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The Sege of Troye

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Introduction to text and manuscript
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Lydgate's Troy Book

The Matter of Troy in England

To a medieval and aristocratic mind, the story of Troy was of outstanding importance. Its popularity throughout the middle ages is due to the fact that many Western European communities created pedigrees, at one time or another, which were meant to prove their descent from a Trojan hero. The story of Troy, then, was considered to be historical truth, *res facgestae*, and not *res fictae*, a matter of romance. The literary descent of this appropriation of ancient history is well-known. To all appearances, the myth of a Trojan descent first shows up in the *Chronicle* of Fredegar who decorated the Franks with a Trojan ancestry, in the 7th century. The myth resurfaces about 800 in Nennius who connects Celtic history with Rome and Troy, through the eponymous hero Brutus; it is then again used in Dudo of St Quentin's and in William of Jumièges' chronicles about the deeds of the Norman dukes (c.1020, c.1070), and in Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britanniae* (c.1136-38), who all used it to legitimize the power and rule of their kings, to create a common ancestry with Rome and to imbue their lordships with a comparable status. From them, it seems to have passed to common knowledge and common use all over Europe. When Guido delle Colonne wrote his Latin remake of Benoît de Sainte Maure's *Roman de Troie*, he could rely on an established tradition when he claimed that the English, the French, the Venetians, the Sicilians, and together with them the Tuscans and the Calabrians, all derived their descent from Troy.[1] The literary sources of these political concoctions are equally well-known:[2] taking Dictys Cretensis and Dares Phrygius as his main sources, Benoît de Sainte Maure produced his highly influential *Roman de Troie* in about 1160-1170; his version was to become one of the major medieval sources for the history of Troy. When his *Roman* had in turn been reworked into the *Historia destructionis Troiae* by Guido, the scene was finally set for all later medieval Troy versions to come.

In England, however, the story of Troy does not seem to have cast an immediate spell over aristocratic audiences; the Normans, the Angevin and the Plantagenet dynasties, it seems, together with their magnates, were much more concerned about with their descent from Arthur than with that from a distant Felix Brutus who was a mere fugitive from Troy, though he and his knights had overcome the giants in Briatin and had successfully founded Brutus Albion. Nevertheless, it is reported that Henry I took his time and listened carefully to an account of the alleged French descent from Troy, while on a short military expedition into French territory in 1128;[3] for the English, Geoffrey of Monmouth in his Latin History of the British Kings had supplied a Trojan society with its own customs and language, and transported it to London which is the only town Brutus founded, as Nova Troia. Despite this offer of identifying with the Trojan descent, however, and despite the Latin *De excidio Troiae*

historia which was probably composed by Joseph of Exeter for Archbishop Baldwin in c.1188-1190, and again: despite the fact that Benoît may have composed his *Roman* for the court of Henry II, the Trojan ancestry seems simply to have been taken for granted in England; everybody else, so to speak, could boast of the same origin.

We have to wait for the late 14th and early 15th centuries until we find more extensive use being made of the matter of Troy in England. The first (at least as far as manuscript evidence goes) to compose a version of the Troy story is Geoffrey Chaucer. His *Troilus and Criseyde*, however, is not at all concerned with the historical importance of the matter; it may be that he wrote the greatest of all medieval love poems - he did not write a historical poem. It is only at the beginning of the next century that poems about the true history of Troy began to be composed in English; from then on, English versions so to speak multiply. There is a fairly unpretentious couplet version called *The Seege of Troye* whose 2066 lines appear in manuscripts of about 1400 and later (though some literary historians would date its composition to 1300-1325); there is the *Gest Historiale of the Destruction of Troy* in 14,044 alliterating lines, in a manuscript of c.1450 (and again, some would have it earlier, dating the composition to c.1350-1400); next, we have the *Laud Troy Book*, 18,664 lines in rhymed couplets, in a manuscript of the early 15th century, said to have been composed around 1400; there is a *Prose Siege of Troy*, 13 pages in print, dating from the second quarter of the 15th century, and towards its end, William Caxton will print and publish his *Recuyell of the Historyes of Troy* in 1475-76.[4] Outstanding among these, however, is John Lydgate's *Hystorye, Sege, and Destruccyon of Troye* which he began in 1412, and finished in 1420 (the title is Pynson's title in his printed edition of 1513).

