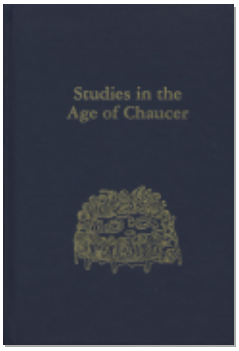
Chaucer Appropriated: The *Troilus* Frontispiece as Lancastrian Propaganda



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Chaucer Appropriated:

The *Troilus* Frontispiece as Lancastrian Propaganda

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FEW PORTRAITS SURVIVE to satisfy our historical and personal curiosity about the man who was Geoffrey Chaucer, and hence the portrait of him that prefaces Corpus Christi College Cambridge (CCCC) MS 61 has exercised continuing fascination over the minds of literary and historical scholars alike.[1] Unique among dedicatory miniatures, and borrowing, it may be, from a variety of pictorial traditions,[2] the frontispiece offers a dauntingly complex iconography that has made it difficult for scholars to come to agreement as to its proper context and meanings.

[1] Reproductions of the frontispiece have been published in a number of sources, although many of the published images are of poor quality. The manuscript facsimile, introduced by M. B. Parkes and Elizabeth Salter, in *Troilus and Criseyde: A Facsimile of Corpus Christi College MS 61* (Cambridge: Brewer, 1978), bears an excellent reproduction of the frontispiece, and Margaret Galway's article on the manuscript, "The *Troilus* Frontispiece," *MLR* 44 (1949): 161–77, offers a good-quality, full-color image facing page 161 of the text. See also Margaret Rickert, *Painting in Britain: The Middle Ages* (Baltimore: Penguin, 1954), plate 170, and O. Elfrida Saunders, *English Illumination* (1933; rpt. New York: Hacker, 1969), plate 129.

[2] Elizabeth Salter and Derek Pearsall provide a summary of eight different frontispiece models that would have been available as exemplars for the design of the *Troilus* frontispiece. Of these, five may have influenced the *Troilus* miniature: the first model, which portrays the author as a teacher, with the author lecturing from his text while a group of students, seated before him, follow the lecture by reading along in their own copies of the text; the third, "author as reader," with the author reading from an open book placed on a lectern before him; the fifth, which presents the author as a preacher, standing at a pulpit and addressing a listening audience; the seventh, in which the author is shown as the protégé of a patron, kneeling before his sponsor and presenting his work to him, and the eighth, in which the author could be represented in memorial fashion, portrayed in a famous scene from his life. See "Pictorial Illustration of Late Medieval Poetic Texts: The Role of the Frontispiece or Prefatory Picture," in *Medieval Iconography and Narrative: A Symposium* (Odense: Odense University Press, 1980), pp. 100–23, esp. pp. 115–16.

The origins and purpose of this intriguing portrait are shrouded in mystery, and scholars have taken the illustration as evidence to support a variety of contradictory positions. Its particular relation to the textual practices of Chaucer and his era remains a contentious issue, as does the question of the range of interpretations assignable to the performance that it depicts. Granted the referential importance of this unique illustration as demonstrative of key characteristics claimed for Chaucer and his literary milieu, the issues raised by this portrait continue to merit the scholar's attention.

The scarcity of records that might help researchers to draw a fuller picture of poetic activity during Chaucer's time is succinctly captured by Richard F. Green's observation that "amongst the nearly five hundred surviving Chaucer life-records edited by Crow and Olson, not a single one gives him the title of poet or links him with any kind of poetic activity, and the same would be true of almost all the documentary evidence collected on other household poets of the period."[3] In light of the paucity of available materials from which to cull evidence, it is hardly surprising that scholars have seized upon the *Troilus* frontispiece as a unique piece of documentation that can provide us with knowledge of an increasingly distant past. James McGregor, in a study of both the *Troilus* frontispiece and the Chaucer portrait accompanying Hoccleve's *De Regimine Principum,* points out that both illustrations "have long been objects of fascination. Each was created shortly after the death of the first great poet in English, and each promises to show us how he looked and how he presented his work to its first illustrious audience. . . . Not surprisingly, therefore, the use made of these pictures has always been documentary. . . . Yet the promise of these portraits has been uncertainly fulfilled."[4] This observation, now thirty years old, remains true today.

Interpreting the message of the frontispiece is complicated by the fact that the portrait is unique among miniatures depicting princes and poets, for it violates the well-established conventions for dedicatory miniatures.[5] Typical presentation pictures demonstrate a keen consciousness of role and status; they depict the poet, usually kneeling, before his prince, offering the prince his text. Emphasis falls upon the subservient

[3] Richard Firth Green, *Poets and Princepleasers: Literature and the English Court in the Late Middle Ages* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1980), p. 6.

[4] James H. McGregor, "The Iconography of Chaucer in Hoccleve's *De Regimine Principum* and in the *Troilus* Frontispiece," *ChauR* 11 (1977): 338–50, quotation on 338.

[5] Ibid., p. 346.

role of the poet, and the dedicatory picture flatters and praises the prince for his scholarship, learning, or patronage. Seth Lerer summarizes the ways in which the *Troilus* frontispiece differs from other dedicatory pictures in its portrayal of the author: "Unlike his counterparts in the many presentation portraits that open medieval manuscripts, the poet is not kneeling before a king or patron but is elevated above his audience. He holds no book before him, and he is attired neither as a university clerk nor as an official servant, after the fashion of other author figures in vernacular texts."[6] For these reasons, the frontispiece has been resistant to any kind of critical consensus as to the meaning and proper interpretation of the scene depicted.

By its depiction of a richly dressed, fashionable, and presumably courtly audience, the frontispiece encourages us to consider its implications within a political, or perhaps rather, a politicized, context, so it is surprising that more scholars have not attempted to view the miniature from within a political framework. Margaret Galway has done so, but her view of a Ricardian provenance for the manuscript seems untenable in light of current estimates of the manuscript's age, which date it to the first quarter of the fifteenth century.[7] Both James McGregor and Seth Lerer situate the manuscript within a context of Chaucerian legacy construction during the reigns of the Lancastrian monarchs, and it is this context for the frontispiece that I wish to pursue further.

This essay will build on recent research to explore the possibility that this puzzling miniature may owe its iconography to a Henrician commission. While the name of Henry V has long been bandied about as a possible patron for the Corpus Christi *Troilus,* no serious study has yet considered the evidence that may serve to connect monarch and manuscript. While such an attribution remains, as it must, conjectural, current trends in scholarship lend credibility to the possibility that Henry originally bespoke the Corpus Christi *Troilus.* In contrast with theories

[6] Seth Lerer, *Chaucer and His Readers: Imagining the Author in Late Medieval England* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), p. 22.

[7] Like Galway, Aage Brusendorff claimed (*The Chaucer Tradition* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1925], p. 21) that we can "trace the history of the *Troilus* copy back to the reign of Richard II." Its composition can have been undertaken no earlier than 1385, the year in which Chaucer is thought to have completed *Troilus and Criseyde,* and it can have been completed no later than 1456, the year in which John Shirley, the first person who is definitely known to have handled the manuscript, died. On the basis of paleographical evidence, Parkes and Salter have proposed a date in the first quarter of the fifteenth century, and no evidence has arisen that would either refute their judgment or call it into question.

that have previously been put forth to account for the miniature's iconography, a Henrician commission best makes sense of the complexities embodied in the frontispiece illustration. If the manuscript originated in a Lancastrian commission, a compelling, coherent, and comprehensible narrative emerges that explains with striking clarity the function of the *Troilus* frontispiece: we discover that the miniature is most clearly explicable as a tool in the Lancastrian propaganda campaign for the promotion of English as the national language of England. In the discussion that follows, I will review briefly the various theories that have been posited to explain the frontispiece, identify the questions these theories have been unable to satisfactorily answer, and examine the reasons for believing that the manuscript may have originated in a royal commission by Henry V.

Interpretations of the Frontispiece

Margaret Galway's study of the *Troilus* frontispiece, published in 1949, offers one of the earliest and most painstakingly detailed looks at the iconography of the prefatory illustration. She proposes that the illustration should be read in a documentary sense, as a recollection of and as homage to a series of readings performed by Chaucer before the royal court. In Galway's view, Chaucer was most likely persuaded to undertake the writing of *Troilus and Criseyde* by Princess Joan, who intended the work as a wedding gift for Richard and Anne. Galway's study occupies an important position among analyses of the frontispiece, if only as an extreme against which other critics have reacted. Although she is not the only critic to have seen in the picture identifiable portraits of members of the court, James McGregor is not far from the mark when he comments that her identifications of the individuals pictured "have prompted universal skepticism."[8] On the other hand, however, most scholars agree that the man in the pulpit is most likely Chaucer (the rendering is not unlike other portraits of the poet) and that the finely dressed man who stands before him is Richard II.

