TWO

War

REVIVING TROY

The significance of Guido delle Colonne’s *Historia destructionis Troiae* to medieval England is best reflected by its English vernacular translations: the *Laud Troy Book* (c. 1400), John Lydgate’s *Troy Book* (1420), and most importantly for this study, the alliterative *Destruction of Troy* (c. 1390). The *Destruction* is of special interest because it is a translation of Guido’s Latin prose into the English alliterative long line, a curious choice to the modern eye, but a relatively common one among alliterative poets. The only printed version of the *Destruction* that has ever been produced is the 1869/74 Early English Text Society edition, which was compiled by two Victorian

gentlemen, G. A. Panton and David Donaldson, who were particularly interested in identifying what they perceived as its Scottish origin. Since they often regularized spelling and included doubtful, and sometimes inaccurate, readings of the manuscript, Hiroyuki Matsumoto created a diplomatic and color facsimile CD-ROM that more faithfully reproduces the sole surviving manuscript of the poem, Hunterian MS.V.2.8 in Glasgow University Library. Matsumoto also includes the name of the poet, John Clerk of Whalley, who was identified by Thorlac Turville-Petre in 1988. The 2002 electronic edition attests to the need for this poem to be read in its manuscript form, since the size of the script, corrections, and evidence of truncation reveal a great number of interpretive curiosities. Therefore, I have primarily relied upon Matsumoto’s edition and my own reading of the Hunterian MS V.2.8 in situ to track the poet John Clerk’s use of his source and to argue that he undermines popular Trojan propaganda through a remarkably “historical” genre of poetic didacticism.

Contrary to previous scholarly findings, I want to suggest that a comparative reading of the Hunterian MS V.2.8, Lydgate’s *Troy Book*, and Guido’s *Historia* exhibits creative embellishments, divergences, and deletions, which reveal Clerk’s prowess as both a poet and translator. Through his negotiations from Latin to English and prose to poetry, Clerk manages to render his source accurately and alter sections strategically for both alliterative and

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thematic effects that differ from Guido’s prosaic history. The result is a poem that effectively translates the figure of the destroyed Troy out of Latin and into the vernacular. Clerk both expands and reduces his audience by addressing his poem directly to an English audience—the “true” Troy is then accessed by those who are not Latin literate and at the same time made specifically relevant to late fourteenth-century England. To make his unsavory message about Britain’s Trojan inheritance palpable, he manipulates alliterative tags to enhance the violence of war and to illustrate the tragic consequences of the revival of dead bodies and cities. Through graphic descriptions of Hector’s death and pseudo-resurrection and the first Troy’s destruction and reconstruction, Clerk revives a morbid Trojan past that enhances Guido’s ambivalence about the *translatio imperii*.

This chapter is divided into four parts. The first focuses on a textual gap in the only surviving copy of the *Destruction*, an absence that is provocative to consider in identifying the way Clerk approached Guido’s history. This lacuna is of great significance because it constitutes the end of Book I and beginning of Book II of Guido’s *Historia*, which contain the references to the English inheritance of the Trojan “plague of great destruction.” The second section addresses Clerk’s translational method as a poet/translator/historian and offers an interpretation of his use of Guido to expand and specify his audience. Clerk’s devotion to all of his roles not only highlights the high value he places upon alliterative poetry, vernacular translation, and the recording of history, but also proves his relative lack of originality to be entirely irrelevant to the value of his text. The third section addresses the role of the fates, Fortune, and human error through a discussion of Hector’s anti-war speech and the invectives of Guido, Lydgate, and Clerk against the martial designs of Priam. Through a comparative reading, Clerk’s *Destruction* emerges as the most critical of human culpability in the downfall of Hector and Troy. Hector’s speech against war is the overwhelming ethical voice in the poem that urges readers to consider this Trojan failure as a historical exemplar of the dangers of martial designs. The fourth section focuses on Clerk’s thematic use of death and revival. Read together, the resurrected figures of the slain Hector and destroyed Troy, body and city, reveal their metonymic relationship and suggest Clerk’s condemnation of Britain’s assumption of a New Trojan identity, a stance that differs from that of both Lydgate and Guido. The sections collectively demonstrate Clerk’s interest in separating cultural and linguistic translation from aristocratic identity and Latinate authority in order to question idealizations of a New Troy.
THE LACUNA IN THE HUNTERIAN MS V.2.8

The most striking difference between the Hunterian MS V.2.8, which contains the *Destruction*, and extant copies of Guido’s *Historia* is the absence of the end of Book I and the beginning of Book II, since this is the section that contains Guido’s most direct interrogation of the transfer of empire. Recent editor Matsumoto and his Victorian predecessors, Panton and Donaldson, have already noted that this absence is a result of lost folios in the manuscript from which the Hunterian MS V.2.8 was copied, but no scholar to date has commented on the significance of this missing section. What was included in the lost folios? While ultimately unanswerable, an understanding of the context of the missing section within *Destruction* and Guido’s *Historia* highlights this historical tradition’s resistance to the *translatio imperii*.

The Hunterian MS V.2.8 is an unassuming paper codex inscribed by the sixteenth-century copyist Thomas Chetham. Many of the pages are worn and folios are missing, suggesting that this book was well used. John Clerk is not identified explicitly in the manuscript as the author of the poem—in fact, George Neilson in 1902 suggested that the mysterious poem was written by the infamous “Huchown of the Awle Ryale” as one of his many alliterative productions, including the *Siege of Jerusalem*. This theory was rejected in 1988 when Thorlac Turville-Petre identified John Clerk of Whalley as the author of the *Destruction* through the discovery that the initia of the books spell “M. I[O]HANNES CLERK DE WHALELE.” While this acrostic provided a name and place for the author, Turville-Petre could not specify which “John Clerk” wrote the poem since John Clerk was a common name in the area of Whalley in the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries.

As I noted in the introduction, the gap in Clerk’s text occurs at a pivotal point early in the narrative of Book II. At this moment, Guido breaks away from the Argonaut plot to meditate on the consequences of Laomedon’s rash decision to threaten violence against the Greeks for daring to arrive on his

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5. The book is intact at this point, which supports the views of both editors that the gap existed in an exemplar. See Matsumoto, *The Destruction of Troy*, 316n; Panton and Donaldson, *The Gest Hystoriale of the Destruction of Troy*, 11.


Trojan shores. Guido suggests that this action is the origin of a “plague of great destruction” that will infect future generations, including the New Trojans of England. A digression that examines the popular fiction of England’s Trojan inheritance would have certainly caught the attention of readers such as Clerk, but since we have no immediate evidence to attest to this, we must turn to Guido’s other known readers, Lydgate, and the anonymous author of the *Laud Troy Book*, in order to determine fourteenth- and fifteenth-century interest and use of this section of Guido’s text. The *Laud*-poet ignores this section completely, which is unsurprising given his bellicose enthusiasm, but Lydgate sees Guido’s digression as an opportunity to wander even further from the plot to explain the role that “gery Fortune” [fickle Fortune] (1.744) plays in inflicting destruction upon the world. While Guido similarly refers to the intervention of “the envious succession of the fates” as a cause for Troy’s fall, their role in the “plague of great destruction” is much less heavy-handed. Lydgate, on the other hand, elaborates on Troy’s legacy by claiming that God interrupted the harmful course of events instigated by wily Fortune:

For every wyght oughte to compleyne  
That lytel gylte schulde have swyche vengaunce,  
Except parkas thorugh Goddys purvyaunce  
That this mescheffe schulde after be  
Folwyng perchaunse of gret felicité. (1.806–10)

[For every man ought to complain that little guilt invites such vengeance, except perhaps through God’s providence that this mischief should be followed afterwards by great felicity.]

According to Lydgate then, the providence of God works against Fortune in order to rectify a wrong and create a greater good. Lydgate continues by translating Guido’s brief description of the *translatio imperii*, but amplifies the importance of each city involved in the transfer. Rome has now become not just the chief of all cities, but also of “passing famous worthinesse” (1.819). Likewise, Brutus is described as “passyngly famus” (1.832) and Britain is described as a “noble yle” (1.836). By including modifiers that glorify the

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new Troys and adding God’s “purvyaunce” to Guido’s nonprovidential history, Lydgate not only perpetuates the *translatio imperii*, but also bolsters its ability to supersede Troy’s destruction. Given his tendency to amplify rather than compress Guido’s text, it is especially curious that he fails to translate or comment upon Guido’s pessimistic line, “Sed sit tante proditio causa fuerit subsequentis boni causa finalis humana mens habet in dubio” [But the human mind holds in doubt whether the cause of such a great betrayal was finally the cause of subsequent good] (12). Instead, Lydgate substitutes an elaboration of the Trojan genealogy:

And thus whan Troye toun
Eversed was and ibrought to nought,
Ful many cite was ibilt and wrought,
And many lond and many riche toun
Was edified by th’ ocasioun
Of this were, as ye han herde me telle. (1.912–17)

[And thus when the city of Troy was overthrown and destroyed, many a city was founded and built, and many a land and many a rich town were edified by the occasion of this war, as you have heard me tell.]

Even though Lydgate generally remains faithful to Guido’s historical account, his contention that “[f]ul many cite was ibilt and wrought” and excision of Guido’s pessimism indicates a predilection for the furthering of the transfer of empire that runs counter to Guido’s ambivalence. This is not to say that Lydgate’s *Troy Book* is a triumphalistic poem through and through. In fact, as C. David Benson contends, Lydgate is more concerned with replacing “Guido’s pessimism with practical advice” than bolstering English claims to empire. Benson also characterizes Lydgate’s references to Britain’s Trojan heritage both in these lines and in his later description of Henry V as sovereign over “Brutys Albyoun” (5.3377) as historical fact. It is certainly safe to assume that Lydgate, Clerk, and their contemporaries would have viewed their connection to Troy as part of truthful history, but Lydgate’s endorsement of this transfer of power is nonetheless a rejection of Guido’s critique of *translatio imperii*. Lydgate’s reception of the missing section then sends at least two messages. First, its content as a whole, particularly the impe-

10. All quotations of Guido’s text are from Nathaniel Griffin’s edition, Guido de Columnis, *Historia destructionis Troiae* (Cambridge, MA: Medieval Academy of America, 1936).
12. Ibid., 118.
rual genealogy, is attractive to English audiences and worthy of translation. Second, Guido’s pessimistic coloring of *translatio imperii* does not suit the interests of Lydgate or his patron. Given Lydgate’s embellishment and enthusiastic rendering of this section in the early fifteenth century, we must ask why this section is missing in Clerk’s *Destruction*, which was most likely composed only twenty years beforehand.  