We do not know where this apparently sudden interest in the story of the downfall of Troy came from. The rapid political, social, and religious changes of the turn of the century (deposition of Richard II, usurpation of Henry IV, Lollard movement) may have created a sense of insecurity which, according to anthropologists, necessarily leads to the writing of history, out of which new order may be regained.[5] Little social dramas like the expropriation of the favourites of Richard II, or the parliamentary attempts to control the household expenses of Henry IV, led to a more conservative attitude in the 15th century as compared with the 14th, which is clearly reflected in its literature; and John Lydgate was part of that movement. Furthermore, there was an ever increasing desire for peace, and a wish that Henry V would put an end to the Hundred Years' War with France; Lydgate is among those who more or less explicitly voiced a demand for peace.[6] He is urgently speaking in favour of it in his *Siege of Thebes*, though less so in his *Troy Book*; but even there he expresses his hope that the marriage between Henry and Katherine of France may put an end to the war (V. 3392-3416), that Henry may become a Prince of Peace, and that ""þe tyme fortunat, / Of the olde worlde called aureat" will return, the golden age of bygone times. It may thus be that the sudden interest in Troy stories arose from the exemplary historical value attached to them: at least for Lydgate, the city's downfall is an example of what may happen when war-mongering prevails, and is not bridled by those virtues which he propagates in all his poetry.

Lydgate: The Poet and his Background

In view of the fact that we do not know very many things about Lydgate, it is best to begin his biography with a statement of his own; we have to turn to his poetry, in order to learn more than mere administrative details about his life. If we are to believe him, he was born about 1370, which made him a near contemporary of the outstanding Middle English poet, Geoffrey Chaucer (c.1340-1400), of whom he claimed to have been a disciple; and he must have been of approximately the same age as the poet Thomas Hoccleve (c.1368-1421). Indeed, Lydgate availed himself of the fact that Chaucer left his Canterbury Tales (CT) unfinished in order to pretend that his own *Siege of Thebes* is its due continuation, and the very first tale which was told to Chaucer's fictitious pilgrims on their way back to Southwark south of London, and to the Tabard Inn. That is: he used the frame of Chaucer's major work, and he also made use of the latter poet's Knight's Tale in the CT, as a kind of impetus to tell his own story, and to morally better his better's best poetry. Small wonder, then, that even in minor details such as the introduction of his own persona, he repeated Chaucer's patterns. Harry Bailey, the host of the Tabard Inn and at the same time the tourists' guide of the pilgrimage to Canterbury, had addressed the fictitious pilgrim Chaucer and asked for his name; in the prologue to Lydgate's *Siege of Thebes*, the poet has him address the newly arrived pilgrim Lydgate in a similar way. When asked who he is, the fictitious pilgrim answers as follows:

> I answerde my name was Lydgate,
> Monk of Bery, nygh fyfty yere of age. (*ST* 92-93)

The *Siege*, therefore, is a good starting line for Lydgate's biography. As internal evidence helps to date the poem to the years 1420-1422, we may assume that the year of his birth must have been somewhere around 1370. At yet another place in his poetry Lydgate mentions that he was born in the small village Lidgate, county Suffolk; it is situated between Cambridge and Bury St Edmund's, or, to be even more precise: it is only six miles to the south-west of the monastery where the poet spent most of his long life.