Unlike Galway, for whom the historicity of the miniature is the key to unlocking its meaning, Laura Kendrick argues that it matters little whether the pictured performance ever took place; for Kendrick, the important issue is that such a performance could be conceived of as

[8] McGregor, "The Iconography of Chaucer," p. 346.

occurring. In her view, the illustration depicts a performance—not merely an oral reading or a recitation, but a dramatic enactment—of the story of Troilus and Criseyde before a fashionable audience.[9] She believes that the two standing figures placed near the pulpit in the frontispiece illustration are present not as spectators, but as actors in a drama. The elegant figure dressed in cloth of gold, whom others have identified as Richard II, is instead, in Kendrick's opinion, an actor miming the part of Troilus while the poet declaims the text from his pulpit.

Seth Lerer suggests a third view of the frontispiece, in which the position of the poet in the picture is central to an interpretation of the significance of the image's iconography. Lerer notes that the picture "shows the author not as subject [to his patron] but as center, elevated among his presumably royal audience. With his golden hair and rich brocade, Chaucer is himself an aureate figure, and the gold trimmings and bright colors of his audience" idealize the occasion as an event appropriate to a golden age of poetry.[10] Like Lerer, James McGregor sees the *Troilus* frontispiece as participating in the construction of a Chaucerian legacy; McGregor, however, describes this legacy not primarily as literary and poetic, but rather as political. He finds a similar principle at work in the Chaucer portrait that accompanies Hoccleve's *De Regimine Principum:* in his view, both elevate the poet, depicting him "as royal counselor, and [they] suggest that in this role the first poet of English plays his most important part."[11] McGregor reasons that although Chaucer did not make any direct contributions to the "advice to princes" genre, the impulse to honor and promote him by associating him with such a role is understandable.[12]

A fifth theory that has been advanced to explain the meaning of the *Troilus* frontispiece views the illustration as borrowing or adapting its iconography from "preaching" pictures. Intriguingly, scholars who have advanced such arguments have also typically cautioned against allowing the miniature evidentiary value as a depiction of Chaucer's audience and

[9] She sets forth this argument in *Chaucerian Play: Comedy and Control in the Canterbury Tales* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1988); see particularly pp. 163–70.

[10] Lerer, *Chaucer,* p. 54.

[11] McGregor, "Iconography," p. 349.

[12] Nevertheless, both *The Monk's Tale* and *Melibee* can be considered as narratives intended to provide "advice to princes." Green has argued that there is a "strong" likelihood that *Melibee* was written early in the reign of Richard II, specifically for the benefit of the young monarch (*Poets and Princepleasers,* p. 143).

of the mode of "publication" or delivery of his literary works.[13] Derek Pearsall expresses concern that the *Troilus* frontispiece may be misread as an indication that Chaucer functioned as a poet of the court. Although willing to grant that Chaucer may have been in the habit of sometimes reading his poetry aloud to a listening audience, Pearsall hastens to remind us that "there seems no reason to suppose that this listening audience was always or ever that of the *Troilus* frontispiece."[14] But in his haste to dissociate Chaucer from a courtly context, Pearsall dismisses the evidence too lightly: while the frontispiece cannot provide *proof* of the nature of Chaucer's audience, it does at least provide "reason to suppose" that his audience *may* have been akin to the one pictured.

The most recent theory concerning the manuscript's provenance comes from Kathleen Scott, who has suggested that Corpus Christi College Cambridge MS 61 may be traceable to the commission of a particular individual—in this case, Charles d'Orléans.[15] Scott suggests a motivation for the depiction of Chaucer with which the *Troilus* frontispiece presents us: Charles, as a poet himself and as a follower of Chaucer, may have found attractive the idea of picturing himself as being addressed by the poet or as standing at Chaucer's feet.[16] Scott's theory also

[13] Derek Brewer, for example, in "*Troilus and Criseyde,*" in *The Middle Ages,* ed. W. F. Bolton (London: Barrie and Jenkins, 1970), pp. 195–228, accounts for the illustration as "a product of the poem's power to create the sense of a listening group" (196). Similarly, V. J. Scattergood accounts for the choice of a preaching-picture exemplar on the basis that "a refashioned 'preaching' picture was the closest approximation the artist could find to communicate the myth of oral delivery, the sense of a listening group that Chaucer cultivates in the poem itself." See V. J. Scattergood and A. W. Sherbourne, *English Court Culture in the Later Middle Ages* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1983), p. 31. Derek Pearsall argues that the picture is "fully explicable from within the poem. . . . [I]t represents as a reality the myth of delivery that Chaucer cultivates so assiduously in the poem, with his references to 'al this compaignye' of lovers 'in this place.'" See "The *Troilus* Frontispiece and Chaucer's Audience," *YES* 7 (1977): 68–74 (73).

[14] Ibid., p. 73. This consistent preference for "literary myth" over the possibility of the poem's being intended for oral performance would seem to contradict Pearsall's admission that Chaucer may have been in the habit of performing his poems orally before an audience. Although it was once fashionable to think of Chaucer, and especially of Caxton, as ushering in the era of silent reading, this view has increasingly been replaced by an understanding that stresses the endurance of oral presentation as a mode of experiencing texts in the late Middle Ages and beyond. See, for example, Joyce Coleman, *Public Reading and the Reading Public in Late Medieval England and France,* Cambridge Studies in Medieval Literature 26 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), and *Performing Medieval Narrative,* ed. Evelyn Birge Vitz, Nancy Freeman Regalado, and Marilyn Lawrence (Rochester, N.Y.: Brewer, 2005).

[15] See Kathleen Scott, "Limner-Power: A Book Artist in England *c.* 1420," in *Prestige, Authority, and Power in Late Medieval Manuscripts and Texts,* ed. Felicity Riddy (Rochester, N.Y.: York Medieval Press, 2000), pp. 55–75.

[16] Although the point is important to Scott's argument, the degree to which Charles deserves to be styled a "follower" of Chaucer remains debatable. Julia Boffey situates Charles's English poetry in connection with "courtly poets writing in English in a tradi-

allows her to account for the incomplete state of the manuscript on the basis of the change in Charles's fortunes in 1417, when English preparations for a further invasion of France caused Henry to place Charles under increased security at Pontefract Castle in Yorkshire.

The theories considered above, however, all leave unanswered one or more key questions about this intriguing miniature. First, this unusual frontispiece challenges us with the question, *Why* portray Chaucer (and, presumably, Richard II) in such a manner? While all of the theories discussed above grapple with this question in one way or another, the variety of conflicting interpretations that have been advanced reveal that none of these explanations has been sufficiently compelling in order to command a general critical consensus. More problematic perhaps is the question of why there is no book before a Chaucer who is presumably reading his text to a listening audience. Although Kendrick "solves" this problem by asserting that Chaucer simply declaims his text in accompaniment to a presumably mimed performance, the question of why he should declaim rather than read remains unanswered.

The final and perhaps most compelling unanswered question is the matter of whose purposes would best be served by a depiction elevating the poet over his monarch. Who would dare to commission a portrayal that so flagrantly violated the sanctioned and accepted notions of class and status? Who had a need to promote Chaucer's authority in so vigorous a fashion? And, finally, why and how should the figure usually thought to be Richard II, preserved in a deluxe and presumably treasured volume, have come to be defaced?[17] These questions can best be answered by locating the picture in its proper political context, a Lancastrian one. Doing so clarifies both its purposes and its early history and reveals that a coherent and comprehensible strategy underlies the anomalies that have served to make the *Troilus* frontispiece an object of pecu-

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tion which was saturated with French precedents, but [which] was also, by the early to mid-fifteenth century, alive to Chaucer's example and to the possibilities of a vernacular literary tradition." See Julia Boffey, "Charles of Orleans Reading Chaucer's Dream Visions," in *Mediaevalitas: Reading the Middle Ages,* ed. Piero Boitani and Anna Torti, The J. A. W. Bennett Memorial Lectures, 9th ser. (Cambridge: Brewer, 1996), pp. 43–62 (43). Although Chaucerian echoes can be found in Charles's English poems, Boffey concedes that there are "difficulties in unraveling the nature of Charles's possible Chaucerian debt" (pp. 46–47); given the extensive borrowing, reworking, and influencing common among authors of this period, "Chaucerian" influences may have found their way into Charles's work through a variety of mediating sources. David Fein's study, *Charles d'Orléans* (Boston: Twayne, 1983), scarcely mentions Chaucer.