While there are other portions of the poem in which lines are lost or compressed, no other missing section, which I estimate to be approximately three folios, matches the significance of this one. No leaves are missing from the book, which indicates that the loss is the result of lost folios in an earlier manuscript. It is therefore highly probable that Clerk had included this section in his original composition of the poem and that it was either lost through copy error, overuse, or censorship. While copy error is a common reason for a missing section, the skipping of two or three pages would be an egregious error. Loss incurred through

13. Not all scholars agree that the *Destruction* is a fourteenth-century poem. In their attempts to explain the relationship between the *Destruction* and the *Siege of Jerusalem*, Ralph Hanna and David Lawton argue that the *Siege* must be an earlier poem than the *Destruction* since the *Siege* exhibits early circulation while the *Destruction* may have been composed as late as the 1530s. They argue for the *Destruction*’s belatedness based on Edward Wilson’s claim that he discovered the John Clerk of Whalley who wrote the *Destruction*, a man who died in 1539. See Hanna and Lawton, eds., *The Siege of Jerusalem*, EETS OS 320 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003); Wilson, “John Clerk, Author of The Destruction of Troy,” *Notes and Queries* 235 (1990): 391–96. As Hanna and Lawton admit, this claim is not entirely compelling because, as Thorlac Turville-Petre notes, the name “John Clerk” is exceedingly common. See Turville-Petre, “The Author of *The Destruction of Troy*,” 264–69. Yet, Hanna and Lawton still insist on the poem’s lateness based on “the poet’s wooden handling of the alliterative long-line” (xxxvi–xxxvii). Despite the difficulties that these questions raise in dating the poems, it is still likely that the *Destruction* is an earlier poem than the *Siege*. In addition to their common obsession with the synecdochic relationship between cities and bodies, Clerk’s citation of Chaucer’s *Troilus and Criseyde* dates the poem as early as the late 1380s and the *Siege*-poet’s contribution to Ricardian crusading polemic (discussed in chapter 3) dates the poem to the late 1390s. Hanna and Lawton’s insistence on the belatedness of the poem is ultimately unconvincing both because of Clerk’s translational style and the evidence that points to the lateness of the composition of the *Siege*. Instead, I would attribute Clerk’s “wooden” alliteration more to his dedication as a translator than to any imitative or derivative style. What scholars have perceived as Clerk’s ponderous use of formulas and parataxis may indicate that he was an awkward stylist, not a nostalgic interloper of the alliterative tradition. The *Destruction*’s direct reference to Chaucer’s *Troilus and Criseyde*, “Whoso wilnes to wit of þaire wo fir / Turne hym to Troilus . . . .” [Whoever wants to know more of their woe turn to the Troilus . . . .] (8053–54), dates the poem no earlier than 1385–6, leaving plenty of time for a late fourteenth-century composition. See E. Kolbing and Mabel Day, eds., *The Siege of Jerusalem* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1932), xxix; Benson, “A Chaucerian Allusion and the Date of the Alliterative ‘Destruction of Troy,’” 206–7. Even though it is likely that it took a considerable amount of time for Chaucer’s poem to be disseminated and read by Clerk, it is quite possible, given the geographical proximity of Clerk and the *Siege*-poet, that the *Siege*-poet would have had direct access to the *Destruction* before the 1390s, when Hanna and Lawton claim *Siege* was composed and circulated (xxxvii).

overuse or censorship is especially compelling, because even a quick glance at one of the manuscript copies of Guido’s *Historia* reveals the popularity of this section to its audience. For example, a reader who flips through Glasgow University Library’s K0ln 140 cannot miss the extent of the glosses that fill the margins. The importance of this section is reflected by scribal flourishes in other manuscripts as well. In Codex Claustro nephurgensis 746, held in the Klosterneuburg Stiftsbibliothek, a manicula (f.3a) points to the lines that relate *translatio imperii*. Codex Admontensis 185 of Admont Stiftsbibliothek even contains a manicula (Figure 2) that signals Guido’s most pessimistic line “But the human mind holds in doubt whether the cause of such a great betrayal was finally the cause of subsequent good” (12). Since the glosses indicate that this part of Guido’s text was well read and perceived as instructional, interesting, and/or controversial, it is probable that Clerk’s readers turned to this section both to confirm their Trojan heritage and to interrogate aristocratic fantasies.

While we cannot uncritically support a reading of *Destruction* based on what has not survived, we would not do the “history” of Troy justice without following Clerk’s textual clues, all of which indicate that this section was a part of the poem during its original composition. Even if this section were never a part of Clerk’s original poem, we must consider why he might have excised this attractive historical content. All in all, the loss compels us to consider the fractured role Troy plays, not only within Clerk’s version of the fall, but also within the late medieval English imagination.

**THE LINKING OF LETTERS**

Most scholars have ignored Clerk’s poem precisely because it is a translation, and a fairly close one indeed.15 Lydgate surpasses Clerk in the number and extent of his embellishments, expanding Guido’s history to a colossal 30,000 lines that makes Clerk’s 14,045, the longest of the alliterative genre, seem like a mere redaction.16 If we turn to the prologues of each English translator, we gain insight into their differing perspectives on the appropriate way to treat their source texts. They both have to negotiate carefully between their roles of translator and poet: Clerk transforms Guido’s Latin into alliterative formulae while Lydgate translates Guido’s Latin into Chaucerian iambic pentameter. A comparison of the translational methods of Lydgate and Clerk

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FIGURE 2. Codex Admontensis 185, f. 3b. Reproduced by permission of Admont Stiftsbibliothek
reveals the idiosyncratic ways they approach Guido’s history. They both remain dedicated to the historiographic principle of providing Guido’s history for English readers, but while Lydgate prefers to moralize the story and temper its pessimistic message through extensive digressions, Clerk presents the unsavory truth about England’s destructive ancestors, eliminating and adding only what he deems necessary to contextualize Guido’s history for an English audience.

If we turn to Clerk’s prologue first, we find that he remains remarkably faithful to Guido’s text. Clerk has the perplexing responsibility of acknowledging his source and interweaving his anonymous role in the translational history without digressing from Guido’s own prologue. He does so by closely rendering Guido’s version of the translational history of this particular Troy story, which begins with the two separate eyewitness accounts of Dares the Phrygian and Dictys of Crete and continues through a redaction by the Roman Cornelius Nepos, who ineptly combines the two versions (68–77). Clerk’s fidelity, however admirable, has been the bane for scholars who pine for “original” texts. Upon close examination, however, Clerk proves to be much more than a mechanical translator. Clerk assumes the formidable job of not only rendering Latin into English, but also matching the sense of the Latin prose with English alliterative units, making his fidelity an impressive feat in the face of complicated linguistic and rhythmical circumstances. Because Clerk remains so faithful to his source, his original insertions are easy to identify. And despite Clerk’s tendency to substitute several words of an alliterative unit and his criticism of Cornelius Nepos’ brevity, most of Clerk’s changes to Guido are compressions, eliminating details or digressions that are unnecessary for the telling of the history.17 When Clerk dares to amplify passages, then, readers should take special note.

The first of the additions significant to an understanding of Clerk’s view of Britain’s Trojan heritage appears within the first five lines of the prologue. Before meditating upon stories lost from collective memory, as Guido does in his opening lines (3), Clerk begins with an invocation of God and an intention to tell “off auters ben [t]olde of aunsetris nobill” (5) [of adventures told of noble ancestors]. Referring directly to noble ancestors whom aristocratic readers would expect to be the Trojans, Clerk perpetuates the genealogical construction of history elucidated so clearly in Geoffrey of Monmouth’s Historia regum Britanniae. By beginning this way, Clerk explains the historical relevance this tale will have for its fourteenth-century readers and directly addresses Geoffrey’s theory of history. Since Clerk refers

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to the Trojans as “nobil,” the poem begins on an optimistic note that sounds more consistent with Geoffrey’s than Guido’s Historia. This added reference increases the importance of this account for his aristocratic readers and clarifies their connection to the events he is about to describe. By contrast, Lydgate writes specifically at the behest of his patron Henry V, calling him the ruler of “Brutys Albyoun” (104), a title that articulates more specifically the Trojan lineage of his regnal audience. Lydgate’s history is also meant for other English readers both “hyghe and lowe” (111), but only so “[t]hat of the story the trouthe we nat mys / No more than doth eche other nacioun” (116–17). His translation is meant to laud Henry’s rightful sovereignty and provide a history to all readers that has already been made known on the Continent. Clerk’s sober addition for an audience of Britain’s noble ancestors matches Lydgate’s intention to reach readers “hyghe and lowe,” but does not participate in imperial ideologies or competition with continental knowledge of the Troy story. Instead of elaborating upon the contribution of his text to established British historical chronologies, Clerk concisely specifies his audience and moves on.

After this addition, Clerk turns to Guido’s justification for recording the truthful history of the fall of Troy. Guido goes into great detail about how stories are passed on and recorded by “faithful preservers of tradition” (fidelia conservatrix premissorum) emphasizing the importance of “truth” (veritatem) and a “faithful writing” (fideli scriptura) of the story of Troy (3). Clerk perpetuates this interest in faithful history by making several “truth” claims, beginning with the use of the word “[s]othe” in line 11, and then continuing with similar “truth” references throughout the prologue (lines 17, 36, 42, 51, and 94).18 For both Guido and Clerk, their adherence to historical veracity distinguishes their accounts from writers who have skewed the truth according their own biases. Guido specifically condemns these mendacious recorders as “poets” (poetice) who attempt to disguise the truth through the use of “fictions” (fictionibus) (3–4).19 Clerk, being a poet, qualifies this slightly by translating Guido’s “poets” to “sum poyetis” (33), which allows him to maintain the emphasis on truth-telling and to deflect the damnation of all versifiers. This, seemingly minor, change calls our attention to the complicated

18. Matsumoto reads line 11 as “Soche stories” while Panton and Donaldson read “Sothe stories.” A close reading of the manuscript indicates that either reading is possible, but the preponderant references to the truth of the stories make “Sothe” a more likely reading.