At the age of eleven or twelve, at the latest, he came to the abbey school; he himself, however, dated his true conversion to his fifteenth year. Up to that age, he says in his *Testament*, he spent his life in ""ryot and excesse"; like the poet Thomas Hoccleve, then, he pretends to have led a riotous life in his early years. Though, to be sure, what he has to say about these 'riots' of his youth (as for example stealing apples in the monastery garden, or stealing away during service to play marbles) compares is pious matter when comparedly with what we hear about Hoccleve's going after pretty girls, and feasting them with wine and wafers. The latter poet in his *Male Regle* and the introduction to his *Regement of Princes* may be called an immediate precursor of François Villon. The former, the future monk, has nothing exceptional to confess, apart from what may be found in the biography of any boy, and in any age; they are all

""Redier cheri-stones for to telle / Than gon to chirche, or here the sacryng-belle", they are all more eager to count the stones of stolen cherries than to go to church (*Testament* 647-648). One day, however, when he was fifteen, the youngster Lydgate according to his own account glanced at a crucifix which bore the simple inscription *Vide;* attached to the wall beside it was a verse saying 'See my humility, o child, and abandon thy pride'. From this moment in about 1385, to the end of his life late in 1449, John Lydgate spent much of his time in the Benedictine abbey of Bury St Edmund's. Apart from being a monk there, he was also a prior in one of the dependant houses of his abbey, in Hatfield Broad Oak, from 1423 to 1432; Hatfield is south of Cambridge, county Essex, close to Bishop's Stortford.

Up to 1400, we know next to nothing about him, nor do we know what his life in the monastery looked like. From the mere lists of names in the episcopal registers we learn that he took the first holy orders in 1389; in the same year, he became subdeacon, and deacon in 1393. He was finally ordained a priest on the 7th of April 1397, when he was about twenty-seven27 years old. Such are the bare facts which may be gathered from the registers in which Lydgate is mentioned. The next news we have about him, comes from Oxford. John Shirley (c.1366-1456), a scribe and collector of books who also copied manuscripts himself and helped to preserve some of the works of Chaucer, Lydgate, and others, wrote a remark into one of the manuscripts of Lydgate's beast fables, saying that these fables were composed in Oxford, during the years 1406 to 1408. We therefore have a piece of evidence which connects Lydgate with Oxford; and indeed, Shirley's remark that Lydgate stayed in the university town is corroborated by a letter written by Prince Henry, the Prince of Wales and future King Henry V. From this letter we learn that the poet was a student in Oxford; we also learn something about the circle in which he may have moved, and about the group of men with whom he seems to have increasingly come into contact. The Prince addressed his letter to the abbot and convent of Bury, asking the abbot to extend the leave for ""nostre treschier en Dieu Dan [= Dominus] John Lydgate", to continue his studies. in Oxford. The studies, he wrote, were ""divinitee ou ... loy canoun a son plesir", that is: Lydgate intended to study either theology or Canon Law, and just as he liked it. The Prince also requested that abbot and convent pay to their brother the same ""pension" which they paid to the other brothers of the abbey studying in Oxford. Lydgate was a student in Gloucester College; the connection between the College and the monastery of Bury was, at the beginning of the 15th century, already of a long standing. The documents of the Benedictines in England testify to the fact that at least three monks of Bury, at any given time, were students and residents of Gloucester College. The abbey not only contributed to the repair of the College buildings; it also financed new buildings of the College under its abbot William Curteys (abbot from 1429 to 1446). Though meagre, there is nevertheless sufficient evidence, then, that Lydgate was an Oxford student, from about 1406 to 1408. The royal letter may even lead one to assume that the monk and poet may have been in Oxford from about 1402 to about 1410: the very vague indication in the letter as to the studies Lydgate undertook there, suggests that he did no formal studies for a degree, as such

studies would have taken eight to nine years without interruption. Furthermore, if studying for a degree, there would have been no need for him to enlist royal support in order to be allowed another period of sojourn in Oxford. It is therefore generally assumed that Lydgate pursued some kind of *studium generale.*