[17] Arguments that this is *not* Richard II must still account for the obvious importance of the figure depicted, who appears to be noble, and must confront the problem of Chaucer's elevation above him.

liar interest and fascination both to art historians and to literary scholars.

Qualifications of the Ideal Patron

As M. B. Parkes and Elizabeth Salter have explained, the early history of the manuscript containing the frontispiece is "obscure."[18] It is not surprising, therefore, that few scholars have attempted to argue a case for a particular individual as the probable commissioner of the manuscript; those who have discussed the *Troilus* frontispiece have accounted for the miniature as a product of the artist's interpretive response to the text. But as Sandra Hindman has shown,[19] programs of illustration were usually provided by an educated advisor, not planned by the limners themselves, whose roles were confined to a mastery of the skills of their craft. Almost certainly, then, the depiction of Chaucer in a public presentation before a royal audience is owed not to the manuscript's illustrator but to someone closer to its commissioner, with a clearer understanding of the reasons for which such a deluxe volume was sought and of the purposes to be served by the manuscript's illustration.

The uniqueness of the design of the frontispiece attests to particular purposes and intentions that might have revealed themselves more clearly and immediately had the original program of illustration planned for the manuscript been carried out to its completion.[20] Had the Corpus Christi *Troilus* been completed according to the illustration scheme suggested by the blanks for miniatures and in line with the quality embodied in the frontispiece illustration, it would, we can reasonably assume, have constituted one of the finest English manuscripts that the early fifteenth century could boast. "Unprecedented" is the word that best bespeaks its quality among Chaucer manuscripts; as Parkes and Salter observe:

> No other Chaucer manuscript contains such an elaborate prefatory miniature; even the copy of *Troilus and Criseyde,* made for Henry V while still Prince of

[18] Parkes and Salter, *Troilus and Criseyde,* p. 11.

[19] Sandra L. Hindman, "The Roles of Author and Artist in the Procedure of Illustrating Late Medieval Texts," in *Text and Image,* ed. David W. Burchmore (Binghamton, N.Y.: Center for Medieval and Early Renaissance Studies, 1986), pp. 27–62.

[20] Scholars differ as to the precise number of miniatures envisioned for the manuscript, but a representative estimate is provided by Parkes and Salter (*Troilus and Criseyde,* p. 4), who set the number at ninety.

Wales, has nothing comparable. And the quality of the only extensive illustrative materials provided for the *Canterbury Tales* (in the Ellesmere and Cambridge University Library Gg.4.27 MSS, for instance) serves to throw into high relief the unique circumstance recorded by Corpus Christi MS.61: the introduction of a medieval English poem by an exceptional piece of international Gothic painting.[21]

Although we lack specific details that would identify for us the person who commissioned this unique work of art, the manuscript itself provides insight into some of the issues surrounding its origin. Parkes and Salter assert that we can be "reasonably confident, from the purity of its text and the unusually high standard of its prefatory picture[,] that the circumstances were informed by a proper understanding of what may have been due not only to the patron but also to the poem and, retrospectively, to its author."[22] The manuscript itself, by its remarkable quality, limits the range of patrons whom we may reasonably imagine to possess both the motivation and the means for acquiring it.

Elizabeth Salter and Derek Pearsall have attempted to provide a context that allows for both the quality of the manuscript and the nature of its frontispiece:

> The richness of its specific recall of a whole range of courtly and aristocratic illustrated manuscripts, made in French workshops between 1380 and 1415 for a number of famous continental patrons, . . . suggests that it cannot be isolated from the lavish courtly circumstance to which it gives expression. If we believe that the *de luxe* quality of the Corpus Christi College copy of Chaucer's poem demands our acceptance of an original patronal situation of some importance, then it is also tempting to believe that the frontispiece commemorates an early fifteenth century sense of the poet's relationship to the courtly society of the preceding century, and the prestige enjoyed by his poetry. It need not, and no doubt, does not, record a special historical moment but, in the very care which was obviously taken with its ordering and design, it may still pay tribute to a historical reputation, fostered, as we know, "this side idolatry" throughout the fifteenth century. . . . [W]e may well look for a patron among those aristocratic families who would have had the strongest reasons for preserving traditions concerning the life, both literary and official, of Geoffrey Chaucer.[23]

[21] Parkes and Salter, *Troilus and Criseyde,* p. 15.
[22] Ibid., p. 22.
[23] Salter and Pearsall, "Pictorial Illustration," pp. 111–13.

The comments of Parkes, Salter, and Pearsall help to clarify and to define the patronal contexts among which one should look for the commissioner or possessor of the Corpus Christi *Troilus.* We must seek a patron of some importance, wealthy enough to afford the manuscript; someone interested in the story of Troilus and Criseyde; someone willing to exalt Chaucer's status, even though such exaltation comes at the expense of violating accepted social hierarchies; someone with a connection to and interest in bookmaking in the Continental, and particularly, in the French tradition; and someone with a strong reason for promoting the reputation of Geoffrey Chaucer.

Additional factors might help to strengthen the identification of a conjectural patron. The ideal commissioner would be someone who, in addition to meeting the above qualifications, could also provide a plausible reason for the incomplete state of the manuscript's illustrative program, someone who, during the period of the manuscript's production, had undergone a change in life circumstances sufficiently significant to require calling a halt to the work in progress on the manuscript. In addition, our ideal patron would help us account for the patterns of ownership once the manuscript had passed from his or her hands: we should seek a person from among those known to have connections with the people, or at least with the circles, to whom the manuscript later passed. Finally, the identification of an ideal patron requires that we posit a situation in which the scenario that the frontispiece depicts comes to be less valued than it was by its original owner. Indeed, so violent is the dislike on the part of some subsequent owner of the manuscript that it results in the defacement of the figure in cloth of gold.

The Case for a Henrician Commission

Henry V fits all of the criteria that we can construct for the ideal patron who commissioned the Corpus Christi College *Troilus.* We know that the expense of the manuscript would have been within the means of the royal coffers, and we know, too, that Henry V was familiar with and valued Chaucer's tale. In fact, Henry, as Prince of Wales, "owned one of the earliest and best copies of Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde* (Pierpont Morgan Library MS M.817)"; interestingly, it is "the only extant Chaucer manuscript for which we can prove royal ownership" during this period.[24] In style and elegance, it reveals some of the same features that

[24] Jeanne E. Krochalis, "The Books and Reading of Henry V and his Circle," *ChauR* 23 (1988–89): 50–77 (50).

characterize the Corpus Christi *Troilus:* the manuscript "is carefully and beautifully designed and written, with borders for every prologue and book, and a miniature on the opening leaf. The text is excellent."[25] Even so, it cannot compare to the fineness of the quality of the Corpus Christi *Troilus.* At about the time Henry acquired the Pierpont manuscript, he commissioned John Lydgate to write his *Troy Book.* These early commissions evidence his interest in Trojan history and in tales of heroic romance.

The Lancastrian kings differ from their predecessors on the English throne in terms of the languages represented in their collections of books. Richard II's library consisted largely of volumes in French and Latin; English was virtually unrepresented. Henry IV, however, appreciated literature in both French and English. Both Hoccleve and Chaucer addressed works to him—primarily complaints, however, rather than lengthier texts. Gower, disillusioned, it would seem, by Richard II, turned instead to Henry Bolingbroke, re-dedicating the *Confessio Amantis* to him in 1393, before Henry came to the throne, and addressing his Latin *Vox clamantis* to him in the same year as well.

In the absence of more definitive records one cannot say for certain, but Jeanne Krochalis points out that "Henry V is the first English king to suggest the possibility of a royal library." His will bequeathed a variety of holdings, including works on law, theology, sermons, and meditational literature, to institutions elsewhere, leaving to his infant son texts such as the "Bible, history, romances, prayerbooks . . . with many volumes in all fields in English." Like his father before him, Henry V demonstrates a bilingual interest in books: "Though he clearly read in French, and commissioned works from French authors, there is also a steady stream of works in English—mostly in verse—which he commissioned or read: Scogan, Duke Edward, Hoccleve, Chaucer, Lydgate, all attracted his patronage."[26] Unlike their predecessors, the Lancastrian kings demonstrate an interest in acquiring texts written in the vernacular.