19. However, Guido does not argue that poetry contains no truth at all. For example, after his condemnation of famous epic poets, he claims that Virgil in his Aeneid “for the greater part . . . reported in the light of truth the deeds of the Trojans” [pro maiori parte gesta Troum . . . sub ueritatis luce narravit] (4).
project that Clerk has undertaken: translating a truthful history not only from Latin to English, but also from prose to poetry.\(^20\)

We may wonder, at the outset, if a medieval reader would believe it possible for Clerk to express the truth of history through poetry. According to our modern understanding of Aristotle's *Poetics*, history is particular and contingent, whereas poetry is universal and philosophical. Such a distinction implies an irreconcilable difference, but Aristotle qualifies this opposition by claiming that epic poetry draws on history in its thematic formulations.\(^21\) Indeed the preeminent classicist Friedrich Nietzsche did not think that poets, especially Roman ones, could accurately represent history because of their inattention to particularities. In his discussion of translation in *The Gay Science*, he condemns the ancient Romans for recklessly appropriating Greek texts as their own. His invective is specifically directed at poet-translators, who “had no sympathy for the antiquarian inquisitiveness that precedes the historical sense; as poets, they had no time for all those very personal things and names and whatever might be considered the costume and mask of a city, coast, or a century.”\(^22\) Nietzsche’s assessment could be accurately applied to Clerk’s tendency to anglicize the Latin text, substituting English words and occupations for ones he did not recognize in Guido’s Latin. Based on his readings of the ancient epic poets, Guido would have agreed with Nietzsche and accepted Aristotle’s opposition of poets and historians.

However, since the *Poetics* was virtually unknown throughout the Middle Ages, and only accessible to the Latin West through translations of a tenth-century Arabic version and Averroës’ commentaries, Aristotle’s thoughts on poetry were primarily gleaned from his “scientific” works.\(^23\)

\(^20\) It is important to remember that even though Guido claims to have followed the accounts of Dictys of Crete and Dares the Phrygian, Guido actually bases his translation on Benoît de Sainte-Maure’s *Le Roman de Troie*. It is certainly possible that Clerk knew Benoît’s *Roman*, but it is more likely that he believed Guido translated directly from Dares and Dictys. See Hermann Dunger, *Die Sage vom troyanischen Kriege in den Bearbeitungen des Mittelalters und ihre antiken Quellen* (Leipzig, 1869); Aristide Joly, *Benoît de Sainte-More et le Roman de Troie ou les Métamorphoses d’Homère et L’Épopée Gréco-Latine au Moyen Âge* (Paris: F. Vieweg, 1870–1); R. M. Frazer, *The Trojan War: The Chronicles of Dictys of Crete and Dares the Phrygian* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1966), 3–15.


Guido likely gained his perspective on poetry from Aristotle’s *Metaphysics*, which demeaned poetry as merely a human invention and set below the divinity found in philosophy. Even though both poetry and philosophy emerge from states of wonder and doubt, it is only philosophers, Aristotle contends, who transcend the ignorance of poetic fable and access truth. Therefore, the Aristotelian idea in the *Poetics* that poetry is philosophical would have seemed fundamentally un-Aristotelian to Guido.

Also at work here is the medieval distinction between poetic and theological truth. The gold standard for truth was upheld by theological texts, which were true both at the literal and allegorical levels—in other words, they maintained their veracity in all senses. At the other end of the spectrum, poetry, or what Dante calls “favola,” was literally false, despite any allegorical truth it may contain. Guido condemns poets for writing stories that are false in the literal sense since such a commitment to falsehood entails “playing with” (*alludendo*) the truth and deluding audiences into thinking that they are reading the truth (1). The use of *alludendo* is especially disparaging because it implies that poetry is a frivolous activity. His invective is primarily directed toward Homer, who allegedly “eius ystorie puram et simplicem ueritatem in uersuta uestigia uariauit, fingens multa que non fuerunt et que fuerunt aliter transformando” [changed the pure and simple truth of his story into clever paths, touching on many things which did not happen and transforming those which did happen] (4). The most significant transformation was Homer’s depiction of pagan gods fighting against the Trojans as if they were mortals.

Guido’s charge against poets here is reminiscent of an episode in Plato’s *Republic*, in which Socrates urges the poets of their republic against telling stories of gods acting impiously and warring against one another as they do in Homer’s *Iliad* since such accounts blaspheme the gods and corrupt their hearers (378b–381e). Socrates even addresses the subject of Troy, saying, “if anyone composes a poem about . . . the tale of Troy . . . we must require him


to say that these things are not the work of a god” (380a). Homer’s portrayals of the gods are false since the gods are inherently good, but Socrates does not claim that poets are inherently mendacious. In fact, he argues that they possess the capability to tell the truth since their accounts can have a profound effect on their readers (378b–e). Guido, on the other hand, presents Socrates’ worse case scenario: he explains that the necessary consequence of these Homeric inventions was that other famous poets, such as Ovid “Cuius errorem . . . curiosius insecuti” [followed his (Homer’s) error carefully] (4). Here Guido cleverly equates the commitment to fidelity of “preservers” with the diligence of poets, but unlike the “conseruatricia” who adhere to truth, poets remain faithful to “error.”

As a poet then, how does Clerk maintain his intention both to translate the truth and to versify it through the alliterative long line? His main strategy to remain faithful to both roles is evident in the structure of his prologue. Rather than compare the *conseuatricia* with the *poete*, Clerk begins more generally and in the passive voice, which allows him to suspend any judgments about the writers of truths and falsehoods.

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So[th]e stories ben stoken vp & straught out of mynd
And swolowet into swym by swiftenes of yeres
ffor new þat ben now next at our hond
Breuyt into bokes for boldyng of hertes
On lusti to loke with lightnes of wille
Cheuyt throughe chaunce & chaungyng of peopull
Sum tru for to traist triet in þe ende
Sum feynit O fere & ay false vnder. (11–18)
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[True stories have been compiled, passed out of mind, or swallowed by forgetfulness through the passing of years because new things that have just happened are recorded into books to embolden hearts, are pleasant to look upon with lightness of will, and accomplished through chance and the changing of people. Some are truthful and credible, tried in the end, while some are invented completely and false underneath.]

The subjectivity of a poet or recorder is almost completely absent here—Clerk shifts the focus to the “stories” themselves and how they have been “swolowet” by the passing of time and “[b]reuyt” into books. Rather than blame the false tales on poetic deception, Clerk explains that after the intervention of “chaunce” and fickle human nature, “sum” remain “tru” and “sum” become “false.” Clerk’s refusal to translate Guido’s blanket condemnation of
all poets reflects his willingness to work against his source in order to further his poetic project and make the case that “sum” poets are capable of writing truthful history. As C. David Benson succinctly puts it: “Guido had distinguished false poets from true historians; the alliterative poet [Clerk] distinguishes true from false poets.” Of the English translators of the Historia, Clerk best defies Nietzschean accusations of recklessness, submits to Socrates’ mandate, and most explicitly argues that “true” poets could also serve as historians. He maintains this focus on the truth throughout the poem, including his discussion of the fate of the Greeks long after Troy has fallen. Lydgate also qualifies Guido’s condemnation of poets by claiming that, of the poets who rehearsed the history of Troy, “somme han the trouthe spared” [some have spared the truth] (259). Yet Lydgate unleashes an invective against those who have “transformed [the truth] in her poysy” [transformed the truth in their poetry] (262) that has no equal in the Destruction. Given their common selection of a poetic medium for the representation of history, it is clear that Clerk’s contemporaries agreed that poetry could effectively express the truth.29

Despite their emphasis on the poet/historian dichotomy, medium mattered less than method to all translators of this Trojan historiographic tradition. Dares and Dictys emerge as the authorities, not because they wrote in prose, but because they obtained their accounts through first-hand experience. In his preface to Dares’ De Excidio Troiae Historia, Cornelius Nepos claims that he translates word-for-word from Dares’ account so that his audience may judge “utrum verum magis esse existiment, quod Dares Phrygius memoriae commendavit, qui per id ipsum tempus vixit et militavit, cum Graeci Trojanos obpugnarent, anne Homero credendum, qui post multos annos natus est, quam bellum hoc gestum est” [whether they consider what Dares the Phrygian confided from memory to be more true, who lived and fought at the time when the Greeks contended against the Trojans, or believe Homer, who was born long after the war was over] (1). In this view, Homer simply could not have related the truth because he was not present to record...

28. Benson, The History of Troy in Middle English Literature, 37.
29. Ibid., 37–39. Benson contends that “[p]oetry and history may be judged antipathetic by both Guido and ourselves, but their union would have seemed perfectly legitimate in medieval England” (37). For a thorough explanation of Anglo-Saxon, Anglo-Norman, and Anglo-Latin expressions of “true” history through poetry, see M. Dominica Legge, Anglo-Norman Literature and Its Background (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963), 27–36. She gives the example of the poet-historian Gaimar who wrote his history of the English, Estorie des Engleis, in octosyllabic rhyming couplets, a verse form which he passed on to Wace and eventually Benoît, who ironically served as a poetic source for Guido’s prose history.
the facts. Dares and Dictys, on the other hand, claim to have witnessed the events and recorded their observations as diarists, thereby inscribing the truth in a way that neither Homer nor Virgil was capable of doing. Dictys establishes the veracity of his account by stating, “quae deinceps insecuta sunt, quoniam ipse interfui, quam verissime potero exponam” [I can relate the events that follow with utmost accuracy, since I myself experienced them] (13). At this point in the prologue, Clerk distinguishes his alliterative version of the history through a reorganization of the textual chronology. Unlike Guido and Lydgate, who move directly into a condemnation of Homer and all poets, Clerk separates his discussion of Homer and “sum” poets who fictionalize the truth from his introduction by pausing to address the accounts that carry the most weight and interest for his audience. Here he privileges the “writing of wees þat wist it in dede, / With sight” [writing of men who knew it in deed, with sight] (23–24), a direct reference to the eyewitnesses Dares and Dictys, whom he will nominally authorize forty lines later. The language that Clerk uses to describe the unnamed Dares and Dictys originates in Guido’s Latin, but his choice to invoke the truth-bearing characteristic of their accounts before identifying the truth-bearers privileges the empirical authority of their history over poetic mendacity.

If Clerk privileges eyewitness truth over literary medium, how then can we explain his use of an alliterative long line that complicates an accurate translation of the history? To answer this question, we should attend to the end of the stanza, where Clerk arrives at a curious conclusion that has perplexed readers. He claims that these eyewitnesses wrote:

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of hom þat suet after
To ken all the crafte how þe case felle,
By lokyng of letturs þat lefte were of olde. (24–26)
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[for those who followed afterwards so that they would know all the causes behind the events through the linking of letters that were left of old.]

While Clerk is directly referring to Dares and Dictys, who provided the account for the use of future generations, the reference to the “lokyng of letturs þat lefte were of olde” is difficult to decipher. The language that Clerk uses here has intrigued scholars of alliterative poetry because of the occurrence of a similar phrase in the prologue to *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*,

which appears directly after a discussion of the fall of Troy and the Trojan heritage of Britain. The Gawain-poet claims that he will tell his story in a tongue,

As it is stad and stoken
In stori stif and stronge,
With lel letters loken,
In londe so hatz ben longe. (33–26)

[As it was set and established in a story stiff and strong, linked with true letters in our land for a long time.]

