survive in his own hand, we can conclude that Hoccleve placed himself on the same level as his audiences in establishing the literary authority in his works. His reactions to the readers who credited him with more authority than he desired in the *Letter of Cupid* only amplify this conclusion. Likewise, in terms of all his poems that survive in holograph manuscripts, we can discern the effect of these reactions on his style when we interpret his texts as his own reading performances.

Understanding the dynamics of audience reception that Hoccleve factored into his poetics allows me to forge new links between the methodologies of literary historicism and book history. This approach can account for the impact of Hoccleve's revisions and manuscript designs on the meanings of his verse, and also suggests a new framework within which we might describe the development of English poetics after Chaucer. Most modern critics of fifteenth-century English poetry describe the period by how it facilitates our understanding of a shift between medieval and Renaissance writers' styles. Scholars,

thus, have cast this period variously: as a period of derivative imitations of Chaucer and earlier medieval forms supplanted by early-modern innovations,¹ as a period of free play with these existing poetic forms that narrowed to suit the tastes of Tudor audiences,² or as a period of formal experimentation in which writers haphazardly tested out styles and genres that eventually crystallized in the later era.³ While these narratives each interpret the stylistic relationships that formed between writers, their predecessors, and successors as the fifteenth century progressed, few account carefully for the activities of readers, or the influence of the manuscript medium on writers.⁴ As a consequence, few treat fifteenth-century English poetry on its own stylistic terms.

These stylistic terms find their clearest and earliest articulation in Hoccleve's poetics of reading. The strategies he devised to collaborate with his readers in manuscript performances show him to be a more innovative figure in the development of English literature than most scholars have granted. While critics no longer treat Hoccleve exclusively as Chaucer's epigone—an historical status Hoccleve courted with his own veneration of Chaucer—most consider his main creative contributions to English poetry

¹ David Wallace, general preface to *CHMEL*, xxi-ii, assesses that, after Chaucer, innovativeness decays in response to a Lancastrian influence that, while expanding readership, made readers and writers more superficial than before 1400.

² James Simpson, in *Reform and Cultural Revolution*, *The Oxford English Literary History*, Vol. 2: 1350-1547 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), suggests that the sixteenth century's narrowing impulses of humanism and Reformation reveal the fifteenth century to be a last wave of creative diversity in early English poetic forms and purposes.

³ See for example A.C. Spearing, *Medieval to Renaissance in English Poetry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985).

⁴ One notable exception is Daniel Wakelin's study of the influence of humanist reading practices on English literature that he claims began in the early-to-mid fifteenth century. Wakelin suggests that the roots of early-modern humanism can be found guiding reading practices in the fifteenth century, detectable in how readers acted on a sense of freedom to make meaning in their texts themselves by studying and imitating classical literature and opening up contemporary literature to traditional philology and rhetorical analysis. See Wakelin, *Humanism, Reading, and English Literature 1430-1530* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

to be the self-conscious, socially conscious, and politically conscious topics that he incorporated into styles and genres derived from Chaucer and other English and French writers.⁵ I argue, however, that Hoccleve's more significant poetic innovation was to resolve key problems with depicting and interpreting literary authority in late-medieval culture. These problems were first identified by Hoccleve's predecessors, especially Chaucer, but Hoccleve presented fifteenth-century English writers and readers the first solutions, factoring readers into the content and material forms of his works.

As Chaucer vividly depicts in the *House of Fame*, late medieval culture was characterized by myriad sources of vernacular and classical authority that were multiplied by translations, adaptations, and compilations. Eventually, mass-reproduced printed editions of texts expanded this multitude further. The range of variation among possible sources for any given text, and the difficulty interpreters encountered when choosing which texts to read and trust inspire the *House of Fame*'s central themes. In Book I, when the narrator reads the story of Aeneas' betrayal of Dido in the stained glass windows of a temple, he encourages his own reader to seek out longer versions of the tale of her suicide in either Virgil's *Aeneid* or Ovid's *Heroides*—despite the differences in each author's point of view.⁶ In Book II, this theme of pluralism expands by means of a talking eagle who, while carrying the narrator to the palace of the goddess of Fame, explains how

⁵ See for example Albrecht Classen, "Hoccleve's Independence from Chaucer: A Study of Poetic Emancipation," *Fifteenth Century Studies* 16 (1990): 59-81; Charles Blyth, "Thomas Hoccleve's Other Master," *Mediaevalia* 16 (1990): 349-59; Derek Pearsall, "Hoccleve's *Regement of Princes*: The Poetics of Self-Representation," *Speculum* 69.2 (1994): 386-410; John A. Burrow, "Hoccleve and the Middle French Poets," in *The Long Fifteenth Century: Essays for Douglas Gray*, eds. Helen Cooper and Sally Mapstone (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), 35-49.