The Incomplete Program of Illustration

Not only does Henry V evince an interest in acquiring and encouraging literature in the vernacular, but his life circumstances would also ac-

[25] Ibid., p. 63.
[26] Ibid., p. 69.

count for the incomplete state of CCCC MS 61's illustrative program. As A. S. G. Edwards and Derek Pearsall have pointed out, any number of factors could account for the absence of the planned miniatures;[27] for example, the commissioner of the manuscript may have run short of funds. Perhaps less plausibly, Edwards and Pearsall also suggest that the illustrative program may have called for resources beyond the reach of the atelier from which the work was commissioned: suitable exemplars for the proposed series of illustrations could not be found. While we cannot wholly dismiss such an explanation, we must recognize its improbability: any bookseller wishing to make a profit from such a luxurious venture as the volume in question is unlikely to have promised so extensive a pictorial program while undertaking the risk, indeed, the probability, of alienating his patron through failure to fulfill the work that had been contracted.[28]

Third, Edwards and Pearsall suggest that the patron may have been in no hurry to have the illustration of the manuscript completed; having obtained the highly satisfactory frontispiece, he or she may have reasoned that the missing pictures could be supplied at any time they were desired. Such an understanding of the reason for the manuscript's incompletion offers us a theory that is neither provable nor disprovable and that, if it is correct, offers us no assistance in identifying, or even in narrowing down, the potential field of candidates for the manuscript's unknown patron.

Finally, we may surmise that the manuscript owes its unfinished state neither to economic reversal, artistic incapacity, nor patronal lack of interest, but rather, to the death of the person who commissioned the work. For such a situation there is, at least, historical precedent.[29] In fact, when scholars have attempted to link Henry V with the Corpus Christi *Troilus,* it has usually been the date of his death, rather than any further consideration, that has led to the mention of his name: the year

[27] Anthony S. G. Edwards and Derek Pearsall, "The Manuscripts of the Major English Poetic Texts," in *Book Production and Publishing in Britain, 1375–1475,* ed. Jeremy Griffiths and Derek Pearsall (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), pp. 257–78.

[28] On the other hand, if we accept this explanation for the absence of further illustration in the *Troilus* manuscript, we might be tempted to imagine that the publisher offered, in compensation for his inability to produce the lavish program of illustration that apparently had been planned, to preface the volume instead with a miniature of the finest quality.

[29] The most famous manuscript for which we know that work was abandoned upon the death of the patron is the *Très riches heures* of the Duc de Berry.

of Henry's death, 1422, fits well the current view that the manuscript and its illustration date to the first quarter of the fifteenth century. A. I. Doyle, for example, attempting to account for the manuscript's pictorial omissions, states that "Henry V's unexpected death might be an explanation, even though he may have had the Pierpont Morgan manuscript of the same poem."[30]

A Leaning Toward the French

In their discussion of possible owners or commissioners of the manuscript, Parkes and Salter remark that "the unique nature of the miniature in the context of early fifteenth-century English art suggests . . . that our search should concentrate upon families whose connections with France, during those years [1400–1425], were particularly close, and whose taste for French book-painting was particularly strong."[31] According to Salter, the artistic influences on the miniature are decidedly French: both the "immediate [and] the ultimate influences upon the stylistic modes of the miniature" are to be found "in that Parisian work of the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries to which so many brilliant Italian and Flemish artists contributed."[32]

Kathleen Scott concurs in finding the *Troilus* illuminator, whom she calls the "Corpus Master," to have received French training, and her recent research allows us to establish certain additional factors regarding his career. She suggests that this unidentified artist was most likely English, but trained by a French artist familiar with certain aspects of English book illustration, particularly border design.[33] Scott's research on the work of this unknown English artist leads her to conclude that he seems to have been able to command a particular type of patron—that is, to exercise some power over the scope of his craft. We can consider first the manuscripts in which his influence has been identified, and then what distinctions emerge in regard to the commissioners of these works.

[30] A. I. Doyle, "English Books In and Out of Court from Edward III to Henry VII," in *English Court Culture in the Later Middle Ages,* ed. V. J. Scattergood and A. W. Sherbourne (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1983), pp. 163–81 (175). Doyle's suggestion presupposes a Henrician commission, but Doyle neither draws out nor pursues this implication.

[31] Parkes and Salter, *Troilus and Criseyde,* p. 23.

[32] Ibid., pp. 19, 21.

[33] Scott, "Limner-Power," p. 56.

In addition to the frontispiece for the Corpus Christi College *Troilus,* the Corpus Master produced the illustration in a copy of John de Burgh's *Pupilla oculi,* preserved in Longleat House MS 24, as well as the illumination of British Library MS Royal 8.Giii, the *Compendium super Bibliam* of Petrus de Aureolis. Four other manuscripts also point to involvement by this illuminator: Scott argues that Bodleian Library MS Auct.f.inf.1.1 and British Library manuscripts Cotton Claudius D.i and Cotton Nero C.vi all reflect either "late work by the 'Corpus Master'" or "work together with an assistant trained under his direction."[34] Finally, Scott finds traces of his influence in Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale MS lat. 1196.

As regards patrons, what do these six manuscripts suggest? The first, Longleat House 24, appears to have been commissioned by three patrons, all of whom suggest associations with the Lancastrians and with France. Three coats of arms once appeared on the bottom of the introductory leaf of the manuscript,[35] but the most intriguing emblem is the one that is absent: the coat of arms that once occupied the central position on the opening leaf has been thoroughly erased. This missing coat of arms, occupying the position of greatest importance and prestige in the manuscript, has recently been identified by Kate Harris as belonging to Henry Scrope, third baron Scrope of Masham.[36] The implication of Scrope in the commission adds an unmistakably Lancastrian connection to the enterprise, not to mention a spicy dose of political intrigue.

Although Scrope, a Knight of the Garter, had enjoyed the confidence of both Henry IV and Henry V, serving for a time as treasurer and taking part in delicate diplomatic missions, he lost his life through his involvement with the Southampton Plot. On 5 August 1415, Scrope was executed for his complicity in the plan to depose Henry V and to

[34] Ibid., p. 67.

[35] On the left-hand are the arms of Robert FitzHugh, who served successively as canon at York, archdeacon of Northampton, and bishop of London. The coat of arms on the right belongs to Richard Holme, who served as canon both at Salisbury and York. Holme's insignia helps to establish a Lancastrian connection for the manuscript, since Holme served in a variety of capacities throughout the reign of Henry IV: as envoy to the French, in the years 1400–1402; as a member of the king's council, from 1408; and as envoy to the Duke of Burgundy, in the years 1412–13.

[36] See Kate Harris, "The Patronage and Dating of Longleat House MS 24," in *Prestige, Authority, and Power in Late Medieval Manuscripts and Texts,* ed. Felicity Riddy (Rochester, N.Y.: York Medieval Press, 2000), pp. 35–54. Kathleen Scott disputes Harris's identification of Henry Scrope. She offers an alternative bearer of the arms: Stephen Scrope, second baron Scrope of Masham and brother to Henry.

place on the throne in his stead Edmund Mortimer, fifth Earl of March.[37] Scrope's goods were confiscated by the crown; it is conceivable, though by no means certain, that the work of the Corpus Master could have come to the attention of the king as a result of the seizure of Scrope's valuables.[38]

The *Compendium super Bibliam* was commissioned by Philip Repingdon, "sometime supporter of John Wyclif, four times chancellor of Oxford, bishop of Lincoln and longtime friend and confessor to Henry IV."[39] Via Repingdon, the Corpus Master's work in this manuscript brings him into close connection with the Lancastrian throne, and Repingdon's Oxford connections also offer an important link to the circles of influence that seem to come closest to the *Troilus* manuscript as well.

The next three manuscripts, Bodleian Library MS Auct.f.inf.1.1 and British Library manuscripts Cotton Claudius D.i and Cotton Nero C.vi, share a single patron and cover a twenty-year period, 1420–40. All three were commissioned by John Whetehamstede, who served as abbot of St. Albans in the years to which these manuscripts date. Whetehamstede's connections with the Lancastrian regime are at a further remove from those of the commissioners of the other texts,[40] and yet the available evidence is suggestive. Whetehamstede had close connections to the abbey of Bury St. Edmunds and, in particular, to the poetry of John Lydgate, whom he engaged to write the *Lives of Saints Alban and Amphibal.* Whetehamstede was on good terms with the Lancastrian regime, and Lydgate, as it is generally agreed, was an important figure in Lancastrian politics and propaganda and a key player in efforts to elevate the status of Geoffrey Chaucer.[41]

[37] See T. B. Pugh, *Henry V and the Southampton Plot of 1415,* Southampton Record Series 30 (Southampton: Southampton University Press, 1988); for details of Scrope's involvement, see particularly pp. 109–21. These events are dramatized by Shakespeare in *Henry V,* 2.2.94–143.