Like Clerk, the Gawain-poet makes reference to “letters loken” that he will utilize to transmit a tale, but it is not clear what these “locked letters” are. Malcolm Andrew and Ronald Waldron translate “lel letters loken” as “enshrined in true syllables,” but concede that it could also mean “linked with true letters.” The latter reading is especially provocative because it may either denote the precision of the meter or allude to the Anglo-Saxon tradition of the alliterative style. If this line calls attention to the verse form, we could then argue for a linguistic and historiographic affinity between the Destruction and Gawain and cite these lines as evidence for a particular alliterative interest in the fall of Troy.

Unfortunately, we cannot make that claim. As Norman Blake has forcefully argued, the consistency of alliterative meter is “too arbitrary an organizing principle” for a coherent literary movement, especially since the content of the alliterative poems varies so widely. More recently, Randy Schiff has identified the “artificial extraction of texts” that is required to fashion evidence for Revivalist arguments about the self-conscious use of the verse form. Rather than speculate about what these lines say about the poetic medium of their Anglo-Saxon predecessors, I want to suggest that these lines refer to the translation or “linking” of Trojan and British history. To do

35. This metrical reading has been attractive to scholars of alliterative poetry such as Turville-Petre and Chism because it calls attention to a Middle English alliterative long line that is both aesthetically striking and encourages the reader to make aural and interpretive connections between individual words in each line. Hence, the reader must “link” the “letters” of the line in order to appreciate their consonance and ponder the significance of their juxtaposi-
so, we must read these lines in an entirely different way. Derek Pearsall is another critic who warns against making too much of these lines as evidence of a continuous or revived alliterative tradition, but his claim that Clerk’s “lokyng of leturts” is directly derived from his source is not entirely accurate. The closest reference to any “locking of letters” in Guido’s prologue is in his description of Ovid, who “in multis libris suis utrumque contextuit” [bound both of these [truth and falsehood] together in his many books] (4).

For Guido, poets deceive their readers by “locking” or “binding” the truth with fiction, a sentiment that Lydgate translates into his own text by claiming that Ovid “poetically hath closyd / Falshede with trouthe” (299–300). The only other “locking” to which Lydgate refers is the consonance of truth that he applies specifically to the accounts of Dares and Dictys (315–16), but he places little emphasis on the phenomenon of their invariation. When Clerk refers to “locking,” he is neither discussing Ovid, who appears in his prologue more than twenty lines later, nor implying the confluence of truths and lies. Instead, he uses this “locking of letters” to conclude the first section of his prologue in a way that differs significantly from the texts of Guido and Lydgate. As I suggested above, Clerk restructures his prologue so that he can preserve the reputation of “sum” poets and introduce his versified history. This strategy suspends discussion of specific writers such as Ovid and shifts the focus to the importance of transmitting forgotten tales to future generations. In so doing, Clerk cleverly introduces Dares and Dictys without mentioning them by name—he views their credence as truth-tellers, rather than their auctoritee, as noteworthy. The “lokyng” may then be read in a variety of ways that suit Clerk’s project. First, the “lokyng” may be the “securing” of the true account, which may have been performed by Dares and Dictys in the act of writing what they had witnessed. But since he does not specify them here as Lydgate does, Clerk may be referring to his own “securing” of

The use of this poetic form has traditionally been attributed to the “Alliterative Revival,” which has led Turville-Petre and Chism to speculate that the emergence of these poems may be evidence of an attempt to create a “classical” genre of English poetry that looks back to earlier Anglo-Saxon poetry. See Chism, *Alliterative Revivals*, 16–20; Turville-Petre, *The Alliterative Revival* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1977). However, scholars have not uniformly embraced such an understanding of the phenomenon of alliterative poetry in the late fourteenth century. Derek Pearsall, advises against reading these obscure references to “linked letters” as an indication of the continuity or revival of alliterative poetry in the later Middle Ages since there is little evidence to support it. Rather, they may simply be conventional expressions that authorize old tales expressed through any medium and may not refer to their meter at all. Pearsall similarly rejects the connection between the similarity between the lines in *Gawain* and *Destruction* by claiming that Clerk’s line is simply “imitated” from Guido’s prologue. See “The Alliterative Revival: Origins and Social Backgrounds,” in *Middle English Alliterative Poetry and Its Literary Background*, ed. David Lawton (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1982), 34–53, at 43.
the truth through the act of translation, which makes the history available to a large audience. Second, the “lokyng” may also mean “locking” or “linking,” which may refer either to the combination of the accounts of Dares and Dictys by Guido, or to Clerk’s own text that “links” the Latin Trojan history to an English poetic tradition.\(^{36}\) This reading is corroborated by a direct reference to Dares and Dictys, who “wrote all þe werkes wroght at þat tyme / In letturs of þere langage as þai lerned hade” [wrote all the works made at that time in letters of their language as they had learned] (58–59). The “letturs” that they used to record their “werkes” are most likely those same “letters” that were “linked/locked.” As James Simpson aptly notes, “the combined accounts of Dictys and Dares are a guarantee of truth.”\(^{37}\) Read this way, the “lokyng” is a combining that also “locks” or ensures that the truth will be revealed. Finally, the “lokyng” could signify a “looking” or a retrospection that “hom þat suet after” had to do in order to understand and pass on the truth about the fall of Troy. This reading alters the grammatical subject slightly, so that the “lokyng” is performed either by the transmitters of the tradition such as Guido or Clerk or any future reader of the texts that record the tale.

All these readings that denote a “securing,” “linking/locking,” and “looking,” place an emphasis on an accurate, well-preserved, and rhetorically humble translation of the truth about Troy. While it is tempting to read the “lokyng” as a reference to a continuous or revived tradition of alliterative poetry in England, we should restrain our desire to make too much of a “classical” English tradition with very little evidence to support it. Instead, I suggest that we read this “lokyng of letturs” as a “translating of words/accounts.” Understood this way, the specific use of the word “lokyng” carries multiple meanings that encompass translation—after all, Clerk has to take special care both to link his words together to create effective alliterative units and to establish the truth about Troy through a translation that remains faithful to Guido. Clerk then secures these accounts in a way that Plato would have certainly endorsed. As a poet he translates the truth both linguistically and historically through the use of interlocking lines that serve a didactic purpose for future generations. Unlike some poets who link truth with falsity,

\(^{36}\) Of course it was neither Guido nor his source Benoît, but a Latin redactor who “linked” the accounts of Dares and Dictys. Benoît and Guido thought this Latin text was one written by Cornelius, nephew to Sallust, since the account begins with a letter that commences, “Cornelius Nepos to Sallustius Crispus” [Cornelius Nepos Sallustio Crispo], but it may in fact have been Joseph of Exeter’s De Bello Trojano. For a more detailed explanation, see Mary Meek’s introduction to her translation: Guido delle Colonne, *Historia destructionis Troiae* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1974), xix.

Clerk locks this Latin “eyewitness” account into an English alliterative word hoard that can be translated truthfully to future British generations. In doing so, Clerk promulgates Guido’s version of the Troy story and rejects the poetic mendacities of Virgil and Homer. Clerk’s “locking” encourages the English reader to view his poem not as a fanciful epic, but a work of sober history that privileges truth over entertainment.

Clerk’s commitment to both his poetic project and a faithful translation of Guido is so thorough that it periodically causes him to make some infelicitous decisions in the creation of his text. For example, in the lines preceding the “lokyng” line, Clerk amplifies Guido’s comment on the transmission of great stories—“Vigent . . . pro gestorum magnitudine continuata recordia dum preteritorum in posteros sermo dirigitur” [continuous records flourish on account of the greatness of the deeds, as long as the discourse of what is past is distributed to posterity] (3)—not only because Clerk needs space in the text to mollify Guido’s contempt for poets, but also because Guido’s content is too brief to match the length of alliterative long lines. He then repeats the tag “most out of mynd” in line 10 with “straught out of mynd” in line 11. As Lawton notes, such glaring poetic mistakes should not lead us to condemn Clerk as a poet, but rather should serve as “an index of his high respect for Guido, and of his seriousness as a translator.”

Even though Clerk may not completely succeed in composing a precise and rich poem in English verse, his negotiation between poetry and prose still secures a faithful translation of the Troy story.

After postponing and deflecting Guido’s contempt for poets and establishing his authorial identity as a poet-translator, Clerk finally turns to the specifics of the Troy story and how he intends to provide the “truth of the matter” without rhetorical flourishes for a vernacular reading audience. The separation between the stanza that ends with the “lokyng of letturs” and the following stanza is clearly marked in the manuscript with a new rubric and large bold letters that begin the first line, “Now of Troy . . .” (27). It is only at this point that Clerk turns to the subject of his poem and joins Guido in a condemnation of false poets. The translation remains very close until both Guido and Clerk make the transition from false to true accounts. Here we witness the tension between Latin prose and vernacular poetry—while Guido legitimizes his history through writing in Latin, Clerk deemphasizes the authority of Latin and again reverts to generalities to avoid direct contradiction of Guido. Guido claims that his text ensures “ut fidelium ipsius ysto-\[254\]rie uera scribentium scripta apud occidentales omni tempore futuro uigeant

successiue, in vtilitatem eorum precipue qui gramaticam legunt, ut separare sciant uerum a falso de hiis que de dicta ystoria in libris gramaticalibus sunt descripta” [that the true accounts of the reliable writers of this history may endure for all future time hereafter among western peoples, chiefly for the use of those who read grammar books, so that they may know how to separate the true from the false among the things which were written of the said history in grammar books] (4). What Guido fails to clarify in this prolix sentence is that those “grammar books,” which fail to provide the whole truth, are the instructional texts that are filled with the work of the epic poets, Homer, Ovid, and Virgil, who combined both truth and falsity in their Latin poems.39

Guido’s history is then intended for a reading audience who values the truth-telling power of Latin prose. Lydgate, in trying to render Guido’s Latin into English, cannot escape Guido’s Latin and finally is forced to admit failure. As noted above, Lydgate claims early on to translate not only for Henry, but also for the “hyghe and lowe” in order that the story of Troy would be known in English as it had already been known in French and Latin on the Continent. Yet, Lydgate’s devotion to a vernacular telling of this history is tempered by his anxiety about his fidelity to the Latin text. He not only praises Guido’s Latinity, but also prays that God help him remain faithful to the text (372–84), a sentiment that continues throughout the prologue and first book, until he experiences a kind of translation anxiety in Book II. At this point, his pen had begun to “quake and tremble” (145) because he fears that his patron Henry “[m]y making rude schal beholde and rede” (148). He feels he cannot reproduce Guido’s rhetorical color and is reduced to decide that since “in ryme Ynglysch hath skarseté . . . I ne can / Folwen Guido” (168–70) and “I leve the wordis and folwe the sentence” (180). On one level this is an example of the “modesty topos,” but it is not long before Lydgate’s “modesty” becomes an admission of the inadequacy of English to match Latinate diction.