⁶ See *Hoff* lines 375-382. Laurel Amtower, "Authorizing the Reader in Chaucer's *House of Fame*," *Philological Quarterly* 79.3 (2000): 283, claims that Chaucer directs his reader to both potential sources to model ideal reading practices for his audience, showing how reading must sort through multiple source texts that can cut across genres.

voices and texts are “heard” by the goddess in order to achieve, or fail to achieve, renown:

Everych ayr another stereth
More and more, and speche up bereth,
Or voys, or noyse, or word, or soun,
Ay through multiplicacioun,
Til hyt be ate Hous of Fame –
Take yt in ernest or in game. (*HofF* 817-22)

The eagle describes how, despite Lady Fame’s role as the sole judge of each voice she hears, all sounds multiply upon themselves in ever broadening circles in order to have a chance to reach Fame’s ears.⁷ The eagle emphasizes “That every speche of every man, / As y the telle first began, / Moveth up on high to pace / Kyndely to Fames place” (*HofF* 849-52). Anyone who speaks or writes—anyone engaged in the act of performing a text—has a chance to reach an authoritative level of fame. As Lesley Kordecki notes, the way this dramatically expands access to *auctorite* is underscored by the fact that the dreamer, himself, treats the eagle as speaking with authority.⁸

In the third book of the poem, Chaucer illustrates the problems interpreters face when trying to determine true sources of authority among such a large number of candidates, but unlike Hoccleve, offers no solutions for these interpretive dilemmas. As the dreamer tours Fame’s palace, he witnesses classical and contemporary authors

⁷ The use of the actual word “multiplicacioun” in this context is significant. The *MED* and *OED* do not have records for the word that extend any earlier than c.1350—and most are from the 1380s or later, with this example from the *House of Fame* one of the earliest among them. There is one record s.v. “multiplien” in a verb form from a 1250 MS thought to reflect a 1150 composition, and a couple examples from a 1340s MS, but still, Chaucer is using it in this way at this time when it is just starting to be quite common parlance. One other use of the word prior to 1400 recorded in the *MED* is in John Trevisa’s translation of Bartholomew Anglicus. Katherine Zieman in “Chaucer’s Voys” *Representations* 60 (1997): 91, n. 38, suggests that this text’s account of polyphony in music may have influenced Chaucer’s understanding of voices and sounds.

⁸ Lesley Kordecki, “Subversive Voices in the *House of Fame*,” *Exemplaria* 11.1 (1999): 75.

heckling each other from atop pillars built to honor their notoriety as historians and poets. The dreamer describes how some feel they deserve more fame than their contemporaries: “...I gan ful wel espie, / Betwex hem was a litil envye. / Oon seyde that Omer made lyes, / Feynyng in hys poetries” (*HofF* 1475-8). Nevertheless, Chaucer puts them all in the same room on columns of the same height because to him, they all hold authority. With this leveling effect, Chaucer exhibits the pointlessness of trying to gauge the different magnitudes of authority writers could have, or any one source of truth. He further underscores this futility by emphasizing the arbitrariness of Fame’s decrees that the dreamer witnesses in the throne room at the end of the authorial colonnade. Nine groups of supplicants approach the goddess for judgments, but the dreamer remarks that he cannot figure out her reasons for each reward of fame or infamy:

And somme of hem she graunted sone,
 And somme she werned wel and faire,
 And some she graunted the contrarie
 Of her axying outterly.
 But thus I seye yow, trewely,
 What her cause was, y nyste.
 For of this folk ful wel y wiste
 They hadde good fame ech deserved,
 Although they were dyversly served (*HofF* 1494-1502)

Fame’s actions mimic the ways readers choose texts to read and choose writers to consider authorities, regardless of intertexts, alternate forms, and (sometimes) merit. She also parodies readers’ varying interpretations of texts that sometimes work at cross-purposes. Fame assesses each petitioner and construes the authority of each almost entirely on a whim. By portraying Fame as a fickle but otherwise normal reader, Chaucer juxtaposes her pronouncements with the narrator’s interpretive, readerly opinions about who among her subjects deserves renown that he holds despite her decisions.

While Chaucer exposes how problematic it is for interpreters to pinpoint any one text or person as a stable source of authority, he only hints at the importance of readers navigating textual multiplicities for themselves and weighing the values of competing claims to authority. He also never resolves the problem of how a writer can depict or claim authority for himself or herself, because he never quite addresses the effects readers' authority can have on writers and the texts they produce. This is particularly apparent in the final scene of the poem, when the dreamer descends to the basement of Fame's palace, into the labyrinthine House of Rumor, to seek tellers of "newe tydynges...of love or suche thynges glade" (*HofF* 1886-9). Here, untested claims to fame are made by all sorts of newsbearers and gossipmongers appearing before the dreamer "alle on an hepe," as they "clamben up on other faste/...And troden fast on others heles" (*HofF* 2149, 2151-3). They all pile up before bursting through the porous walls of the house to be famed or defamed, disseminated or forgotten by the goddess above. From these "impressions of swirling multiplicity,"⁹ emerges a figure Chaucer introduces only as "a man of gret auctorite" (*HofF* 2158). This introduction, however, is the last line of the poem, cutting off the dream narrative abruptly, leaving the dreamer still in his dream, and leaving this man silent, featureless, and anonymous. While numerous conjectures have been made about who this man might represent or how he might complete the narrative of the poem,¹⁰ and all three surviving manuscript versions of the poem leave

⁹ Kay Stevenson uses this phrase to describe Chaucer's attempt to survey and mix together the best and worst expressions of humanity in this scene. See Stevenson, "The Endings of Chaucer's *House of Fame*," *English Studies* 59.1 (1978): 15,

¹⁰ See *ibid.*, 10-26, for a survey of these conjectures.

space for additional concluding verses,¹¹ many modern critics of the poem consider it to be quite complete thematically. These critics treat the very ambiguity of the man's identity and role in the narrative as a key part of the poem's meaning.¹² I agree that the man's silence and anonymity are crucial elements of the poem's meditations on the nature of fame. The "man of gret auctorite" cannot speak without risking that his voice may blend in with the undesirable voices of the rabble-rousers surrounding him. He cannot be defined as any one person with authority without risking that his identity may be denounced or lost in the often-arbitrary judgments of others.