Some literary historians assume that Lydgate may have moved to Oxford as early as 1397, that is shortly after he had been ordained a priest. If this is true, then he may even have become acquainted with the Prince who was in Queens College, Oxford, during the very first years of the century. He may then also have met with Edmund Lacy who later became Bishop of Exeter. Later in his life, Lydgate composed poems on behalf of both; the Prince as well as the Bishop were among his patrons who ordered poems from him for various occasions, and there is indeed some evidence that their patronage may already have begun in Oxford. There is the testimony of a few rubrics to Lydgate's religious poems which tell us that they were composed for liturgical use in the masses of Henry and of Edmund Lacy.[7] However that may have been, we actually do not know very much about his life during the years from 1400 to 1420. It seems plausible that he began composing poems somewhere between 1400 and 1410, and from his own works we learn that in the decade following he received orders from the Prince, from king and court, to translate and to compose poetry. The commission for Lydgate's version of the *Troy Book* was given to him by the Prince in 1412; this is exactly the time when Thomas Hoccleve tried to win Henry's patronage, too, by addressing his *Regement of Princes* to him.

At the latest at about 1420, Lydgate seems to have become the one fashionable poet whose services were enlisted for many occasions; he had by then established close connections with the court. Until 1434, for aboutlmost fifteen years, there was almost a run for his poetry. Lydgate was in great demand: he composed poems on behalf of the royal family; on behalf of the court; on behalf of prelates; and on behalf of the increasing circle of well-to-do gentry and merchant families in London and in East Anglia; he would not even not abstain from versifying the very signatures of an Anglo-Saxon charter, when asked for a poetic version of the abbey's privileges. Just a few examples which will give an idea of the kind of poetry for which he was in demand. Among many other things, Lydgate wrote a mummers' play for the merchant companies of London who intended to present it before their Lord Mayor (*Mumming for the Mercers of London*); he composed a verse epistle for a nobleman who then used it as a covering letter when sending his New Year's present to the king (*On a New Year's Gift of an Eagle presented to King Henry VI*); he wrote an instruction about the rules of the mass, and an explanation of its symbolical meaning, for Alice, the Countess of Suffolk and only daughter of Thomas Chaucer, the son of the poet (*Virtues of the Mass*); for this same Thomas Chaucer, he composed a farewell poem when Thomas left family and home, in order to travel to the Continent on a diplomatic mission (*Ballade at the Departyng of Thomas Chaucyer*). Lydgate wrote festive poems which were recited at banquets (e.g. *Solteltes at the Coronation Banquet*); he wrote love poems for which one could place an order with him, and which were then sent to one's adored (e.g. *Ballade of Her that hath all Virtues*); he composed explanatory poems which describe

the pictures on paintings (e.g. *Legend of St George*), or on painted cloth (e.g. *Bycorne and Chychevache*), or on tapestry in the houses of the great (perhaps *Of the Sodein Fal of Princes in oure Dayes*); he wrote poems which formed part of an indulgence which one could buy at his monastery (e.g. *The Dolorous Pyte of Crystes Passioun*); by order, he would all too willingly 'translate' this book or that treatise. In the period from about 1420 to about 1435, then, the pen of John Lydgate was evidently good for everything, poems flowed from it without restraint. Of course he profited from being a fashionable poet, for it brought him worldly pleasures in the form of possessions and income. In 1423, for example, he together with three other clerics received the rents of a priory as a kind of *sine cure* benefice. Another worldly aspect of his life during these years is that he increasingly stayed in the household of great magnates, and especially so in the household of members of the royal family. Thus, he for example was in the retinue of John, Duke of Bedford, a brother of King Henry V, when John was in Paris from 1426 to 1429. There, in Paris, Lydgate began his translation of Guillaume Deguileville's *Pêèlerinage de la vie humaine* which later appeared as *Pilgrimage of the Life of Man* ; he translated the French poem on behalf of Thomas Montague, the Earl of Salisbury. Lydgate also fabricated a verse version of the genealogy of King Henry VI by order of Richard Beauchamp, the Earl of Warwick, who was related to the royal family and with whose household Lydgate was mostly associated from 1430 onwards. Examples like these could be multiplied; they simply point to the fact that Lydgate's connections with the great of his time brought a number of commissions on him which had to be executed, but which he evidently carried out to his patrons' pleasures, for orders accumulated. At the same time, the examples testify to Lydgate's having attained to a position which his fellow poet Thomas Hoccleve never achieved: the monk won the favour of an aristocratic and a gentry audience, he was able to satisfy their tastes; their patronage enabled him to produce that massive amount of verse which he left to us, namely about 145,000 lines (Chaucer's known works amount to some 52,500 lines only, and Hoccleve's to a little more than 6,000).