Despite Lydgate’s desire to exalt the English language, this translational crisis indicates that he feels that English cannot match the rhetorical complexity and sonority of the Latin language. This forces him to shift his fidelity from the Latin rhetoric to the historical ideas of Guido’s text. He now calls on Clio, the muse of history, to help him with his historical project (178–79), which effectively transforms his text from a translation to a moralistic tale that Pearsall has called “a homily first, an encyclopedia second, and

39. Thirteenth- and fourteenth-century readers would have most likely only known Homer from a rudimentary Latin translation. See Benson, The History of Troy in Middle English Literature, 3.
an epic nowhere.”40 Lydgate essentially admits what Talal Asad would call the “inequality” of English within the medieval hierarchy of languages, and accordingly crumbles in the face of Latinate authority.41 By contrast, Clerk neither cowers nor relinquishes his translational project to provide the history of Troy for an English audience. While he acknowledges Guido’s preference for Latin by relating that “wise men haue written the wordes before / Left it in latyn for lernyng of vs” (31–32), the rest of his references to language are more general and functional for the purposes of his narrative. To establish Guido’s account as the authority, he does not refer to its Latin prose, but instead claims that of all the histories of Troy, Guido’s is “þe text euyn” [the correct text] (51). Clerk treats Dares and Dictys in a similar manner; since Guido never mentions the language they used to compose their diaries, Clerk characterizes their “werkes” as written “[i]n letturs of þere langage as þai lerned hade” (58–9).42 Given his goal of “lokyng” or translating letters for readers who neither know Latin nor possess memory of past historical events, the use of letters from “their language” privileges the vernacular and inclusive narrative that he intends to provide for a lay aristocratic audience.

An examination of Clerk’s prologue, its divergences from Guido’s Historia, and its similarities and differences to Lydgate’s Troy Book lead to four conclusions. First and foremost, Clerk is a faithful translator who prefers compression and only embellishes when necessary. His fidelity to his source indicates that he makes no attempt to mitigate Guido’s pessimism about the consequences of the fall of Troy and therefore translates the warning against imperial designs for fourteenth-century English readers. Second, Clerk cleverly restructures his narrative and plays with shades of meaning in order to further his alliterative poetic project. This means that he often reverts to repetitive phrases to maintain both poetic subjectivity and historical fidelity. Third, vernacular poetry can appropriately and accurately express Guido’s Latinate “eyewitness truth” about historical events. His manipulation of Guido’s invective against poetry preserves the reputation of “sum” poets who

42. Since Guido never combined Dares andDictys accounts and instead translated Benoît’s Roman, he may not have known the language in which they wrote.
work to tell the whole truth and resist the trifles of Homer, Ovid, and Virgil. Fourth and most importantly, as a quintessential poet-translator, Clerk amplifies the importance of translation, not only of language, but also of the message that the translation bears. “By lokyng of letturs,” Clerk employs a new language (English) and a challenging mode (alliterative poetry) in order to reach a new audience. Without the establishment of the veracity of Clerk’s historical method, we sense that he fears that his romance may not be read as history at all. In other words, his fidelity and dedication to “locking” this account are attempts to define his poem as a serious work of translation and history that has the capability to critique contemporary strains of imperial historiography.

HECTOR’S HESITATIONS

Having established the salient characteristics of Clerk’s alliterative project and his translation theory, we may now examine the historical didacticism in the Troy story itself. In the words of Lydgate, I now “leve the wordis and folwe the sentence” of the Destruction to demonstrate the way this text functions as an historical exemplar. This forces us to ask the following question: if Clerk remains faithful to Guido and specifies a particular English audience interested in alliterative poetry and Trojan historiography, which historical ideas does the Destruction uniquely express? To understand Clerk’s perspective on England’s Trojan identity, we should attend to the causes that he attributes to the fall of Troy. While the exhumation of Troy and the vivification of Hector that I describe later in the chapter provide compelling images of doom, the most pacifistic parts of the poem are found in the dissection within the Trojan war councils. Unlike the Aeneid, wherein gods manipulate events and the destiny of the Trojan line seems to be transparent, Clerk’s Destruction illustrates a martial world that is almost completely determined by the will of military councils.₄³ Within the councils, we hear the declamations of the great Trojan heroes Hector, Troilus, and Aeneas and the most direct arguments against war, which allow us to discern the heightened agency of humans in the Destruction. In comparison, Lydgate’s Troy

₄³. Of course, the fatum of Virgil’s Aeneas is not as clear as it seems. Virgil shows great sympathy for those who suffer the pain caused by Aeneas’ adherence to his destiny (i.e. Creusa, Dido, and Pallas) and it is clear that Aeneas himself does not understand his fate. When he observes his future on Vulcan’s shield, he does not comprehend its significance (“rerumque ignarus”). See Virgil’s Aeneid, in Opera, ed. R. A. B. Mynors (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969), 8.730. See also Mihoko Suzuki, Metamorphoses of Helen: Authority, Difference, and the Epic (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989), 144–49.
Book illustrates a world in which Fortune plays an enhanced role in causing a human tragedy that can only be redeemed through God’s “good” providence. Providence assumes an empire-engendering potential for Lydgate that has no equivalent in Clerk’s Destruction. The absence of providence for Clerk is precisely the point—humans cannot anticipate that martial investments will yield imperial benefits.

In the words of Clerk’s Hector at the first war council, the Trojans suffer from not being able to perceive “the fer end what may fall after” (2246). This prophetic problem of failing to perceive one’s destiny pleads for what Virgilian providence seems to provide: a certain future of imperial glory. This providential theory of empire is most clearly articulated in Book VI of the Aeneid, when Anchises describes to Aeneas the transmigration of souls from Elysium into the future bodies of the founders and defenders of the Roman Empire:

Nunc age, Dardaniam prolem quae deinde sequatur
gloria, qui maneant Itala de gente nepotes,
inlustris animas nostrumque in nomen ituras . . . (756–58).45

[Come now, what glory shall follow hereafter the Dardan race, what children of the Italian clan shall remain, illustrious souls and heirs in our name . . .]

Examined uncritically, this ethereal transfer of power, in which an imperial spirit inhabits new bodies across time, provides hope and a justification for Roman sovereignty that is notably absent in the texts of Clerk and Guido. Lydgate’s Hector, however, has a Virgilian ring to him: he exalts “good providence,” but claims that “I hold it no prudence / To Fortune, ful of doubilnes” (2300–1). Even though the council agrees to acquiesce to Fortune’s “doubilnes,” Lydgate propagates a providential design that contains the potential for heroic souls to transmigrate from oblivion to glory. Clerk’s Hector instead laments the absence of such providence; whereas Virgil’s Aeneas is constantly nudged on by his fate, the Destruction’s Priam and his realm are essentially left to their own devices to determine the future of Troy.

44. By using the adjective “Virgilian,” I am not claiming that the Aeneid and its imperialism can be read in any singular way at all. Instead, I refer to the Galfridian reading of Virgil that appropriates the Aeneid’s imperial genealogy for its own political ends (see my discussion in chapter 1, 20–26).

45. As clear as this vision seems, it is important to note that when Aeneas later leaves Anchises in the Underworld, he passes through the ivory gate of false dreams. Suzuki, Metamorphoses of Helen, 144.
This is not to say that fate plays no part in the *Destruction*, but a comparison of the role of fate within Guido’s and Lydgate’s texts reveals Clerk’s enhanced attribution of human error to the fall of Troy. As I mentioned earlier about the missing section of Book I and II in the *Destruction*, Guido attributes blame for the “plague of great destruction” to both “the envious succession of the fates” and Laomedon’s inhospitality. However, the role of the fates for Guido is minor and vague, especially in comparison to Virgil, and the brunt of the blame is placed on the actions of the military leaders such as Priam, who are the object of periodic invective throughout the narrative. After Antenor’s diplomatic mission to Greece fails and Priam organizes a council of war, Guido halts the progression of the narrative briefly to reprove Priam’s boldness and lack of self-control in pursuing war against the Greeks: “Set dic, rex Priame, quis fatorum casus infelix ad tante infelicitatis audaciam tue quietis animum instigauit ut frenare proprios animi motus tui, licet non sint in hominis potestate, per matura consilia minime potuisses, ut, dum licetbat, abstraheres ab iniquis consiliis pedem tuum, et dum licebat, sciuisses tuas preteritas dissimulare iacturas, que per tot annorum curricula forte poterant obliuione deleri?” [But, say, King Priam, what unhappy accident of the fates incited your peaceful heart to such unfortunate audacity, so that you were not able in the least to curb the unique impulses of your heart by mature counsels (although, these impulses are not in the control of man), so that while it was permitted, you might have withdrawn from evil counsels, and while it was permitted, you would have known how to disguise your past losses, which perhaps through the course of so many years could have been obliterated by forgetfulness?] (56–57). The uncertain dynamic between fate and human agency that Guido expresses here somewhat lessens the poignancy of his reprisal and confuses his message. Even though Guido acknowledges that the “fates incited” Priam to action and that these “impulses are not in the control of man,” he expects that Priam should have been able to restrain his passion, avoid bad advice, and cover up his mistakes. In other words, “Even though you could not have prevented it, you should have.”

To modern readers this reproof seems ridiculous and reflects what C. David Benson calls Guido’s “inability to find God’s guiding hand or any other logic in the ruin and carnage of the Trojan War.” Guido knows about the imminent destruction of Troy, but fails to express in clear terms the nature of providence and freewill. In his translation, Lydgate amplifies the confu-

sion by claiming that the fault lies in “infolcicité,” “trouble,” “hap,” “destyné,” “hateful influence,” “sodeyn sort,” “fortune graceles,” “chaunce unhappy,” “willful lust,” and “fonnaid hardynes” (1797–804). Despite his variation of causes, Lydgate characteristically turns to “providence” to which Priam has been “[d]irked and blind” (1812). Thus, Lydgate doubly remains faithful to Guido’s confusion and the presence of Virgilian providence, which naturally leads to even more frustrating interpretive ambiguity.