An important point that I must emphasize, however, is that the man of authority is *almost indistinguishable* from the cacophony of common chitchat surrounding him. He is but one member of the population in the House of Rumor and, since nothing is revealed about his appearance and he does not speak before the poem's abrupt ending, it seems that almost any figure in this crowd could stand in for him. This interchangeability corroborates Chaucer's plural vision of authority throughout the poem. Authority cannot reside in any single individual or voice, but rather in a collective of individuals that are connected to each other and who can stand in for one another. Although the "man of gret auctorite" seems to rise out of and transcend the scrum the dreamer witnesses in the last

¹¹ The three manuscripts of the *House of Fame*, are Bodleian Library, MSS Fairfax 16, f. 154v-183v, and Bodley 638, f. 141v-193v, and Cambridge, Magdalene College MS Pepys 2006, pp. 91-114. Bodley leaves over 2 pages blank before the beginning of its next text, Pepys leaves almost 6, and in Fairfax there is enough space in which a later hand adds a dozen lines to the poem to quickly conclude it like a conventional dream poem. Note, though, that this appending scribe does not alter the final vagueness of the man of authority—suggesting that he possibly recognized the thematic significance of this ambiguity. For a transcription of the verse added to Fairfax 16, see Stevenson, 11. For a facsimile see John Norton-Smith, ed., *Bodleian Library MS Fairfax 16* (London: Scholar Press, 1979), f. 183v.

¹² See for example Stevenson, 12-13, 25-6. See also Jacqueline T. Miller, "The Writing on the Wall: Authority and Authorship in Chaucer's *House of Fame*" *Chaucer Review* 17.2 (1982): 95-115, who argues that the ending of the *House of Fame* opens up a space for an individual voice to assume the position of authority while remaining unchallengeable because, in the man's anonymity, such a voice is only "suggested, and never tested" (p. 112).

dozen lines of the poem, his separate identity never fully materializes because it cannot. He seems in some ways to represent the figurehead of the multiplicity of tidings-tellers. Readers of Chaucer, such as Hoccleve, would have recognized the quandary in casting any one man in the House of Rumor as a source of “gret auctorite.”

The utter lack of specificity in the poem about this figure of authority and his place in such a clamorous environment suggests that he is meant to leave the reader asking questions, involving the reader directly in determining the poem’s meaning. As Laurel Amtower argues, the apparent void at the end of the poem encourages readers to mimic the text’s narrative, comparing and analyzing the poem’s multiple parts, mirroring what the dreamer does with multiple texts in order to sort out competing claims for authority.¹³ These readers, who in effect become authorities themselves, are precisely the readers Hoccleve inherits from Chaucer. But rather than conjuring up a paradoxical figure (a source of authority with no voice or identity) to gesture to the authority that these readers bring to the textual and vocal multiplicities in their culture, Hoccleve attends to the real ways that readers, himself among them, affected texts.

In this dissertation, I have shown that Hoccleve foregrounds the effects his own reading practices have on his texts, connecting readers to his sources and demonstrating that the task of writing requires him to read as they do. He places his readers in the center of his fictions as he incorporates their activities into the material layout of his books. Hoccleve even responds to readers with both criticism and self-correction, rereading, revising, and recontextualizing his works in self-inscribed compilations. He essentially

¹³ Laurel Amtower, “Authorizing the Reader,” 274-5. For a similar claim about the interpretive independence readers must assert to understand the poem’s multiple conflicting perspectives, see also Katherine H. Terrell, “Reallocation of Hermeneutic Authority in Chaucer’s *House of Fame*,” *Chaucer Review* 31.3 (1997): 279-90.

shows audiences how they, themselves, are arbiters of fame and figures of authority in their efforts to understand, interpret, and transmit his texts. Hoccleve casts these audiences alongside himself in reading performances that proliferate in each new manuscript version of his verse.

Future Directions: Skelton in the Court of Fame

My readings of Hoccleve and manuscripts of his works demonstrate the foundational role that this one author and scribe played in developing a poetic style for his era grounded in readers' authority. I see this work as a starting point, though, for a larger project examining how Hoccleve's innovative poetic solution for establishing and depicting literary authority in reader-centered textual culture continued to be used throughout a literary period we might describe as the "long" fifteenth century to include early Tudor writers. John Skelton, for example, appropriates and adapts a poetics of reading in his oeuvre at the dawn of the sixteenth century. Skelton often explores the nature of his own authority in the context of his classical and medieval literary heritage.¹⁴ He also expresses a strong awareness of his readers and their relationships to the materiality of his texts, positioning his poetry for multiple audiences during his life in both manuscript and early printed media.¹⁵ One of Skelton's works that demonstrates this, for example, is his poem, the *Garland of Laurel*.¹⁶ As Hoccleve does in his oeuvre,

¹⁴ For a comprehensive analysis of Skelton's construction of authority in his works see Jane Griffiths, *John Skelton and Poetic Authority: Defining the Liberty to Speak* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2006).

¹⁵ See A.S.G. Edwards, "Skelton's English Poems in Manuscript and Print," in *John Skelton and Early Modern Culture: Papers Honoring Robert S. Kinsman*, ed. David Carlson (Tempe: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2008), 85-97.