From 1434 onwards, Lydgate retired to the security and tranquillity of his abbey at Bury St Edmund's where he seems to have stayed for the rest of his life, perhaps for financial reasons. In an official document of King Henry VI, he is given permission to retire to a life of greater seclusion - which, by the way, might be expected to be the regular way of life for a Benedictine monk. Nevertheless, in the years which remained up to his death late in 1449, he continued to enjoy the favour of the public and of the great. By the instigation of the Earl of Suffolk, William de la Pole, and that man's sheriff, Sir Miles Stapleton, he was granted a royal pension of seven pounds£7 a year; the Earl of Suffolk and Sir Miles were both patrons of art and literature in East Anglia, and Suffolk was himself a poet. Lydgate also continued to write poetry for official occasions: thus, he composed a number of texts for the royal entry into the city of London in 1445, when King Henry VI presented his newly wedded wife to the Londoners; she was Margaret of Anjou, a daughter of the Count of Anjou and Duke of Provence. Their entry into the city was accompanied by the recitation of a number of poems

composed by John Lydgate (*Verses for Pageants at the Entry of Queen Margaret*). Strictly speaking, however, the years from 1430 onwards were the years of the production of his longest poem, the translation and re-working of Boccaccio's *De casibus illustrium virorum* ; Lydgate produced his version of the Latin original by order of Duke Humphrey of Gloucester, another of the many princes of the royal blood, a brother of the late Henry V; his remake of Boccaccio turned out to be some 36,000 lines long. Chaucer had already used Boccaccio's work as a model in his *Canterbury Tales* without being in earnest about its meaning, but rather in order to ridicule his fictitious monk's inability to tell a successful tale; the monk fails because he cannot stop, and produces his tale of structurally identical examples like a stud would produce progeny. With Lydgate, we have a real monk who is really in earnest about the *De casibus* tradition, and who used it to write another 'Mirror for Princes'. Though as a type his mirror is completely different from what Hoccleve had written in his *Regement*, Lydgate's *Fall of Princes* had an immense success: we know of more than 30 manuscripts, and of quite a number of early prints. His patron for this work, Duke Humphrey of Gloucester, was famous in his time as a patron of art and literature, and as a patron of Italian humanists (though at least one of them returned home with a grudge, and was disappointed because he thought that Humphrey did not live up to his promises of remuneration). In 1438, Gloucester bequeathed 129 books to the library of Oxford, and in 1444 he gave another 134. He is also among those magnates for whose favour the poet Hoccleve had hoped and which he sought for, but evidently without success. Lydgate had made Duke Humphrey's acquaintance in about 1420, and was in contact with him between 1420 and 1422. And again, we have a parallel here with his contemporary Hoccleve who composed his *Series* of five longer poems in 1421 to 1422 which he then addressed, among others, to Duke Humphrey. The Duke, however, preferred John Lydgate as a poet; the monk was ordered to compose the official marriage poem when in 1422 Humphrey took unusual measures to marry a countess of Hainault in order to win the land she inherited. His commission for the *Fall of Princes* probably dates to 1431: in his prologue, Lydgate refers to the Duke's suppression of a Lollard rising in that year. The monk of Bury occupied himself with his remake of Boccaccio's *De casibus* for seven or eight years; in 1438-9, the poem was finally finished.