There is no such equivocation in Clerk’s translation. Instead of trying to lay blame upon both the fates and Priam, Clerk directs the attack upon Priam:

But say me sir kyng what set in þi hede
What wrixlit þi wit & þi wille chaunget
Or what happont the so haastely þi with hardnes of wille
To put þe to purpas þat pynet þe aftur
What meuyt the with malis to myn on þi harme
And to cache a counse to combur þi selue rewme
With daunger and drede of a dede hate
ffor a lure þat was light & of long tyme
Þat wold ȝepely haue bene forȝeton in yeres a few. (2059–67)

[But tell me sir king, what controlled your mind, what overcame your wit and changed your will, or what happened to you so hastily with a willful eagerness to put you to the purpose that you regretted afterwards? What moved you with malice to bring trouble to yourself and to accept counsel to harm yourself realm with danger and dread of a dire hate for a minor crime from a long time ago that would quickly have been forgotten in a few years?]

Clerk deftly avoids the discussion of the role of the fates through the employment of a strategy that has become his modus operandi in his translation of Guido: the obfuscation of the grammatical subject. To remain faithful as a translator, Clerk does not contradict his source and only cuts references to the fates so that Guido’s question, “what unhappy accident of the fates incited your peaceful heart?” becomes a coupling of alliterative tags: “But say me sir kyng what set in þi hede / What wrixlit þi wit & þi wille chaunget?” Clerk’s reversion to generality about “what” incited Priam’s war mongering allows him to remain consistent with Guido while at the same time to alter slightly the object of the invective to the “malis” of the Trojan king that causes him “to cache a counse to combur þi selue rewme.” Here an exami-
nation of Chetham’s manuscript yields some interesting findings about this mystifying line. I have quoted Matsumoto's diplomatic text above to show how the reading of the manuscript leads to at least two different readings. Rendered literally, the line means “to accept counsel to harm your self realm.” Chetham most likely crossed out “selue” and wrote in “rewme,” but we will never know whether “rewme” was in his copy text or was an addition by him or another reader because Clerk’s translation of Guido at this point in the passage is relatively loose. Guido makes references later in the invective to the broader implications of the decision to go to war, but here they are less heavy handed than they are in Destruction. Clerk continues to criticize Priam by contending that “þi fall was so fuerse with so fele other” [your fall with so many others was so fierce] (2083), which continues the charge that Priam’s actions will not only harm him “selue,” but also his realm and future generations to come. In contrast to Virgil’s providential model and Guido and Lydgate’s oblique notions of the authority of the fates and providence, Clerk creates a martial world in which tragedy is driven not by the machinations of fate, but by human error. Clerk’s emphasis on human fallibility is why the treason of Aeneas and Antenor, instead of the treachery of the Greeks, looms as the most significant cause of the fall of Troy.

In all of the texts, the argument against war falls on deaf ears and Troy’s destruction commences. Guido, Lydgate, and Clerk all effectively urge for reasonable approaches to war, but a comparative reading reveals that the Destruction emerges as a raw expression of human freewill. Clerk’s Trojan history then does not deride the “doubilnes” of Fortune or throw up its hands in cosmologic confusion, but rather directs its polemic at its human audience. To make the message palpable, Clerk continues the attack upon martial designs through the figure of Hector and his response to his father’s proposal to attack the Greeks. While this greatest of Trojan heroes acknowledges the need to avenge the rape of Hesione and the destruction of the first Troy, he proceeds to beg Priam:

Consider to our cause with a clene wit
Let our gate be so gouernet þat no grem follow
Ne no torfer be tyde ne no tene after

47. Panton and Donaldson read the first part of the line as “to cache a connse” and consider “connse” to be a corruption of “comse,” which means “beginning,” but a close look at the manuscript indicates that the word could also be the “counse” or “counsel” of Matsumoto’s text. Given Guido’s emphasis on mature and evil “consilia,” “counse” is the preferable reading.

48. This folio of the manuscript is especially worn, possibly indicating its interest or value to its readers.
Consider our cause with a clear mind. Let our conduct be so guarded that no grief will follow, neither harm nor injury will be incurred afterwards. Examine all losses that will occur by the end, what will happen in the beginning onwards to the midway point. Proceed forth to the next effect, search it within, and look to the very end what destruction may follow. It is not wise or prudent advice to follow, I think, to attend to what happens first and not foresee the far end or what may happen afterwards.

Through this bold speech, Hector implores Priam to consider not only the short term rewards or consequences, but also “the last ende,” which signifies the future ramifications of their warlike endeavors. The repetitive emphasis on the “ende” in this passage not only encourages the reader to consider the destructive end of the Trojans but also originates singularly in Hector’s multiple references to the “end” (fine) of their war with the Greeks in Guido’s text (59–60), which is an instructive alteration to his unacknowledged source, Benoît de Sainte-Maure’s *Le Roman de Troie*. In Benoît’s romance, Hector also speaks these words of caution about “la fin” (3804), but only after Antenor ardently urges the same message:

Quar ço nos diënt li autor:
Qui grant chose vueut envaîr,
La fin a qu’il en deit venir
Deit esguarder, se il est sages,
Que n’en vienge honte e damages. (3646–50)⁴⁹

[For this is what authorities tell us: whoever wishes to attack a great thing, if he is wise, will examine the conclusion at which he ought to arrive so that he does not bring about shame and harm.]

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By having Antenor remain silent and Hector speak these wise words of caution, Guido makes the sentiment more authoritative. After all, Antenor becomes an insidious traitor while Hector dies valiantly for a cause he supports only through his loyalty to his father. Given this shift, the Guido-tradition posits Hector as the tragic hero of the history, who represents the fall of reason that haunts the imperial ideology, not only of the Trojans, but also of their progeny.

Other characters such as Cassandra and Helenus support Hector’s hesitations, but their speeches are swallowed up by the cacophony of Trojan voices that praise the war effort. Paris and Troilus both urge for war and their support of Priam sways the council in favor of Paris’ expedition to Greece, thereby continuing the progression of events that lead to the destruction of Troy. Hector eventually joins the fray with the rest of the Trojans and becomes so caught up in his bloodlust that even his wife Andromache’s nightmare about his death cannot convince him to refrain from battle. As soon as it seems that his chilling words are forgotten, Achilles treacherously slays him, which elicits an outpouring of Trojan grief that is embodied in Hector’s pseudo-resurrected body seated in his tomb. Hector’s death is the beginning of the end of Troy, and the many lines devoted to the description of his tomb remind us of his wise counsel that urged Priam to consider the consequences of war.

EXHUMING TROY

As I will suggest throughout the book, careful attention to death and resurrection is characteristic of the alliterative romances of the Guido-tradition. Christine Chism has argued a similar point, even going so far to imply that alliterative romances writ large serve to “animate British history by reviving past bodies,” citing the examples of the giant of St. Michael’s Mount, Sir Priamus, and even the Green Knight.50 These “revivals” of characters who refuse to die serve as a clever conceit for the Revivalist claim about a moribund verse form that is resurrected in the fourteenth century, but as Blake and Schiff have suggested, such arguments place undue weight on alliterative poetry as a coherent genre.51 Yet, Chism’s contention that the alliterative romances invoke “the past to reinforce or challenge contemporary ideologies” certainly applies to Clerk’s project, which weakens the triumphalistic.

51. Blake, “Middle English Alliterative Revivals,” 205–14; Schiff, *Revivalist Fantasy*. 
force of the *translatio imperii* both through the animation of dead bodies and through the revived and dismembered figure of Troy. Through a comparative analysis of the death and pseudo-resurrection of Hector and the destruction and reconstruction of the First Troy in both the *Destruction* and Lydgate’s *Troy Book*, Clerk’s rendering of these events emerges as uniquely damnatory of the exploitation of Trojan heritage of Britain as a legitimizing tool.

While Chism acknowledges that alliterative romances interrogate historical notions of linearity, she does not consider the figure of the destroyed city of Troy that fractures the coherence of these narratives. She characterizes the more substantial romances (*Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, *The Wars of Alexander*, *The Siege of Jerusalem*, and the alliterative *Morte Arthure*) as engaging in the message of “caveat imperator,” but because she does not consider the influence that the *Destruction* or the Guido-tradition exacts on these poems, she does not attend to the historiographic problems they pose. As I demonstrate, the resurrections that occur in the *Destruction* transcend benign interrogations of the *translatio imperii*—they reveal how each invocation of Trojan historiography awakens a dangerous past that exposes the destructive implications of imperial desires. The half-dead figure of Troy adds a pessimistic coloring to these alliterative romances that does more than admonish—it condemns.

The clearest example of a “revived body” in the *Destruction* is that of Hector, who is treacherously slain from behind by Achilles and then memorialized by Priam in a morbidly iconographic monument. To understand Clerk’s representation of the revival, we should first turn to Lydgate’s exegetical version of Hector’s death in Book III. Rather than dwell on the unscrupulous Achilles in Guido’s text, Lydgate shifts the focus to the avarice of Hector. Instead of emphasizing Hector’s prowess in battle, Lydgate homilizes upon the deadly consequences of coveting. After slaying a Greek king, Hector strips the armor of this dead warrior, leaving his back vulnerable to Achilles’ spear. This inspires Lydgate to lament

> But out, allass, on fals covetyse,
> Whos gredy fret—the whiche is gret pité—


In hertis may nat lightly staunched be.
The etyk gnaweth be so gret distresse
That it diffaceth the highe worthines
Ful ofte sythe of thies conquerours
And of her fame rent aweie the flours.
Desyre of havynge in a gredy thought
To highe noblesse sothly longeth nought;
No swiche, spoilynge, nor robberie
Apartene not to worthi chivalrye:
For covetyse and knyghthood, as I lere,
In o cheyne may nat be knet yfere;
For kouthe it is that ofte swiche ravyne
Hath cause ben and rote of the ruyne
Of many worthi—whoso liste take hede—
Like as ye may now of Hector rede
That sodeinly was brought to his endynge
Only for spoilynge of this riche kyng. (3.5354–72)

[But curses, alas, on false avarice, whose greedy gnawing—which is a great pity—may not lightly be assuaged in hearts. This desire causes such great distress that it disfigures the high worthiness very often experienced by these conquerors and rends away the flowers of their fame. The desire for possessions or covetous longing does not truly belong in high nobility; no such stealing, spoiling, or robbery appertains to worthy chivalry: for avarice and knighthood, as I understand them, may not be knitted together in a chain; for it is known that often such greed has been the cause and root of the ruin of many worthies—whoever wishes take heed—such as you may now read about Hector who suddenly was brought to his ending just for despoiling this rich king.]