¹⁶ I cite the poem from its most recent edition: John Skelton, *The Book of the Laurel*, ed. F.W. Brownlow (Newark, DE: University of Delaware Press, 1990). The standard edition of Skelton's collected works is

Skelton responds in the *Garland* to the problematic nature of authority in a textual culture characterized by multiple forms and unpredictable readers. Rather than the implicit nature of Hoccleve's response to the *House of Fame*, however, Skelton explicitly and self-consciously echoes Chaucer's poem.¹⁷

The *Garland of Laurel* is a dream poem in which Skelton's authorial persona submits to an examination by the Queen of Fame in order to gain admission into her court of laureate poets. As he is being led to the place of his assessment, depicted as a hall in the house of Skelton's real-life patroness, Elisabeth Howard née Tylney, Countess of Surrey,¹⁸ he encounters many famous poets and orators from medieval and classical history paying tribute to Phoebus Apollo. Notably, he meets and walks a pace with Gower, Chaucer, and Lydgate—who each welcome him into their company, compliment him for his poetic accomplishments, and offer to advocate on his behalf in Fame's court.¹⁹ In his hearing before the Queen of Fame, Skelton's persona clarifies that whatever fame and authority she awards him should be credited to the people who read his works, since his poems are the product of his service to his patrons. As a prelude to the hearing, he addresses individual dedicatory verses to the Countess and each of ten

John Skelton: The Complete English Poems, ed. John Scattergood (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1983), in which the poem is titled "Garlande or Chapelet of Laurell," 312-58.

¹⁷ For an analysis of the *Garland's* relationship to Chaucer's works and of Skelton's contemporaries who characterized themselves in relation to Chaucer see Julia Boffey, "'Withdrawe your Hande': The Lyrics of *The Garland of Laurel* from Manuscript to Print," 135-46, and Antony Hasler, "Cultural Intersections: Skelton, Barclay, Hawes, André," 76-84, both in *John Skelton and Early Modern Culture: Papers Honoring Robert S. Kinsman*, ed. David Carlson (Tempe: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2008).

¹⁸ See F.W. Brownlow, "Introduction I," in Skelton, *The Book of the Laurel*, 32.

¹⁹ Seth Lerer, in *Chaucer and His Readers: Imagining the Author in Late-Medieval England* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 177, argues that Skelton exploits Chaucer primarily for his citability and the authority his name lent him. I argue that, in addition to this, in this imagined meeting, Skelton models the appreciative readership that he seeks for his work by placing these famous English poetic innovators in his audience.

women of her household who attend the hearing and are also depicted as the weavers of the laurel garland with which Skelton is to be crowned if Fame rules in his favor. Fame's notary then performs a reading from a gorgeously bound illuminated manuscript that lists and describes the entire catalog of Skelton's poetry. After listening to the recital of most of this catalog, Skelton's persona expresses his doubts that the record will be enough to warrant an award of good fame and makes a final appeal to be left in peaceful anonymity and have his name struck from Fame's register. This appeal is denied, however, and when the notary mentions the last item in the list, the book of "The Laurelle" itself (line 1497), the court erupts in triumphant cheers to show their affirmation of Skelton's fame even before the Queen of Fame assents to it by shutting the book and waking the dreamer.

Along with this fictional depiction of his audiences granting him notoriety, we can see Skelton revising his text over time for new, non-imaginary audiences between the copy in British Library MS Cotton Vitellius E.X., which attests to a manuscript tradition circulating since approximately 1495,²⁰ and the 1523 printed edition.²¹ The latter offers an expanded list of Skelton's works that could not have been included in a 1495 original version of the poem as well as a response, in the form of 114 new lines amending the ending to Skelton's poem *Phyllyp Sparowe*, to readers who took offense at the mock elegy.²² The 1523 edition also includes a rededication in a supplementary envoi that

²⁰ See Brownlow, "Introduction I," 30-6, for an explanation of this date for the original version of the poem. In the heavily damaged Cotton MS, the *Garland* appears in partial form on f.208r-225v.

²¹ See John Skelton, *A ryght delectable tratyse vpon a goodly Garlande or Chapelet of Laurell* (published by Richard Faukes, 1523), STC 22610, EEBO.

²² Scattergood, in the "Table of Dates" in his edition and in his specific notes for *Phyllyp Sparowe*, dates the poem's original composition to approximately 1505. See *John Skelton: The Complete English Poems*, 17 and 405-6.

famously demonstrates Skelton's reconciliation with Cardinal Wolsey after having viciously lambasted him in poems written prior to the edition.²³

Additionally, the 1523 edition alters the layout of the dedications to the Countess of Surrey and her female attendants, visually deemphasizing their significance in the poem. While the edition condenses the text of each of the dedicatory verses into as little space as they can take up on a page while still maintaining each one's distinct verse form, the earlier manuscript presents each verse on its own folio (see Figure 4.1). In the manuscript each verse is formatted as a lyric individually addressed to its named dedicatee, offering each noble lady a page of her own in the poem. While the manuscript cannot be taken as a direct indication of the visual format of Skelton's presentation copy of the poem, it may suggest that the manuscript tradition in which the poem originally circulated used this pagination scheme to encourage Skelton's original audiences to feel a personal connection to it.²⁴ Even for later manuscript readers or readers echoing Fame's notary by performing it aloud, the folio demarcation of the dedicatory verses would emphasize each dedication's independent form and create natural pauses between them. By means of these pauses, readers might take more time to call to mind Skelton's real patronesses honored in the verses (or at least to recognize the existence of the honorific).

²³ See Greg Walker, *John Skelton and the Politics of the 1520s* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), for a thorough discussion of the relationship between the series of satires, the revised *Garland*, and Skelton's political alliances against and then with Wolsey in the late 1510s and early 1520s.

²⁴ For an account of the well-informed but amateur readers of Skelton's manuscripts like MS Cotton Vitellius E.X. see John Scattergood, "The London Manuscripts of John Skelton's Poems," in *Regionalism in Late Medieval Manuscripts and Texts: Essays celebrating the publication of A Linguistic Atlas of Late Mediaeval English*, ed. Felicity Riddy (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1991), 171-182.