It may be that other works delayed the translation: thus, in 1434 Lydgate was ordered to write a legend of St Edmund, the patron saint of his abbey, for King Henry VI. The work was composed by order of William Curteys, Lydgate's abbot whom I already mentioned as a patron of Gloucester College in Oxford. The occasion for this order was a longer stay of the King in St Edmund's abbey; the pious Henry stayed for a noticeably long time, from Christmas 1433 until Easter 1434. During his stay, he was admitted to the confraternity of Bury St Edmund's. The monastery ranked with the most important religious houses in the country; its abbots were regularly summoned to Parliament, and kept close links with the royal court. Evidently it was a mark of distinction to be to to become a member of its lay associates; this honour to be of its brotherhood was sought after by nobles, members of the gentry, and rich merchants alike.

Apart from King Henry VI, the lay fraternity of Bury during Lydgate's lifetime included, for example, the King's uncle Duke Humphrey; Richard Beauchamp, the Earl of Warwick; William de la Pole, the Earl of Suffolk, and the latter's wife Alice, the daughter of Thomas Chaucer; among the members we also find William Paston, the Norfolk merchant whose family rose to the gentry and who left us the rich collection of the famous *Paston Letters*. Of course, the honour to be reckoned among the members of Bury's confraternity had to be paid for; on the part of the abbey it meant that the members were included into the daily routine of the monks' prayers, and that the abbey had to receive them as hosts. On the part of the members, it meant that they were patrons of the abbey which of course hoped for significant contributions to their abbots' and monks' means. What is, however, more important is the fact that all these patrons were at the same time in contact with John Lydgate; they were his patrons as well, and for them he composed poetry even after he had retired from the world, from about 1434 to the end of his life.

Lydgate's death late in 1449 is imbued with almost romantic legend. The last work which he began at the age of over 70, and probably at the instigation of King Henry VI, was a verse translation of the *Secreta Secretorum* which were a major source for Thomas Hoccleve's *Regement of Princes*. It is just possible that Lydgate worked for years on his own version of the *Secrets*, as his part of the poem leaves one with the impression of an unfinished sketch; his part, I said, because Lydgate could not complete his work. At the King's request it was finished by Benedict Burgh (c.1413-1483) who claims to have been a pupil of the poet. It is he who created the legend about the monk's death: according to Burgh, death struck Lydgate with his pen in his hand; death only could take the ever-flowing pen from the hand of the monk and poet when he was about seventy-nine years old. Immediately following line 1491 of the *Secrees of Old Philisoffres*, Burgh wrote into the manuscript "here deyed this translator and nobil poete: and the yonge folowere gan his prologe on this wyse", namely by delivering a eulogy for Lydgate. If all were true what Benedict Burgh wrote, Lydgate could not have found a better and more impressive line where to finish his life than the last one which he is supposed to have written. These, then, were the last words of the poet and monk from Bury St Edmund's: ""deth al consumyth, which may nat be denyed ...", death takes everything away, which cannot be denied.

Lydgate's complete works run up to some 145,000 lines, and most of them were written on order. His longest poem, the *Fall of Princes* composed on behalf of Duke Humphrey, accounts for some 36,000 lines; almost equal in length is his *Troy Book*, some 30,000 lines written at the request of Prince Henry. Not much shorter is his remake of Deguileville's *Pèlerinage*, which as *Pilgrimage of the Life of Man* numbers some 25,000 lines. The greatest number of manuscripts we have of any of his works, is that of his *Life of Our Lady*, commissioned by Henry V (some 6,000 lines); it was transmitted to our day in 42 manuscripts. Comparable in length to the *Life* is the unfinished allegorical poem *Reason and Sensuality*, which Lydgate in his typical manner expanded from 4,873 lines of his French source (*Les Echecs Amoureux*) into some 7,000 lines. A middle

stage is kept by the *Siege of Thebes* which was composed by Lydgate to form part of Chaucer's Canterbury cycle, and which he wrote without a commission, to further the demand for peace between England and France (c. 4,700 lines, composed c.1420-22). Finally, the shortest of his longer poems is the *Temple of Glass* (c. 1,400 lines), perhaps written at the request of William Paston. When we add up the number of lines, these seven longer poems account for more than two thirds of Lydgate's poetry; together with his more than 150 shorter poems, they testify to the fact that he was certainly the most prolific writer of all medieval English poets.