These lines, entirely unique to Lydgate’s version, more than simply provide material for those inclined to patristic exegesis and reading Troy’s fall as a result of deadly sin. They give Hector a character flaw of imprudence, which taints his admirable anti-war declamation, desecrates the memorial that Priam erects for him, and reduces his status as the symbol of Trojan glory. Clerk, on the other hand, eschews this homiletic mode and reproduces faithfully the sequence of events that he finds in Guido’s text. Hector dies through no sin of his own, but through the treachery of Achilles, which leaves his reputation as a virtuous warrior intact.
Hector’s innocence at the moment of his death possesses symbolic significance, but his pseudo-resurrection garners more interest for Clerk since it translates further destruction. After describing the excessive mourning and fainting that ensues after the procession of Hector’s dead body, he turns to the construction of his tomb. This is a natural sequence of events within the metonymy of the body as a representation of the city, since the city serves as what Henri Lefebvre calls a “guardian of civic unity” that “binds the living to the dead just as it binds the living to one another.”

Monuments to the dead contain the civic chaos that ensues from the death of one of its members, particularly one such as Hector, a potential Trojan monarch. Hector’s funerary structure is far from conventional, however. Instead of enclosing his body in the privacy of a crypt that would allow the body to decay away from the human eye, Priam pursues a ghastly public alternative:

Then priam the prise kyng prestly gert come  
Maisturs full mony & men þat were wise  
He fraynet at þo fre with a fyn wille  
How the korse might be keppit in his kynd holl  
ffresshe vndefaced & in fine hew  
As a lede vpon lyue likyng to se  
And not orible ne vgly of odir to fele. (8726–32)

[Then Priam the prized king quickly summoned skilled artisans and wise men. With great eagerness, he asked the men how the corpse might be kept in its natural state, fresh, undefaced, and in a fine hue, just as a live man were to appear, and not horrible, ugly, or of a foul odor.]

Priam’s consultation with Trojan undertakers reflects a desire to revive Troy’s greatest hero and maintain the power that he wielded as a “lede vpon lyue.” As Troy’s greatest warrior, Hector is a metonym for the prowess of Troy and remains its martyr even until the final lines that list the warriors he killed in battle. Allowing his body to putrefy would seemingly foretell the decay of the city. In order to accomplish the impossible task of reviving the dead flesh, the architects of the tomb engage in what James Simpson cleverly characterizes as “macabre engineering.”

They construct an elaborate monument that includes a tabernacle adorned with pure gold and fine stones, a walkway for

observers, a golden image of Hector, and even the seated body of Hector himself (8733–73).

Þan þo maisturs gert make amyddes his hed
A hole þurgh his horne pan hertyly by craft
There in put was a pipe with a prise ointment
Of bavme & of balsamom þat brethed full swete
With oþer maters mynget þat most were of strenght
Conseruatours by craft þat cointly were made. (8774–79)

[Then the artisans made in the center of his head a hole through his skull eagerly by skill; therein was placed a pipe containing a noble ointment of balsam that smelled very sweet, mixed with other elements, which were of a strength cunningly fashioned by the undertakers' craft.]

The detail of the embalming and the translation of Guido’s “uertice” (177) to the Anglo-Saxon kenning “horne pan,” meaning “skull” or “horn pane,” invites us to read Hector’s body as a coroner would, following the route of the vivifying liquid from his head down to his feet as if through an x-ray or autopsy. This description of the course of the “lycour” that enlivens Hector’s flesh and the illustration of the additional adornments that the death ministers add to his tomb continue for another thirty-nine lines (8780–818), a detailed digression that has no equal in the rest of the poem. The effect is the invocation and establishment of Hector’s presence as a vivified fragment of Troy’s glorious past for all to witness.

Yet, this decryption of Hector’s body subverts the representative power of the body politic. In the case of most funerary monuments, as Lefebvre suggests, such civic architecture “produces living bodies” and the “animating principle of such a body, its presence, is neither visible nor legible as such, nor is it the object of any discourse, for it reproduces itself within those who use the space in question, within their lived experience.” For the Trojan people, Hector’s presence is eerily visible, collapsing the metonymic distance between the city and the body. Rather than represent the transcendence of

56. The later Middle English equivalent “braynne-panne” is used by Sir Thomas Malory in both martial and “crime-scene” contexts. Its suitability for the description of battle is shown after Launcelot rescues Gwenyver from the fire, in which he “smote sir Gaherys and sir Gareth upon the brayne-pannes” (1178.2). The latter use, which recalls Hector’s “autopsy,” would seem to fit a modern crime scene investigation. Tristram is identified by the gap in his sword, which is consistent with the fragment that was “founde in the brayne-panne of sir Marhalte” (389.26). Eugène Vinaver, ed., The Works of Sir Thomas Malory (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967).
57. Lefebvre, The Production of Space, 137.
the body politic in the manner of a funerary effigy, his enlivened body is a testament of his death and an historical exemplar of the horrors of war that is reaffirmed in the listing of the dead at the end of the poem. By contrast, Lydgate is not satisfied to leave his hero as a fixture in a living monument. Instead, he follows Chaucer’s *Troilus and Criseyde* in stellifying his hero, whereby Hector’s “soule” (5749) leaves this temple to enjoy the “joie and blisse above the sterris clere” (5752). This implies that his presence can no longer be found in the tomb, but in the heavens, an image that is strikingly similar to the Virgilian transmigration of souls. Whereas Lydgate’s Hector becomes a glorious constellation for future observation and imitation, Clerk’s revived Hector carries with him the presence of the past and the potential for future horror on earth. He now sits, like a saint’s body preserved for pilgrims who seek spiritual healing, as a martyr who spoke the truth about war and paid dearly for it.

Hector’s specter, in the manner of the Green Knight’s head, also terrifies onlookers in the *Destruction* and inspires bellicosity. Priam and his architects defy the putrefaction of Hector’s body and postpone their own destruction, but not for long. A death ritual for Hector at his tomb becomes the occasion for the encounter between Achilles and Hector’s sister Polyxena, which inspires a love-struck Achilles to beseech the Greeks to cease their siege in return for Polyxena (9089–400). Here, as is often found in medieval romances such as *Yvain and Gawain* and Chaucer’s *The Knight’s Tale*, a knight woos a woman over the corpse of his adversary. In this case, the sight of Polyxena prostrate in front of Hector’s body, “sittyng full hoole”

58. Chaucer describes Troilus “As he that was withouten any peere, / Save Ector, his tyme, as I kan heere . . . / And whan that he [Troilus] was slayn in this manere, / His lighte goost ful blisfully is went / Up to the holughnesse of the eighthe spere, / In convers letyng everich element; / And ther he saugh with ful aysement / The erratik sterres, herkenyng armonye / With sownes ful of hevenyssh melodie.” See *Troilus and Criseyde* in *The Riverside Chaucer*, ed. Larry Benson, 3rd ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987), 5.1803–4, 1807–13.

59. And in each case, the living knights grieve: Ywain grieves after watching the translation and Palamon actually participates in the rite, wearing the adornments of a mourner (2882–84). See Mary Flowers Braswell, ed., *Sir Perceval of Galles and Ywain and Gawain* (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 1995), 869–74. Such lamentation for an enemy is a convention of romance that is especially well illustrated in the death ritual of Darius in the alliterative poem *The Wars of Alexander*. See Hoyt N. Duggan and Thorlac Turville-Petre, ed., *The Wars of Alexander* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1989), 3449. As Alexander observes Darius’ funeral, he “as a barne gretis,” a ritual that he performs at the death of all his enemies. Chism argues that his tears allow him to move past the death of an honorable adversary and prepare himself to battle another enemy. Enemies like Darius possess hero status, even in the eyes of Alexander, and a proper ritual of honor allow them “to be mourned more cleanly; dead heroes do not haunt as powerfully as dead victims.” Thus, by participating in the grief, winning knights move from battle to battle without carrying the guilt and consequences of dishonoring their defeated foes. See *Alliterative Revivals*, 143.
(9118), wounds Achilles and restrains his bloodlust. His lovesickness even causes him to grieve as Polyxena does at the feet of the enlivened Hector. Just as “teris . . . trickilt on her [Polyxena’s] tryet chekes” (9133), “terys on his [Achilles’] chekes / Ronen full rifely” (9209–10). While these similar phrases equalize the two characters in their grief, the tears of Polyxena only “trickle,” while those of Achilles “run abundantly.” Thus, Hector’s revived body serves as the catalyst for a wounding that causes even more significant damage upon Achilles’ martial identity than he had inflicted on Hector in defeating him on the battlefield. However, this transformation from Greece’s greatest warrior to swooning lover only temporarily encumbers Hector’s slayer and stalls the martial intentions of the Greeks. As Simpson notes, Polyxena’s “grief at Hector’s death initiates a terrible and determinant pattern of violence and recrimination . . . [that] . . . can only finally be resolved by her sacrifice, which ends the Trojan war by allowing the Greeks to return, to their own disasters.”

Her death is intimately connected not only with Achilles’ tomb, upon which she is slain by Achilles’ son Pyrrhus, but also with the artificially revived Hector, whose half-dead presence haunts the rest of the narrative and dooms all, both Trojans and Greeks, to destruction.

The preserved Hector serves as the clearest, but not the most poignant, example of a “revived body” in the Destruction. When Priam returns to the ruins of the first Troy that his father Laomedon had ruled, he “[s]egh the buyldynges brent & beton to ground” (1518) and bewails the horrific sight so intensely “Þat all his wongys were wete for weping of terus” (1520). As the first Trojan mourner of the poem, Priam’s example becomes the basis for the many future descriptions of grief. Clerk commonly uses the image of the tears on the faces of the grief-stricken for hyperbolic effect. For example, after Hector, Deiphobus, and Troilus have all been slain, Paris weeps so profusely, that his tears “[o]uer flowet his face fell on his brest / With streamys out straght þurgh his stithe helme” (10661–62). The fates of these heroes and the city they defend are intimately connected, and the grief crescendos from Priam’s first gaze on the ashes of the first Troy until the final destruction of the new city. Priam’s sorrow over the fallen city is the exemplar for other scenes of the mourning, indicating that we should understand Priam’s object of weeping to be not only an incinerated city, but also a dismembered body that he desperately hopes to revive.