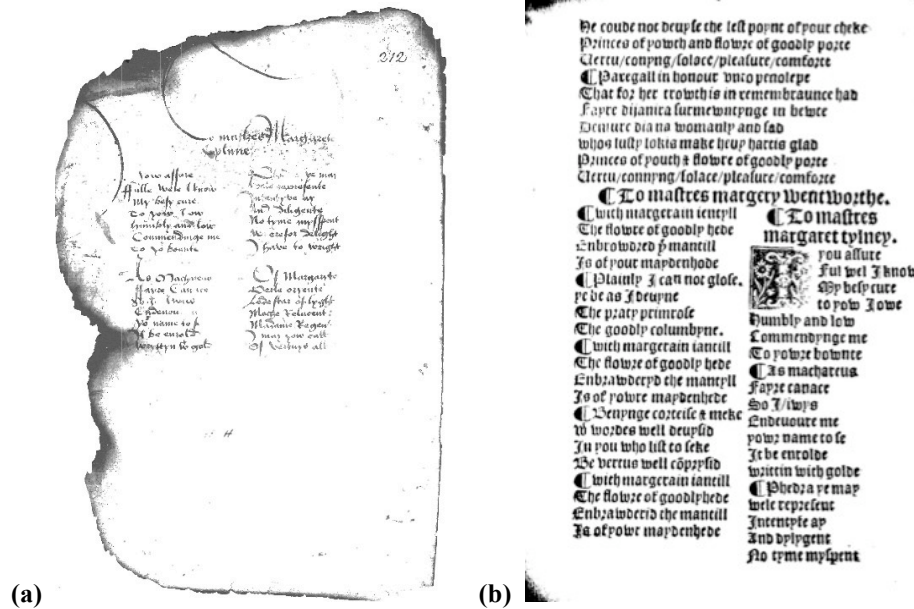


Figure 4.1: The layout of Skelton’s dedicatory lyric “To Mastres Margarete Tylney” (*Garland* 926ff): (a) British Library, MS Cotton Vitellius E.X, f.220r; (b) 1523 printed edition by Richard Faukes, STC 22610, Sig. D2v²⁵

Like Hoccleve, Skelton seems hyper-aware of his audiences’ material relationship to his texts and the authority audiences can wield over them. His bold but still reverent descriptions of his service to those audiences reveal him tapping into the same sense of collaborative literary authority that characterizes Hoccleve’s poetry. This commonality suggests a possible relationship between two poets who are not usually associated with each other except in terms of their status as writers working at the opposite ends of the fifteenth century.²⁶ Perhaps, then, characterizations of fifteenth-century English literature

²⁵ (a) Image from British Library microfilm. (b) Image (detail) from *EEBO*, s.v. “STC 22610,” image 17 of 27.

²⁶ Robert Meyer-Lee, in *Poets and Power from Chaucer to Wyatt* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), specifically places Skelton in his chapter titled “The Trace of Lydgate” in which he argues that the selfhood Skelton constructs throughout his works in relation to royal authority builds upon the efforts of Lydgate, not Hoccleve. Meyer-Lee contrasts Skelton’s self-amplifying laureate identity to Hoccleve’s fragmented portrayals of his own poetic identity, but does not consider the way the poetic identities of both poets get refracted through the audiences of their texts and their texts’ material forms. I argue that Hoccleve’s and Skelton’s awareness of this refraction suggests a much greater similarity in their styles than Meyer-Lee allows. For a preliminary examination of the stylistic relationship between Hoccleve and

should not be limited to the poetics of previous generations, or to descriptions of the early modern poetic styles that its major writers incubated. Rather, writers in the “long” fifteenth-century accounted for the authorizing activities of readers and scribes, and readers in the period performed such authorizations in textual communities shared with these writers. We should thus characterize the poetics of the fifteenth century as having its own distinctly collaborative, perhaps even Hocclevean, style.

Skelton at the level of poetic voice, see David Lawton, “Voice after Arundel,” (paper presented at the conference “After Arundel: Religious Writing in Fifteenth-Century England,” Oxford, U.K., April 2009). Lawton argues that both poets “colonize” a Boethian-styled voice in some of their more pronounced acts of self-licensing in their poems.

Appendix A: Transcription of British Library MS Harley 4826, f. 83r

(A title page inserted before the *Regiment of Princes* by the appreciating observer who rebound the MS in 1632. Superscripts are represented as such, brackets indicate an approximate transcription, and abbreviations are not expanded—except for macrons, which are indicated with an italicized *m*.)

Pitsans de Claris Anglia Scriptoribus
Cap: 747

Thomas Occleff, Occlene, or Hoccleff, borne in England of Noble Parents, was sometyme y^e scoller of Geoffrey Chaucer & a diligent Imitator of him in his studyes. A great louer of Poesie & Diligent in Polishing y^e elegancy of o^r tounge w^{ch} hee much adorned. hee wrott many things in English Meter, Ingeniously & conceitedly: & in prose both Latin & English neatly, clearly & Eloquently Thomas WALSingham in his Cronicle doth not obscurely taxe him of Heresy, how truely I know not; let others Iudge; * I Fyned no reason to condemme him vpon one mannes testimony, or deprive him of due prayse, by rasing him out of y^e Catholick [c]atalogue; for y^e workes by him published deserue to haue his name remembred of posterity. Hee wrott, besides these present, diuerse other worrkes (some whereof y^e sayd Pitsans mentioneth) hee flourished about y^e yeare of Grace 1410 Henry the fourthe beeing king of England, buto whose sonne Henry Prince of wales (afterwardes king Henry y^e fifte) he dedicateth y^e treatise called de Regimine Principis w^{ch} happily, next buto y^e goodnes of God, might giue occasion to y^e strange mutation w^{ch} happened in y^e lyfe & manners of y^t Prince, from deboshed, & vicious, to Heroicall & virtuous. how-so euer it weare, certaynely y^e worke is well worthy to bee taken from obscurity; and placed before y^e eyes of Kinges and Princes.