[38] How closely Henry V, himself on the brink of departure for France, concerned himself with the disposal of the goods belonging to a former intimate remains uncertain, but the king did order their seizure and must have given some direction as to their redistribution as (unlike the case of fellow conspirators Cambridge and Grey), Scrope's goods were not permitted to remain within his family circle. See Christopher Allmand, *Henry V* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1992), p. 77.

[39] Scott, "Limner-Power," p. 63.

[40] Since these manuscripts date, on the whole, to the rule in minority of Henry VI, we should not expect the same degree of direct connection to the court as was possible during the reigns of the two preceding monarchs.

[41] See, for example, Paul Strohm's discussion in *England's Empty Throne: Usurpation and the Language of Legitimation, 1399–1422* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), especially pp. 186–91, as well as his "Hoccleve, Lydgate, and the Lancastrian Court," in *The Cambridge History of Medieval English Literature,* ed. David Wallace (Cambridge:

I shall consider last, and out of its proper time sequence, the ownership and commissioning of Bibliothèque Nationale MS lat. 1196, since it serves as the basis for Scott's conjectures regarding the provenance of the *Troilus* frontispiece and thus is of particular interest to this study. This Book of Prayers was produced for Charles d'Orléans "probably in London, certainly after 1415 and probably before 1424, this is, after he had become a hostage at Agincourt and before he entered on a period of extreme hardship in captivity."[42]

However, the relationship of the Corpus Master to the artistry of Charles's Book of Prayers remains uncertain, at least more so than does the artist's association with the other manuscripts mentioned above, as Scott herself is careful to point out. Bibliothèque Nationale MS lat. 1196, Scott observes, "was illustrated by four artists, none of whom was the MS Corpus 61 Master, and was decorated by eleven border artists, one of whom was, I think, likely to be the Corpus Master."[43] Scott conjectures that Charles, in the early years of his captivity in England, may have imported to England from France illuminators of his own choice, including the Corpus Master, whom he employed, among others, in the decoration of his prayer book. He then retained the artist's services for work on the *Troilus* manuscript.[44]

Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 640–61, and Lee Patterson, "Making Identities in Fifteenth-Century England," in *New Historical Literary Study: Essays on Reproducing Texts, Representing History,* ed. Jeffrey N. Cox and Larry J. Reynolds (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), pp. 69–107. For a challenge to the view of Lydgate as Lancastrian propagandist, see Scott-Morgan Straker in "Propaganda, Intentionality, and the Lancastrian Regime," in *John Lydgate: Poetry, Culture, and Lancastrian England,* ed. Larry Scanlon and James Simpson (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2006), pp. 98–128. For a survey of the contours of scholarship on this issue, see Nigel Mortimer, *John Lydgate's* Fall of Princes: *Narrative Tragedy in Its Literary and Political Contexts* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2005), pp. 51–52.

[42] Scott, "Limner-Power," p. 73. This increased hardship refers to the unusual decision reached by the king's council, in a meeting on 26 January 1424, to discontinue funding the upkeep in captivity of Charles and to require him to bear his own expenses for maintenance. (A similar constraint was laid at this time upon another French prisoner taken at the battle of Agincourt, John, Duke of Bourbon.) These expenses served only to complicate a financial picture that was already bleak: since the treaty of Buzançais, signed in November 1412, Charles had been under obligation to render to the English, whose assistance he had sought, a sum of 210,000 gold *écus.* As surety for this payment, Charles had been obliged to surrender up not merely valuables but a number of hostages, among them his younger brother, John of Angoulême, then twelve. Despite regular efforts to raise funds both prior to and during his captivity, Charles had not yet supplied sufficient payment to ransom his brother.

[43] Ibid., p. 73.

[44] Scott's theory presents certain difficulties. First, we know that work on the Book of Prayers continued during the years 1415–24, and Charles seems to have had ample access to limners at this time, since some fifteen different artists had a hand in the

Charles may indeed have brought artisans to England, but Scott's reconstruction of the Corpus Master's career requires that we accept the erased coat of arms on Longleat House MS 24 as having belonged to Stephen, rather than to Henry, Scrope. This identification is necessary if one is to accept the timeline that Scott proposes: Henry Scrope, executed prior to the battle of Agincourt, cannot have commissioned a manuscript containing artwork by a limner who was present in England only after the battle. But this identification does not help us to understand whose purposes would have been served by the removal of the central coat of arms from the Longleat manuscript; that mystery resolves itself much more satisfactorily if one accepts Harris's identification of Henry as the Scrope concerned.

A Lancastrian Agenda

The idea of Charles d'Orléans as the commissioner of the *Troilus* manuscript does provide us with a patron whose links with France are direct and unquestioned, but he is not the only candidate who fits such requirements. In this regard, Henry V is an equally plausible candidate: his interests in and connections to French culture are well known and well documented. His incursions into France were most likely those of a political opportunist, but they bespeak an emergent English nationalism as well. Henry's response to the political instability in France[45] re-

illustration of this text. Thus, the continuance of the prayer-book project does not seem to suggest that the illustration of the *Troilus* manuscript need have been abandoned in this same period. Second, if Charles commissioned the Corpus Christi *Troilus* for his own use while in captivity, why, we must wonder, did he request so deluxe a display copy of the text? Why not commission a work on a smaller scale, one that in style and size would be more suitable for everyday use? Finally, *Troilus and Criseyde* differs from the majority of the nearly one hundred texts that Charles had in possession while in captivity. The unifying feature of these works, Enid McLeod explains, is their seriousness; among them we find "no romances and no classical authors except for Seneca"; seven treatises on medicine; some works of the "advice to princes" genre; and, predominantly, works of a religious nature. The two texts that he is known to have commissioned in England are both religious works; in addition to the Book of Prayers, Charles commissioned Bibliothèque Nationale MS lat. 1201, a work comprised largely of extracts from Saint Bernard, Saint Augustine, Hugh of St. Victor, and John of Hovendene. See Enid McLeod, *Charles of Orleans: Prince and Poet* (New York: Viking Press, 1970).

[45] As V. J. Scattergood, in *Politics and Poetry in the Fifteenth Century* (London: Blandford, 1971), explains: "At the beginning of the [fifteenth] century the French political scene was one of extreme disorder. The central rule of Charles VI, who suffered from fits of insanity, was weak, and the princes of the royal family, his uncles, brothers and nephews, vied for authority in the court. . . . They differed on practically every aspect of policy, including their attitudes towards the English. . . . Matters came to a head in 1407, when John the Fearless had Louis [of Orleans] murdered in the streets of Paris by paid agents" (p. 47).

flects his shrewdness and his determination to achieve French influence: from the time he reached the throne, he "showed himself ready to negotiate with Charles VI and enter the French royal house by a marriage with the Princess Catherine; he was prepared to form an alliance with John the Fearless; and at the same time he made preparations for war."[46] He realized his ambitions militarily, gaining, by the Treaty of Troyes, not only the hand of Catherine in marriage, but the guarantee of the union of England and France under the English crown upon the death of Charles VI.

In light of Henry's aggressive stance toward obtaining a foothold in France, the *Troilus* frontispiece emerges as a visual and material statement of Henry's Continental ambitions. A. I. Doyle reflects that the manuscript, with its prefatory illustration, "is the clearest attempt to emulate the standard and style of early fifteenth-century books for the French court."[47] As such, the Corpus Christi *Troilus* offers a skillful blending of some of the highest literary and artistic achievements of both French and English culture, just as the king proposed to unite them under the English crown: the use of a French style of illumination with English content, a content that involves an English poet, speaking in English, to an English audience. Thus, the manuscript and its prefatory illustration blend two cultures, but, in keeping with Henry's emergent nationalism, it is English literature and English culture that are highlighted.