Whatever we may think of his poetry today, there is no denying that for his contemporaries John Lydgate was a great poet.[8] For some of his major works, lavishly illuminated presentation copies still exist (cf. e.g. BL MS Harley 2278, *Life of St Edmund* ; BL MS Harley 1766, *Fall of Princes* ; and, of course, the *Troy Book* in MS English 1, JRUL); in the 15th century, Lydgate himself is more than once present on dedication scenes in manuscripts of his works (cf. e.g. BL MS Harley 4846 f.1, *Pilgrimage of the Life of Man*). His fame as a poet is voiced by contemporaries and successors alike. The Duke of Suffolk, one of his patrons and himself a poet of some distinction in his time, called him the equal of Chaucer; as the great master of English poetry is already dead, he requested Lydgate's help as his 'muse':

> And to the monke of bury now speke I
> Ffor thy co[nn]yng ys syche and eke thy grace
> After Chaucer to occupye his place ...

'and to the monk of Bury I now address myself; for your skill is such, and also your reputation, as to occupy Chaucer's place after his death'. Time and again succeeding poets compared Lydgate favourably with the great 14th-century poets Geoffrey Chaucer (c.1343/4-1400) and John Gower (c.1330-1408): the East Anglian Osbern Bokenham (c.1392-c.1464) and John Metham (fl. ?1448-60) praised him as one of this trinity, George Ashby (c.1390-1475) included him in his eulogy as one of the ""primier poetes of this nacion"; and the poet Stephen Hawes (c.1474-c.1523) is on record as having been able to ""repeat by heart most of our English poets; esp. Jo. Lydgate, a monk of Bury, whom he made equal, in some respects, with Geff. Chaucer ...",[9] apart from praising him as ""dulcet sprynge / Of famous rethoryke", as 'sweet well of famous poetry' in his *Pastime of Pleasure*. No doubt, then, Lydgate was in high esteem in the 15th century; his strong bent towards didacticism and moralisation which he exhibits in all his works was evidently to the taste of his audience, in a century which was much more conservative than the preceding 14th.

Lydgate's *The Sege of TroyeTroy Book*

Lydgate began to work on his English version of the Troy story on Monday 31st October 1412, at 4 p.m., after having received the commission to do so by Prince Henry, later King Henry V. The elaborate dating in the prologue to his work which he finished only by 1420, indicates that the commission by the Prince must have been a moment of importance for the monk of Bury St Edmunds (cf. ll. 121-146 and V.3366-3369). It may have been the turning point in his career as a poet; for, as mentioned earlier, he afterwards became fashionable in East Anglia and beyond. In structure and outline of his Troy Book, Lydgate followed Guido delle Colonne's Latin *Historia Destructionis Troiae* of 1287; probably he had the Latin text ready at hand, for the medieval library of Bury owned a copy of Guido's work.. Little was left out; but the monk had also much to add to his source: in typical Lydgatian manner, he takes every chance to enlarge his remake of Guido's version into a full-scale encyclopedia of knowledge of every kind, including mythographic, astronomical, or other learned material, which he took from sources as varied as Ovid, Isidore of Seville, John Trevisa's English translation of Bartholomew's *De proprietatibus rerum*, or Christine de Pizan. Apart from the envoy which is composed in Chaucer's rhyme royal, a stanza of seven lines, Lydgate used rhymed couplets throughout his *Troy Book*.