*se pag: 7:

Appendix B: Collations of the *Letter of Cupid's* First-Person Pronouns¹

Figure B.1: Cupid's plural first-person pronouns in Huntington Library, MS HM 744 written over erasure (bipartite 'w', etc.)

(The inclusion of lines with 'our' and 'us' in this table are based on my analysis of the MS facsimile—their status as being written over erasure needs to be confirmed by observing the texture of the original MS.)

HM 744 loc. (line #)	Line in HM 744	Collation of 1 st -pers. pronouns
*Fol. 44v, l.11(l. 221)	For betwixt vs & my lady nature	vs] me (all= Ba Bo Di Du F Fi S Sh T Th)
Fol. 45r, l. 3 (l. 234)	<u>Pat</u> sodeynly We felle can hir boost	We] y (T), I (all others)
l. 10 (l. 241)	So can We mennes hertes sette on fyre	We] I (all)
l. 13 (l. 244)	Our sharpe strokes how sore they smyte	Our] My (all)
†Fol. 46r, l. 15(l. 288)	Nat can We seen ne in our / wit <u>conpre</u> hende	We] I (all)
Fol. 47r, l. 1 (l. 316)	In our legende of martirs may men fynde	our] þe (Sh), my (all others)
Fol. 48r, l. 8 (l. 365)	Wherfore We seyn this good woman Eeue	We] I (all)
Fol. 48v, l. 2 (l. 380)	Vnnethes any dar We saufly seye	We] I (all)
l. 5 (l. 383)	This haue in mynde sires / We yow preye	We] I (all)
Fol. 49r, l. 12 (l. 411)	But this We Witen verrailily / <u>pat</u> shee	We Witen] I sey (all)
Fol. 49v, l. 3 (l. 423)	Thy martyrdom / ne may We nat foryete	We] I (all)
l. 8 (l. 428)	But vndirstondith / We <u>comm</u> ende hir noght	We] pat I (Sh), I (all others)
l. 11 (l. 431)	For ay We werreie ageyn chastitee	ay We werreie] ever werrey (Bo, F), ever I werrey (Di, Du, S, Sh, T), ever wer I (Ba, Th)

¹ Manuscript sigla are listed below Fig. B.3. Previous partial collations in the textual notes of editions were used as guides: *Hoccleve's Works*, ed. Furnivall, p.72-91, for Bo, Di, F, T, and S; *ibid*, p.249-53 for HM 744, F, and Sh; *'My Compleinte' and Other Poems*, ed. Ellis, p.280 for all MSS, but limited to lines 219, 221, 225, 411, 434, and 446; Fenster and Erlor eds., *Poems of Cupid*, p. 205 n.7. HM 744, Ba, Bo, F, Fi, S, T, were checked in their respective facsimile editions, cited in the above chapter. Di and F were consulted in person. Th was viewed via EEBO. Du and Sh were viewed in images scanned from microfilm. The excerpts of the poem in British Library Additional MS 17492 (the Devonshire Manuscript) do not contain any of the lines relevant to this collation. Lines listed in two tables are marked with * and †. The rubrics "all" or "all others" include Fi, except for these lines not extant in it: 197-203, 274-343, and 414-476, and Di except for its missing lines: 1-70. Spelling variation is only noted in collation when substantive.

Figure B.2: Cupid’s plural first-person pronouns in HM 744 **not** written over erasure (round-form ‘w’, etc.) or substituted

(In lines 351, 366, and 403, Cupid uses ‘our’ to refer to Adam, Eve, and Mary, as our father, our first mother, and our lady, respectively. These are conventional uses meant to refer to both speaker and audience—and are therefore not included here.)

Fol. 39v, l. 7 (l. 7)	Been soggettes / greetynge senden we	we] no difference in other MSS
l. 8 (l. 8)	In general / we wole <u>pa</u> t yee knowe	we] no difference in other MSS
l. 10 (l. 10)	Swich seed of conpleynte in our audience	our] no difference in other MSS
l. 13 (l. 13)	<u>Pa</u> t it oure eres greeueth for to heere	oure] no difference in other MSS
Fol. 44v, l. 9 (l. 219)	Of al hir wrong wrytyng do we no cure	we] I (all)
l.15 (l. 225)	Whilom ful many of hem were in our cheyne	our] my (all)
l. 21 (l. 231)	For to rebelle ageyn vs and our lawes	vs] me (all) our] my (all)
Fol. 45r, l. 2 (l. 233)	Swich is the force of oure impressioun	oure] my (S), myn (all others)
l. 7 (l. 238)	If <u>pa</u> t vs list / for al <u>pa</u> t they can muse	vs] me (all)
l. 11 (l. 242)	And as vs list / him sende ioie & teene	vs] me (all)
[†] Fol. 46r, l. 15 (l. 288)	Nat can We seen ne in our / wit conprehende	our] my (all)
Fol. 49v, l.14 (l. 434)	Dryue out of ---- remembrance we nat may	Dryue out of ----] Dryve out of my (Bo Di Du F S T), Out of (Sh) we] dryve I (Sh), I (all others)
Fol. 50r, l. 5 (l. 446)	And therefore it may preeued be ther by	it ... by] I may wel preve herby (F Bo Sh), I may preved wel therby (Di),
Fol. 50v, l. 1 (l. 463)	Than thus we wolen conclude and deffyne	we] yee (Sh), no difference in others
l. 2 (l. 464)	We yow commaunde our Ministres echoon	we] no difference in other MSS our] no difference in other MSS
l. 3 (l. 465)	<u>Pa</u> t reedy been to oure heestes enclyne	oure] no difference besides spelling in other MSS
l. 4 (l. 466)	<u>Pa</u> t of tho men vntreewe / our rebel foon	our] no difference in other MSS
l. 6 (l. 468)	Voide hem our Court / & banisse hem for euere	hem our] thame 3our (S), no difference in others
l.11 (l. 474)	In our Paleys / wher many a million	our] no difference in other MSS