Few scholars have concerned themselves with the problem of why the miniature should choose to elevate, literally and therefore symbolically, the poet over his sovereign. Laura Kendrick, however, calls attention to this unusual status reversal. For Kendrick, the violation of established hierarchies that is implied in the elevation of Chaucer over the monarch virtually rules out the possibility that the richly attired figure could be the sovereign; for a society dominated by stringent conceptions of class, status, and role, the miniature's positioning of poet above prince constitutes a reversal of the typical positions of authority, which Kendrick finds "extremely daring—indeed, I think, too daring."[48] This conviction of the problem involved in the power relationships displayed leads her

[46] Ibid., p. 48.

[47] Doyle, "English Books," p. 175.

[48] Kendrick, *Chaucerian Play,* p. 163. This argument, if one grants its validity, would also tend to militate against the view that Charles d'Orléans would have chosen to depict himself as subservient to Chaucer, his social inferior.

to conclude that the figure over whom Chaucer towers cannot be Richard II: whereas the elevation of the poet over his peers might constitute an acceptable statement, the elevation of the poet over his prince would be unacceptable both on social and political grounds.

Henry V, however, had good reason to wish to elevate the status of Chaucer, and he also emerges as the one person who might most logically dare and desire to appropriate the image of Richard II and to subjugate him to his own particular purposes. Whatever Richard II's shortcomings as a monarch may have been, Henry Bolingbroke's seizure of the crown, however justified or justifiable, never constituted a universally popular act. Domestic discord and political uprisings periodically troubled the reign of Henry IV, and his son inherited this legacy from his father when he came to the throne in 1413. As his military maneuvers in France demonstrate, Henry V was a decisive ruler in terms of setting and acting on policy. A similar shrewdness and decisiveness manifests itself in his efforts to manage the legacy of Richard II's disenthronement and death in a manner that Henry IV could not credibly have managed, even had he sensed that such acts might prove politically expedient. Having Richard's body exhumed from King's Langley and reburied in greater honor in Westminster was most likely an act calculated to deflect criticism aimed at him by Ricardian supporters and to obtain greater public support and sympathy for the Lancastrian cause. By attempting to ease and smooth over tensions from the past, Henry V could hope to open up opportunities for his own brighter future.[49]

Henry's reburial of Richard's body suggests something of his attitude toward his former sovereign. Not content merely to let the legacy of the past stand as it had been left by his father, Henry calculated that a public act designed to bestow honor and dignity upon Richard need not have been wholly destabilizing to his own rule; instead, he must have imagined, it might help to bring stability and greater popularity to the Lancastrian regime. While others might have advised him to "let sleeping dogs lie," Henry risked the chance of a renewed outpouring of public sympathy for Richard's cause, a sympathy that could easily have

[49] Paul Strohm's *England's Empty Throne* provides an in-depth look at Lancastrian strategies for managing the legacy of Richard II, a spectral presence that continued to haunt and threaten Lancastrian claims to legitimacy. Within the ideological framework suggested by Strohm, the *Troilus* frontispiece could easily stand as one of "those officially sponsored symbolizations and enactments by which the Lancastrian monarchs sought to dominate their subjects' political imagination" (p. 2).

reopened the wounds felt by many upon Bolingbroke's seizure of the throne. The precise effect of Richard's reburial upon the Lancastrian grip on power remains conjectural, but it was accomplished without rioting in the streets and without instigating a mass uprising against the Lancastrians. Whether it gained additional respect for Henry V as the legitimate ruler of England remains unknown.[50]

What this incident does clearly demonstrate is that Henry V was not afraid to resurrect the legacy of Richard II and use his body to serve his own political purposes. Strictly speaking, it is difficult to imagine that someone who wished to honor Richard would commission the *Troilus* frontispiece with the sovereign placed elsewhere than in the dominant position of honor and authority. The miniature proclaims plainly enough that it was commissioned by someone to whose cause Chaucer was more important than Richard; this fact alone helps to narrow down the ring of persons whom one may reasonably suspect of having commissioned the work. Thus, that the miniature was requested by a political partisan of Richard seems highly implausible. We could, on the other hand, postulate its having been ordered by some especially enthusiastic and wealthy admirer of Chaucer, but we must ask whether even such fanatical devotion could account for the visual elevation of the poet above his sovereign in the miniature. Chaucer's status, pictorially speaking, could just as easily, and far more acceptably, have been signaled simply by granting him, within the context of the illustration, audience with the king. To place Chaucer below the monarch, or even at the king's own level, would just as effectively, and again, more acceptably, have signaled the poet's importance to the realm. When we ask who would have had both the audacity and the motive to position the main characters in the scene like so many pawns on a chess board, the Lancastrian circle immediately suggests itself as harboring the most likely perpetrators of such politically opportunistic manipulation. The positioning of an image of a living Richard in the static tableau of the *Troilus* frontispiece mimics, mirrors, and reenacts the statement made by Henry V's relocation of Richard's body to Westminster: the image and memory of the dead King Richard are thus exploited to further the art and purposes of Lancastrian self-promotion and national consolidation.

[50] Nigel Saul places the reburial in a favorable light, calling it "a useful symbolic way of healing the wounds that had been opened up by his father's usurpation." See *The Three Richards: Richard I, Richard II, and Richard III* (New York: Hambledon and London, 2005), p. 65.

The Uses of Chaucer

Scholars agree that the *Troilus* frontispiece accords Chaucer an exalted status; the illustration elevates the poet, both literally and symbolically, above the members of the crowd to whom he addresses his words. Seth Lerer sees the frontispiece as participating in a broad matrix of Chaucerian legacy-promotion; he opens *Chaucer and His Readers* with the important observation that "Chaucer—as author, as 'laureate,' and as 'father' of English poetry—is a construction of his later fifteenth-century scribes, readers, and poetic imitators."[51] I would add that Chaucer is also a construction of the Lancastrian regime. Lerer also points out that fifteenth-century poets define Chaucer as "the refiner of language and the English version of the classical *auctor* and the trecento *poeta.* The Chaucer who inhabits their verse is the kin of the performer at the center of the *Troilus* frontispiece: a laureate figure in an aureate world, a poet for a king whose glittering language befits his golden literary age."[52]

Why the need to heap such lavish praise upon the deceased Chaucer? If, as scholars currently believe, Chaucer was not in fact a court poet,[53] the question is well worth asking. The most plausible answer to this question would seem to be that, as others have asserted, Henry V may have placed Chaucer at the center of a campaign to promote the status of the English language. A number of scholars have called attention to the remarkable flourishing of the English language at just this period.[54] Although in the fourteenth century Middle English texts had begun to appear in increasing numbers in England, there seems to have been much less public demand for such written works before Henry IV's accession to the throne in 1399, by comparison with the proliferation of manuscripts in the years that followed. It seems that promoting Chaucer helped to promote the prestige and status of the English language and to create a growing demand for texts in the vernacular.

[51] Lerer, *Chaucer and His Readers,* p. 3.

[52] Ibid., p. 23.

[53] By this I mean that to the best of our knowledge, he was never commissioned to write poetry on behalf of court or crown nor paid for having done so. Paul Strohm, in his work *Social Chaucer* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1989), asserts that "current consensus regards Chaucer as writing mainly for social equals" and also contends that "th[is] shifting body of equals and near-equals I have indentified as his core audience continues to stand in *some* relation . . . to most of his major work" (p. 51; emphasis in original).

[54] Green highlights the growing demand for the translation of works into English in the period; *Poets and Princepleasers,* pp. 153–61; see also Scattergood, *Politics and Poetry,* particularly pp. 13–14.

John Fisher, who has developed the evidence for a deliberate promotion of English as the national language as a specifically Lancastrian policy, summarizes his argument in the introduction to *The Importance of Chaucer:*

> The inference about the Lancastrian promotion of Chaucer's poetry rests in turn upon the inference that Henry V deliberately promoted the adoption of the vernacular. Most histories of the English language still seem to imply that standard English just happened, but I am sufficiently a disciple of Thomas Kuhn's *The Structure of Scientific Revolution{s}* to believe that most technical and cultural developments can be traced to innovation by one individual. . . . Henry's switch in 1417 to writing to his chancellor and the English cities in English was not precipitous, but the outgrowth of many years of thought and discussion. Part of this process of gestation could have been Henry's encouragement of his cousin (or uncle) Thomas Chaucer to assemble Thomas's father's (or stepfather's) foul papers and produce the fair copies of Chaucer's poems as models of cultivated English.[55]

John Bowers concurs in seeing a similar impetus and a circle of united forces at work: Geoffrey Chaucer, he argues, was "installed as the patriarch of English letters by Thomas Chaucer with the assistance of those Lancastrian supporters known to be connected with him, a father very much created by his own son, to fill the role" of a national poet.[56]

The promotion of English and the promotion of Chaucer as an exemplar of what could be achieved in the vernacular form two strands of a complex thread that seems to have woven itself throughout the period of Lancastrian rule as part of "a deliberate policy intended to engage the support of parliament and the English citizenry for a questionable usurpation of the throne. The publication of Chaucer's poems and his enshrinement as the perfecter of rhetoric in English were central to this

[55] Fisher, *The Importance of Chaucer* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1992), p. x. Fisher's arguments are presented here and also in "A Language Policy for Lancastrian England," *PMLA* 107 (1992): 1168–88. See also Lerer, *Chaucer and His Readers,* especially p. 48. Allmand makes similar claims for the king's intentional promotion of English as the national language; see *Henry V,* pp. 418–25, for a listing of further developments that helped to spur the adoption of English throughout a broader sector of society during his reign.