Clerk may have assimilated this notion of the “city as a body” from Virgil’s Aeneid, a text to which he refers directly three times (49, 1492, 12914). At the end of the description of the fall of Troy, Virgil describes the destroyed

60. Simpson, Reform and Cultural Revolution, 94.
Troy, which is embodied in the decapitated Priam, as “ingens litore truncus, / auulsumque umeris caput et sine nomine corpus” [a monstrous torso on the sea-shore, a head torn off the shoulders and a body without a name] (2.557–58). According to the imperialistic reception of Virgil, the fragmented parts of Troy are dispersed seeds that germinate to become a Roman empire that will fully bloom under Caesar Augustus, but for Clerk, such raisings of the dead do not lead to life and imperial power, but instead to death and greater destruction. In the *Destruction*, Priam attempts to revive Troy in a way that prefigures his later embalming of Hector: he commissions masons, miners, and architects to resurrect the destroyed city. Even the language Clerk uses to describe the rebuilding evokes a ritual exhumation of a dead body. Clerk explains how the workers “[s]erchit vp the soile þere þe Citie was” (1533), which indicates that digging took place. The use of “serchit vp the soile” is especially evocative because it refers doubly to digging and searching, two actions that go hand in hand in exhumation. Interestingly, there is no such grave digging vocabulary in Guido; he merely recounts how the workers “amotis ruderibus et ruinosis locis purgatis” [removed the debris and cleared the ruins] (46), which characterizes the first Troy more as detritus to be removed than a body to be preserved. The digging that occurs is given a purpose: “To make sure the fundacioun” (537). Lydgate uses several lines to describe the removal of the ruins and the building of the new wall, which reflects his interest in the details of the New Troy’s construction. By contrast, Clerk’s divergence from his source here prepares his readers for Priam’s further futile attempts to “revive” Troy, including his refreshment of Hector’s flesh through a constantly flowing embalming liquid and his final attempts to resist the Greeks and the treason of Aeneas and Antenor.

Clerk is more interested in revealing to his audience of Trojan inheritors how these attempted resurrections ultimately fail than how they temporarily succeed. Even though Priam effectively digs up the ashes of Troy and “byld vp a bygge towne of þe bare vrthe” (1534) to reestablish Trojan power, his newly erected city suffers even more complete destruction than its predecessor did. Clerk reminds the audience of their Trojan ancestry by calling Priam’s realm a “new Troye” in the title to the fifth book despite the fact that his source reads “magne Troie” or “great Troy” (43) in the title and “secunde Troye” in the text of the book (46). Using the term “new Troye” reaffirms Clerk’s familiarity with Geoffrey’s *Historia*, which describes Brutus’ search of the island for the site of the city that Diana had promised. On the land adjacent to the river Thames, “Conditit itaque ciuitatem ibidem eamque Troiam
Nouam uocauit. Ex hoc nomine multis postmodum temporibus appellata tandem per corruptionem vocabuli Tinouantum dicta fuit” [he founded the city and called it New Troy. It was known by this name for many ages thereafter until at last, through corruption of the name, it was called Trinouantum] (14).61 While the “new Troye” in his title is more evidence that Clerk knew Galfridian history, it also suggests that he was aware of the contemporary uses of the term. During the reign of Richard II, at the Smithfield tournament held in October 1390, the Crie des Jouistes proudly refers to London as “la neufe troy,” which serves as one of many examples of appropriations of Trojan identity.62 Another late fourteenth-century alliterative poet, the anonymous author of Saint Erkenwald uses the same label for London: “Now þat London is neuenyd hatte þe New Troie, / þe metropol and þe mayster toun hit euermore has bene” (25–56).63 On the surface, this statement expresses an enthusiastic acceptance of the translatio imperii and a subsequent optimism about Troy’s future that is absent in Destruction, but the fact that the Erkenwald-poet calls London a “New Troie” suggests that Clerk may have used the same label to evoke “London” to establish an insular Trojan geography in the minds of his readers.

The doomed New Troy of the Destruction possesses added significance when juxtaposed with the New Troy that appears in John Gower’s contemporary Latin poem, Vox Clamantis. Gower’s first book, written in response to the 1381 Rising, describes a dream he had:

A dextrisque nouam me tunc vidisse putabam
Troiam, que vidue languida more fuit:
Que solet ex muris cingi patuit sine muro,
Nec potuit seras claudere porta suas. (1.879–882)64

[On my right I then thought I saw New Troy, who was weak in the habit of a widow. Ordinarily surrounded by walls, it lay open without a wall, and the gate could not shut its bars.]

Using the image of a powerless Troy as a representation of London’s vulnerability to revolt, Gower envisions a city that does not bear the trappings of empire, but rather lies exposed and ripe for plunder. Clerk’s New Troy, on the contrary, has walls and fortifications aplenty, which he describes in detail for 153 lines (1535–1687), but the effect is not to boast New Troy’s indestructibility. Instead, Clerk’s tone is nostalgic:

Was neuer sython vnder son Cite so large
Ne neuer before as we fynd fourmyt in vrthe
Nonso luffly on to loke in any Lond out. (1538–40)

[There was never since under the sun a city so large; never before would we find one so formed on earth nor one so lovely to look on in any land.]

Clerk not only reminds his readers of the New Troy’s reformation from its grave in the “vrthe,” but also contends that no future city will match its size or beauty. The mention of “never sython” is a brief moment of providence that prophesies the inability of future cities to match the glory of Troy. According to the translatio imperii, Troy’s hereditary cities are Rome and, more significantly for Clerk’s audience, London. This accords with the fate of this beautifully constructed New Troy, which the Greeks invaded

And the bildynges bete doun to the bare erthe
All the cite vnsarkenly þai set vpon fyre
With gret launchaund lawes into the light ayre
Wroght vnder wallez walt hom to ground
Grete palis of prise put into askys
With flames of fyre fuerse to be hold. (12005–10)

[and beat the buildings down to the bare earth. All of the city they fiercely set on fire with great launching strokes into the light air, toppled walls to the ground, reduced the great palace of renown to ashes with flames of fire fierce to behold.]

Clerk sends the ominous message that cities attempting to match Troy’s glory will return to ashes in the end. Excising Guido’s condemnation of the savagery of the Greeks (234), Clerk emphasizes the culpability of the Trojans themselves. His ire is directed instead at Aeneas and Antenor, whose homes have been spared, interjecting, “anger hom betyde!” [may they suffer for it!] (12015). Like Gower, Clerk is disgusted by the way Troy has been left without
fortifications and rendered defenseless. The vulnerable city is literally beaten back down into the earth from which it had arisen and fire consumes what has been left standing.

As Simpson observes, these scenes are consistent reminders of how diplomacy has failed and “history is held in the balance by purely human passions and decisions.” Such an emphasis on human culpability emerges throughout the narrative, but most memorably after the Trojans fail to heed the advice against war.

Hade the counsell ben kept of the knight Ector
And the Ernyst speche Eftward of Elinus the Bysshop
Cassandras care considret with all
With the prophesy of Protheus put into hertys
Troy with þi toures hade bene a toune noble
And wond in his weile to the worldes ende. (2711–16)

[Had the counsel of the knight Hector been heeded, and afterwards Hel-enus the Bishop's earnest speech and Cassandra's fear considered as well, with the prophecy of Proteus taken to heart, Troy with its towers would have been a noble city, and would have dwelled in its wealth until the world's end.]

While Clerk never denies the power of divine providence, he crafts a world in which humans are the diplomatic agents of their own prosperity or demise. Unfortunately, Clerk's New Troy assumes the guise of the undead and tragically perpetuates the “plague of great destruction” to which it eventually succumbs.

A “DESTRUCTIVE” CONTRIBUTION TO TROJAN HISTORIOGRAPHY

The treatment of Hector's death and his tomb is emblematic of Clerk's perspective of the entire history of the Trojans. Rather than view Hector's death and Troy's fall as an opportunity for a rebirth or stellification that will spawn future heroes and empires, Clerk sees the destruction of Troy as an event of lamentable tragedy and loss. At the end of his history, following the example of Dares, Dictys, and Guido, there are no expressions of hope for future

generations, only the epitaphs of the dead and the ones they slew in battle. We find a compelling analogue in the treatment of Hector by Christine de Pizan, who by 1400–1 had begun to assume a position that was antithetical to many optimistic renderings of the Troy narrative. Christine developed an increasingly pessimistic perspective of Hector that is reflected in her three representations of this Trojan hero in Épistre Othea, Le Livre de la Mutation de Fortune, and Cité des dames. In the last of her Hector narratives, Cité des dames, he is already dead, and his tomb is the macabre spectacle and catalyst for consequent devastation and death that we find in the Destruction. As Lorna Jane Abray aptly notes, “Christine spoke of Hector not to praise him, but to bury him, to close the door on his elaborate tomb before his awe-inspiring corpse betrayed yet more of the living to their doom. Troy to her, like original sin, was a poisoned inheritance and Hector just another old Adam to be transcended.” Like Clerk, Christine contends that Hector’s heroism has expired and any imitation of his martial prowess unnecessarily revives a contaminated Trojan line that should be left dead and buried.

Such a morbid ending did not suit the tastes of Lydgate, who eliminates the listing of the slain and substitutes a conclusion in which he identifies himself, lauds his patron Henry V, and pays homage to Chaucer. Since Lydgate was working from a source in Guido who was ambivalent about imperialism, his Troy Book naturally expresses hesitations and anti-war invective, but its approval of the translatio imperii is made manifest in its praise of Henry V. Lydgate not only names him “protector of Brutis Albyoun” (5.3377) and “[o]f Normaundie the myghti conquerour” (5.3381), but also goes on to make many references to his heritage that entitles him to rule in both England and France (5.3381–416). For Lydgate, the fall of Troy serves as an exemplar more for the mutability of worldly things and the consequences of sin than for the tragic consequences of war. Clerk, by contrast, makes no attempt to moralize or justify territorial expansion at the end of his poem and instead remains faithful to Guido’s ending, which seals the tomb, so to speak, on Troy’s glory.


67. Lorna Jane Abray, “Imagining the Masculine: Chistine de Pizan’s Hector, Prince of Troy,” in Fantasies of Troy: Classical Tales and the Social Imaginary in Medieval and Early Modern Europe, eds. Alan Shepard and Stephen D. Powell (Toronto: Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies, 2004), 136–43.


69. Abray, “Imagining the Masculine,” 147.
Both the specter and unheeded counsel of Hector cast Troy’s authority as an origin of empire buried in the soil. Though Troy’s glory is not translated, something is passed on hereditarily. There are multiple references throughout the poem not only to British inheritance, but also to consequences that will affect future generations, presumably in the form of Guido’s “plague of great destruction.” The *Destruction of Troy* then translates to its English readers what it advertises: destruction. As I demonstrate in the following chapters, we witness this message not only in this poem, but also within other surviving alliterative romances that incorporate Trojan history in their narratives.