Figure B.3: Instances where Cupid's first-person pronoun in HM 744 is singular

(Hoccleve neglects or chooses not to correct these instances to we/our.)

Fol. 41v, l. 7 (l. 91)	Wommen be waar of mennes sleighte / I rede	l] no difference in other MSS
Fol. 43r, l. 20 (l. 167)	I see wel mennes owne falsenesse	l] no difference in other MSS
Fol. 44r, l. 17 (l. 206)	Where in I trowe / he dide greet folie	l] no difference in other MSS
*Fol. 44v, l.11(l. 221)	Betwixt vs & my lady nature	my] no difference in other MSS
Fol. 46r, l. 8 (l. 281)	To Maistir John de Meun / as I suppose	l] no difference in other MSS
Fol. 47r, l. 14 (l. 329)	And some of hem shuln smerte / I vndirtake	l] no difference in other MSS

Manuscript Sigla:

Ba - National Library of Scotland Advocates' MS 1.1.6 (Bannatyne)
Bo - Oxford Bodleian Library MS Bodley 638
Di - Oxford Bodleian Library MS Digby 181
Du - Durham University Library Cosin V.ii.13
F - Oxford Bodleian Library MS Fairfax 16
Fi - Cambridge University Library MS 1.6 (Findern)
HM 744 - Huntington Library MS HM 744
S - Oxford Bodleian Library MS Arch Selden B.24
Sh - Trinity College Cambridge MS R.3.20 (Shirley)
T - Oxford Bodleian Library MS Tanner 346
Th - William Thynne's 1532 edition of *Chaucer's Works*

Appendix C: The *Letter of Cupid* Stanza Disarrangement in MS Fairfax 16

The *Letter of Cupid* in Bodleian Library MS Fairfax 16 is written on folios 40r-47r, such that only the first stanza appears on 40r, and only stanzas 67-68 appear on 47r. Since the manuscript's sixth quire of 8-folios is made up of folios 39-46, this causes the *Letter's* last two stanzas to overlap the seventh quire of the codex.² As the sixth quire is bound, folio 39 and 46 share the outermost bifolium, 40 and 45 share the second, 41 and 44 share the third, and 42 and 43 share the innermost. The stanzas of the poem are arranged on the bifolia as illustrated in the table below. It is clear from this layout that if the innermost bifolium (the 4th leaf) was swapped with the third (the 3rd leaf), the poem's stanzas would be ordered exactly like the rest of the Oxford Group and the main subgroup of the *Letter's* witnesses: stanzas 2-6 on fol. 40v would be facing 7-11 on the new 41r, stanzas 12-16 on the new 41v would flow right into 17-19 and 30-31 on the new 42r facing-page, etc., to result in the order: 1-19, 30-39, 50-59, 20-29, 40-49, 60, 63-64, 61-62, 65-66.

1 st leaf (outermost)	(39r) other verse	(39v) other verse	(46r) 47-49, 60, 63	(46v) 64, 61-2, 65-66
2 nd leaf	(40r) 1	(40v) 2-6	(45r) 27-29, 40-41	(45v) 42-46
3 rd leaf	(41r) 17-19, 30-31	(41v) 32-36	(44r) 37-39, 50-51	(44v) 52-56
4 th leaf (innermost)	(42r) 7-11	(42v) 12-16	(43r) 57-59, 20-21	(43v) 22-26

Figure C.1: The arrangement of *Letter of Cupid* stanzas in quire 6⁸ of Fairfax 16

Thus, while the pages of this quire in Fairfax 16 *were* shuffled, resulting in a frustrating collation problem for editors reading the poem, its cause was not due to so dramatically careless a scribe as Furnivall, Hammond, or Mosser accuse. Probably due to

² For the quire-structure of Fairfax 16, see John Norton-Smith's table in his introduction to the facsimile ed. of the MS, p.xi.

a misnumbered signature, Fairfax's assembler merely compounded the "misplaced bifolia" problem transmitted via the archetype of the *Letter*'s main subgroup, by misplacing another one. If the scribe of the poem was responsible for the quire signatures, his mistake may have been simply adding an extra 'i' or 'j' to the wrong leaf—otherwise he may not have been culpable at all.³ Since binding practices were often quite far-removed in time from the process of actually inscribing booklets of manuscript pages, there was a greater chance that the arrangement of such pages could fall into disarray.⁴

³ Norton-Smith, *ibid.*, lists the quire signatures for 6⁸ as a consistent di-diiij, suggesting a misnumbering by the signature writer – though, I cannot verify these from the printing in the facsimile and did not notice them when viewing the actual MS. Norton-Smith does mention how most signatures have been obscured by page wear and page-cropping.