[56] John M. Bowers, "The House of Chaucer & Son: The Business of Lancastrian Canon-Formation," *MedPers* 6 (1991): 135–43 (141).

effort."[57] Denton Fox points out that "Chaucer, and often Gower and Lydgate, are praised repeatedly for being the first to bring into English the adornments of rhetoric."[58] Chaucer's improvement of the capacities of English forms a cornerstone of his praise. Although Norman Eliason insists that Chaucer's successors must have praised his versification, he admits that "their admiration of his versification is certainly less clear than that of his language, about which their comments are fairly lucid"; they extol his language by deeming it "ornate," in contrast with what they describe as the "rudeness" of the English language as employed by Chaucer's predecessors and contemporaries.[59]

As John Fisher has pointed out, the dedication to the *Troy Book* comes closer than any other surviving document to offering a statement of Lancastrian language policy. Lydgate, describing the impetus for the composition of his tale, explains that Henry

> comaunded the drery pitus fate
> Of hem of Troye in englysche to translate
> . . . . . .
> By-cause he wolde to hyge and lowe
> The noble story openly wer knowe
> In oure tonge, aboute in every age,

[57] Fisher, "A Language Policy," p. 1170. The literary praise of Chaucer begins early. Lydgate's *The Floure of Curtesy,* which Walter Schirmer dates to the years 1400–1402, just after Henry IV's accession to the throne, offers some of the earliest literary homage to Chaucer. It describes him as having earned "a name / Of fayre makyng" as fair "as the laurer grene." Lydgate, *The Floure of Curtesy,* in *The Minor Poems of John Lydgate, Part II,* ed. Henry Noble MacCracken, EETS o.s. 192 (London: Oxford University Press, 1961), pp. 410–17, lines 236–38; Walter F. Schirmer, *John Lydgate: A Study in the Culture of the XVth Century,* trans. Ann E. Keep (London: Methuen, 1961). Fisher describes both this and another early Lydgatean work, *The Complaint of the Black Knight,* as "acts of homage to Chaucer" ("A Language Policy," p. 1176). Lydgate's *The Temple of Glas* is another work from this early period that also pays tribute to the late poet. Again and again, the praise that Chaucer's successors accord to him emphasizes his skill as a master, perfecter, and purifier of the English language and tongue.

[58] Denton Fox, "Chaucer's Influence on Fifteenth-Century Poetry," in *Companion to Chaucer Studies,* ed. Beryl Rowland (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968), pp. 385–402 (387).

[59] Norman E. Eliason, "Chaucer's Fifteenth-Century Successors," *Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 5 (1969): 103–21 (105). If we accept the thesis that the Lancastrians were busy about promoting English as the national language, we should also realize that their efforts would have involved not just the elevation of the prestige of English as a language capable of producing great literature; they would also need to have labored to produce, as the evidence shows that they did, a standardized dialect. The often-repeated references to the "rudeness" of other writers' English may also function as a stab at the provincial dialects in which many earlier manuscripts had been rendered.

> And y-writen as wel in our langage
> As in latyn or in frensche it is;
> That of the story the trouthe we may nat mys
> No more than doth eche other nacioun:
> This was the fyn of his entencioun.[60]

Thus, even before his accession to the throne in 1413, Henry appears to have expressed concern for the rendering of a text into English style that would stand on a par with other versions in the prestige languages of Latin and French.

The frontispiece to CCCC MS 61 makes sense within the context of a program of Lancastrian literary promotion of the status of both Chaucer and English. In the picture, the presence or absence of a literary text in front of Chaucer makes little difference to the key element that it is designed to portray. Chaucer's preeminence as a user and perfecter of the English language—a reputation well established in fifteenth-century literature—rather than his skill as an author per se, is the concept or idea that the miniature promotes. The iconography of the frontispiece grants Chaucer a platform, literally and metaphorically, from which he can preach English to the still-too-linguistically-French court of Richard II. It is also noteworthy that despite the variety of attitudes and activities pictured for the various members of the audience, Richard himself is standing and apparently quite attentive to the words of Chaucer, hearing from Chaucer's own mouth the glories of the English language. The picture, commissioned by Henry V as part of a prestige manuscript, was designed to serve as Lancastrian propaganda, as a piece of historical fiction that would project backward in time the ascendancy and authority of Chaucer's decision to use and to improve English as the prestige language of the English people.

An Act of Vandalism

Granted that the Corpus Christi *Troilus* is a deluxe manuscript and that, as a prized possession, it has been so carefully preserved, it is perhaps all the more surprising that the face of one of the characters in the frontispiece illustration, the figure dressed in cloth of gold, has been rubbed out. This circumstance is difficult to account for unless we accept an

[60] John Lydgate, *Troy Book,* ed. Henry Bergen, EETS e.s. 97 (London: Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co., 1906), lines 105–6, 111–18.

explanation that was first advanced many years ago: Aage Brusendorff suggested "political reasons," on the theory that the manuscript passed into the hands of Lancastrian supporters.[61] We cannot establish definitively that the figure concerned was indeed meant as a representation of Richard II, but no other character would seem to provide an adequate explanation as to why the manuscript should have been defaced.

While Henry's successes in France may have encouraged him in the belief that he had consolidated support for his regime to a sufficient degree so as to render the *Troilus* frontispiece's depiction of Richard a calculated but acceptable risk, his early and unexpected death in 1422 may have given his political successors a different view of the matter. One can easily imagine the discomfort of Henry V's successors when faced with what, under such circumstances, they must have deemed an unnecessarily inflammatory portrait; presumably, the picture was defaced on orders from some powerful member of the ruling council before the manuscript was delivered into the hands of John Shirley, an important manuscript broker with Lancastrian connections, for further disposition.

Kinship and Connections: The Early Possessors of the Corpus Manuscript

Although there is no direct evidence in the Corpus Christi *Troilus* to link it with Henry V, something of the early connections of the manuscript can be deduced from the inscriptions in its margins. Connections among the earliest documentable owners of CCCC MS 61 consistently lead back to the circles of influence that are most closely connected with the monarchies of Henry V and Henry VI. That fifteenth-century owners and handlers of the manuscript should be important Lancastrian supporters is consistent with the view that the manuscript may have originated in a commission by Henry V and that, upon his death, the incomplete manuscript may have passed into the hands of Lancastrian supporters.

The first important marginal inscription reveals that the manuscript was at one time in the possession of John Shirley; the second important clue as to early ownership is the inscription of the name Anne Neville, written on folio 101v in a late fifteenth-century hand. Both names re-

[61] Brusendorff, *The Chaucer Tradition,* 22 n. 4.

connect the manuscript with the court of Henry V and with the social circles that centered on the Lancastrian throne. These later possessors of the manuscript reinforce the view that the Corpus Christi *Troilus* originated in a Lancastrian context.

John Shirley

The precise role of John Shirley in relation to fifteenth-century literary culture has been much debated, but certainly he was an avid handler and annotator of manuscripts. During the course of his ninety-year lifespan, he worked as a "book dealer, publisher, prolific scribe and, not least, purveyor of much engaging information about the literary and aristocratic figures of his day."[62] Lydgate's prayer for king, queen, and people, inscribed by Shirley, identifies the Corpus Christi *Troilus* as having at some time been in Shirley's possession.[63] Shirley's name connects the manuscript not only with Lydgate, whom John Fisher identifies as the public relations mouthpiece for the Lancastrian campaign to promote the status of English as the national language, but also with the Beauchamps, whose relevance to the manuscript is considered below. Shirley's chief patron was Richard Beauchamp, to whom he acted as secretary; Shirley had been in France along with Beauchamp and with Henry V.

The Nevilles, Dukes of Westmorland

The next name associated with the manuscript, that of Neville, opens up an extensive network of relationships and possibilities. Although the inscription "'neuer Foryeteth' Anne neuill" identifies a particular individual, the name itself could belong to one of several people. One of the

[62] Parkes and Salter, *Troilus and Criseyde,* p. 23. Margaret Connolly, who has published the only book-length study to date on Shirley's life and career, *John Shirley: Book Production and the Noble Household in Fifteenth-Century England* (Brookfield, Vt.: Ashgate, 1998), argues for a more circumspect assessment of Shirley's role, one that recognizes the degree to which Shirley's activities would have been dictated by and responsive to his role as Beauchamp's secretary.

[63] Although the exact nature of Shirley's relationship to John Lydgate remains conjectural, the work of the two men is closely associated. See Connolly, *John Shirley,* p. 84; Derek Pearsall argues not only for Shirley's acquaintance with Lydgate, but suggests he was "at once his publisher and his literary agent." *John Lydgate* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1970), pp. 74–75.

two identities most often suggested is Anne Neville (c. 1410–80),[64] daughter of Joan Beaufort and Ralph Neville. Joan Beaufort was the daughter of John of Gaunt and Katherine Swynford; she was therefore, as well, the niece of Chaucer's wife, Philippa de Roet. Thus she and her daughter Anne were related both to the family of Chaucer and to the Lancastrian monarchs. Her husband, Ralph Neville, is (in)famous for having helped John of Gaunt's son, Henry Bolingbroke, to depose Richard II in 1399.

The identification of the Anne concerned as the daughter of Joan Beaufort and Ralph Neville is potentially strengthened by the appearance of another inscription, in a similar hand, on folio 108r, which gives the name "Knyvett."[65] Anne's daughter, Joanna, married her second husband, Sir William Knyvett of Norfolk, in 1477: thus, the manuscript may have been passed from mother to daughter. However, since Anne herself married Humphrey Stafford in 1424, she is unlikely to have used the name "Neville" after this time; thus, she may well not be the person who inscribed the name "Anne Neville" in the manuscript in a late fifteenth-century hand. Nevertheless, as Parkes and Salter observe, "It is tempting to find [Anne (Beaufort) Neville's] ownership of the *Troilus* particularly convincing in the courtly contexts of the mid-fifteenth-century in England; she was, in company with ladies such as Jaquetta, Lady Rivers, and Alice de la Pole, Duchess of Suffolk (granddaughter of Chaucer) 'in frequent attendance' at the court of Henry VI

[64] The Beauchamps' involvement with the manuscript offers direct links to both Anne Neville and John Shirley. The second identity most often suggested for the Anne Neville who owned the *Troilus* manuscript is Anne Beauchamp, heiress of Richard. Anne, born in 1426, married Richard Neville (the "Kingmaker") in 1439 and died in 1492. Parkes and Salter suggest that "this identification [of Anne] might provide a clue as to where the manuscript was before it reached Shirley's hands." Parkes and Salter, *Troilus and Criseyde,* p. 12. In other words, if Anne Beauchamp-Neville is the woman concerned, the manuscript might conceivably have been commissioned by her father. Such a commission, however, as appealing it may be on other grounds, cannot account adequately for either the abandonment of the manuscript's illustrative program or for the defacing of the figure dressed in gold brocade.

[65] The two Anne Nevilles who are considered here, Anne (Beaufort) Neville and Anne Beauchamp Neville, are not the only Anne Nevilles of the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. For a discussion of further possibilities, see A. I. Doyle in Appendix B to Christine de Pisan's *Epistle of Othea,* ed. Curt F. Bühler, trans. Stephen Scrope, EETS o.s. 264 (London: Oxford University Press, 1970). The name "Knyvett," however, involves us in an even more daunting array of potential identities. Parkes and Salter point out that "there are ten Knyvetts listed in the index of *Testamenta Vetusta* alone, any one of whom could have been responsible for the name inscribed on fol. 108^{r}. The name 'Knyvett' also appears in the Devonshire manuscript of the *Canterbury Tales* which contains Sir Edmund Knyvett's arms." *Troilus and Criseyde,* p. 12.

and Margaret of Anjou."[66] Anne's ownership of the manuscript would thus situate early ownership of the Corpus Christi *Troilus* in a context that is both distinctly Chaucerian and thoroughly Lancastrian.

Conclusion

I have argued that the strongest possible case can be made for the *Troilus* frontispiece's having originated in a commission from Henry V; his sponsorship of the manuscript provides the key that helps to unlock the mysteries that have so baffled scholars in regard to its interpretation. In life circumstances, Henry fits the picture of the manuscript's unnamed patron. He could afford the expenditure; the date of the manuscript accords with the years of his reign; and his death would account both for the abandonment of the illustrative plan as well as for the political uncertainty that may well have led to the defacing of the portrait of Richard II. We know, too, that close ties, not only social but also biological and political, connected the various persons involved both in supporting and promoting the Lancastrian monarchs and in exploring and disseminating the newly popularized literature in the English language; early known possessors of the manuscript were sympathizers with and close to the Lancastrian cause.

Henrician sponsorship of the manuscript provides an explanation for the status reversal of poet and monarch in the prefatory illustration: Henry V's reburial of Richard's bones in Westminster provides a documentable corollary that demonstrates his willingness to use Richard—and his belief that he could safely do so—to bolster his own popularity. In the case of the *Troilus* manuscript, the reversed positions of Chaucer and Richard II emphasize the status relations that the Lancastrians wish to promote: Chaucer lectures (or preaches to) the court of Richard II in the English language, and it is Chaucer, the famous purifier and beautifier of the English language, whom the portrait celebrates. In this sense, the miniature derives its iconography from that of the "preaching" or "teaching" picture: Chaucer expounds his ideas, to his flock or to his students, through the medium of the English language.

Furthermore, Henry's interest in the stories of Troy is manifest, since before he ever came to the throne he had commissioned both Lydgate's *Troy Book* and a copy (the Pierpont Morgan manuscript) of Chaucer's

[66] Parkes and Salter, *Troilus and Criseyde,* 23 n. 30.

Troilus and Criseyde. Both texts serve dynastic and nationalistic interests. Lydgate's *Troy Book* "provided Henry not just with a history . . . but with an authoritative version of the Trojan history that had, at least since the time of Henry II, served to support the legitimacy of insecure English kings. In representing Henry as the patron of what was taken to be the founding moment of English history, Lydgate was . . . affirming Henry's proprietorship over the national culture."[67] The Pierpont Morgan *Troilus* bespeaks Henry's interest in Chaucer's tale, and we can easily imagine it as a forerunner to the even more deluxe copy that survives as CCCC MS 61. It takes no stretch of the imagination, but rather, a logical extension of facts already known, to conceive of the Corpus Christi *Troilus* as having been envisioned by Henry V as a work to stand as a national treasure, proclaiming one of the great stories of Troy (to which England often traced its origins) in glorious English, the national language newly revived through the poetic efforts of Geoffrey Chaucer.

The artwork of the *Troilus* frontispiece, unprecedented in the history of English manuscript illustration, looks to France for its inspiration, and this fact, too, makes sense in the context of the king's commission of the manuscript. As a monarch with a no-nonsense plan for achieving ascendancy in France, Henry could conceivably have cultivated quite deliberately the miniature's blend of French style with English content. As Henry would seek political union, under English headship, between England and France, the *Troilus* frontispiece embodies, through its pictorial statement, an artistic union, a blending of some of the highest aesthetic achievements that both countries could offer: French book-painting, combined with Chaucer's English poetry.

Finally, an association of Henry V with the Corpus Christi *Troilus* helps to explain one of the central mysteries that has made the picture such a puzzle to scholarship: why Chaucer should have no book before him as he addresses his royal audience. Given the Henrician commission, we will recognize that it is not preeminently as a poet but as a beautifier and promoter of the English language that the Chaucer of the *Troilus* frontispiece stands before us. We can name no other early fifteenth-century figure who seems to have had so consistent and so vested an interest as did Henry V in promoting the status of Chaucer as the finest poet in English, as the "first finder" of the language's capacities for

[67] Patterson, "Making Identities," p. 74.

exalted expression. Although the Lancastrian literary campaign to promote the status of English seems to have been well under way during Henry V's reign, this prefatory miniature seems to have been the first (or the first surviving) attempt to enshrine Chaucer's status in visual art, the pictorial counterpart to the verbal paeans that Chaucer's immediate successors so consistently accord him.