⁴ See Ralph Hanna III, "Booklets in Medieval Manuscripts: Further Considerations," in his *Pursuing History: Middle English Manuscripts and their Texts* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 1996), 21-34.

Appendix D: Compared Contents of 15th-Century *Letter of Cupid* MSS

Figure D.1: Overlapping Contents of 15th-Century *Letter of Cupid* MSS

(Arranged in order of most to least common texts compiled with the ‘Letter.’)

Texts		Manuscripts (in estimated chronological order from left to right)								
		IMEV #	Du	Di	Bo	T	F	Fi	Sh	S
Chaucer - <i>Anelida and Arcite</i>	3670		X	X	X	X	X	X		
Chaucer - <i>Complaint of Venus</i>	3542				X	X	X	X	X	X
Chaucer - <i>Parliament of Fowls</i>	3412		X	X	X	X	X			X
Chaucer - <i>Legend of Good Women</i>	100				X	X	X	X		X
Clanvowe - <i>The Cuckoo and Nightingale (Boke of Cupid)</i>	3361				X	X	X	X		X
Lydgate - <i>Complaint of Black Knight</i>	1507		X	X	X	X				X
Chaucer - <i>Complaint of Mars</i>	913					X	X		X	X
Chaucer - <i>Complaint Unto Pity</i>	2756				X	X	X	X		
Chaucer - <i>Book of the Duchess</i>	1306				X	X	X			
Chaucer - <i>Fortune</i>	3661				X		X		X	
Chaucer - <i>Troilus and Criseyde</i>	3327	X	X							X
Chaucer - <i>Truth*</i>	809						X		X	X
Lydgate - <i>Temple of Glass</i>	851				X	X	X			
Anon. - <i>A Lover's Plaint</i>	402					X		X		
Anon. - <i>Chaunce of the Dyse</i>	803				X		X			
Anon. - <i>Complaint Against Hope</i>	370				X		X			
Anon. - <i>Complaint D'amours</i>	1388				X		X			
Anon. - <i>Complaint for Lack of Sight</i>	828					X		X		
Anon. - <i>Ragman's Rolle</i>	2251				X		X			
Chaucer - <i>An ABC</i>	239				X		X			
Chaucer - <i>Complaint to his Purse</i>	3787						X	X		
Chaucer - <i>Envoy to Alison</i>	2479					X	X			
Chaucer - <i>House of Fame</i>	991				X		X			
Chaucer - <i>Lack of Steadfastness</i>	3190						X		X	
Lydgate - <i>Pain and Sorrow of Evil Marriage</i>	919		X					X		
Lydgate - <i>Prayer for King, Queen, and People</i>	1955.5						X		X	
Roos - <i>La Belle Dame Sans Merci</i>	1086						X	X		

**Truth* is copied twice in both F and Sh

Figure D.2: Summary List of Non-Overlapping MS Contents

- Durham: 4 unique short poems, one on courtly love
- Digby: a lyric on the deceit of women, 20 folios of guidance offered by a father to his son, an extract from Lydgate's *Fall of Princes*
- Bodley: completely overlaps with Fairfax
- Tanner: all but 2 anonymous lyrics overlap with Fairfax and these overlap with Findern
- Fairfax: several unique lyrics (one by Charles d'Orleans), a ballad by Hoccleve, 2 of Chaucer's envoys, Lydgate's *Reason and Sensuality*
- Findern: several dozen unique (anonymous) lyric complaints, several Lydgate lyrics, some extracts from Gower's *Confessio Amantis*
- Shirley: several dozen unique Lydgate lyrics and mummings, Chaucer lyrics including *Adam Sciveyn*
- Selden: a few religious lyrics including Hoccleve's *Mother of God* (attributed to Chaucer), King James I of Scotland's *The King's Quair*, the *Lufaris Compleynt*, the *Lay of Sorrow*

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Cambridge, Magdalene College, MS Pepys 2006

Cambridge, Trinity College, MS R.3.20

Cambridge, University Library, MS. Ff. 1.6 (Findern)

Cambridge, University Library, MS Gg. 4.27

Canterbury, Cathedral Archives, Register O, fols. 406v-407r

Chicago, Newberry Library, MS 33.7[†]

Durham, University Library, MS Cosin V.ii.13

Durham, University Library, MS Cosin V.iii.9

Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland, Advocates' MS 1.1.6 (Bannatyne)

London, British Library, MS Additional 17492 (Devonshire)[†]

London, British Library, MS Arundel 38[†]

London, British Library, MS Cotton Vitellius E. X

London, British Library, MS Harley 372[†]

London, British Library, MS Harley 2813, fol. 4r

London, British Library, MS Harley 4350, fol. 68v

London, British Library, MS Harley 4826[†]

^{*} This is a list of all manuscripts described and analyzed in this dissertation. I have used reproductions (microfilm, digital images, printed facsimiles, and critical transcriptions—sometimes in combination) to support my claims about most, and I have described specific reproductions in footnotes throughout the project. Manuscripts that I have viewed in person are marked with a superscript dagger (†).

London, British Library, MS Harley 4866

London, British Library, MS Harley 7333 †

London, British Library, MS Royal 17 D. vi

London, British Library, MS Royal 17 D. xviii †

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Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Ashmole 40

Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Bodley 221 †

Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Bodley 638

Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Digby 181 †

Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Digby 185 †

Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Douce 158

Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Dugdale 45 †

Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Eng. Poet. d.4 †

Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Fairfax 16 †

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