Book I (4436 ll.). After an elaborate prologue of 384 lines, his poem begins with the story of the Argonauts and their leader Jason: Pelleus, King of Thessalia, intends to exclude his nephew Jason from power by setting him on the search for the Golden Fleece which is kept and guarded by the King of Colchos; Medea, his daughter, helps Jason to win the fleece, and their love relationship is told by Lydgate at great length. More important for the story's continuation, however, is the fact that on their way to Colchos the Greeks land in Phrygia; they are neither welcomed nor received by the Trojan king. Among the Argonauts, we find Hercules: the mere name in his source led Lydgate to jump the chance to tell the story of the twelve Herculean tasks. This is typical of Lydgate's as well as of much 15th-century English poetry: where Chaucer could simply drop a name and assumed that his audience knew the story, Lydgate will always tell all he knows. He had to make sure to bring the story home to his audience, he evidently did no longer assume that they knew it. In contrast to Chaucer who was personally acquainted with his original audience, Lydgate did not know who was to read his poems; he therefore may have thought it necessary to inform his audience about every aspect of a motif, of a story, or of a figure from classical mythology. Now Hercules is the one member among the Argonauts who bears the Trojans ill-will because they did not receive them on their way to Colchos. He therefore persuades the Greeks to take revenge: they besiege Troy and destroy it; the Trojan king is killed, and one of his daughters abducted. This destruction of Troy and the abduction of the princess is the pre-history to the later abduction of Helen by the Trojan Paris; as in all medieval Troy stories which go back to the fictitious Dares, it is the

Greeks who begin hostilities, and who are therefore to be held responsible for everything which follows. Lydgate ends his first book with this first destruction of Troy; there is not much action in it, it is mostly characterised by his manner of enlarging and expanding the story so that the plot of the narrative is almost buried underneath additional information.

Book II (8706 ll). Priam rebuilds Troy. After a long deliberation, the Trojans send Antenor to Greece in order to reclaim the abducted princess; the Greeks, however, proudly reject Antenor's offer of peace. Their rejection leads to another deliberation among the Trojans which is described in great detail and at great length: they decide to take revenge. Paris is sent to Greece, to whom Venus appears in a dream and promises a beautiful woman. He abducts Helen and thereby provokes the revenge of the Greeks: they decide to wage war on Troy, to besiege the town and to destroy it again; Helen's husband Agamemnon is made their leader. The second book ends with the first skirmishes and battles under the walls of Troy. This is the mere plot; but it would not be Lydgate's poem if he did not digress many times from the main narrative. Let me give a few examples. He adds an elaborated description of the Greek naval force which, though it is in his sources, is embellished to great length with regard to the heraldry of their weapons, to gorgeous banners, and to similar military insignia. The rebuilding of Troy is a hint which Lydgate takes up in order to enlarge on courtly pleasures and courtly games, only to jump to the chance of explaining the origin of the game of chess, or of instructing his readers in the art of performing mummers' plays at court - and all this, by the way, within his description of the new palace which is built in Troy. When he talks about the dream of Paris, he takes the opportunity to digress again and to add allegorical interpretations of the gods mentioned in his source. Time and again, he comments on the actions of his characters, and takes every chance to abstract from their actions in order to instruct his readers as to the behaviour patterns which princes should follow. When he looks back from his second book to the first and reminds us that the Trojan king did not provision the Greeks on their way to Colchos, he insists that princes should always be kind to strangers; when the Trojans deliberate on the problem of how to deal with their Greek opponents, he comments that peaceful negotiations should always precede any attempt to solve problems by warfare; when he comes to realise that the whole history of Troy is indeed connected with beautiful women (Medea, Helen, Criseyde), he takes the opportunity to deliver a long diatribe against the art of female seduction, and to warn against allowing women too great an influence, or any influence whatsoever. The second book also contains a long-drawn attack against the heathen gods and against idolatry. Further, its plot is again and again interrupted by long descriptions of those various knights, Trojan as well as Greek, who fight against each other: these descriptions are miniature portraits which serve as a kind of formal introduction of the participants of the war, to the reader. Uppermost in importance among Lydgate's many digressions and descriptions is, however, his warning against the goddess Fortune with which he begins his second book, and to which he returns time and again throughout the whole poem, in one way or another. Thus, the downfall of Troy, of its kings, its princes, and its knights in the end becomes one single

municipal exemplum of the workings of Fortune, just as his *Fall of Princes* will offer examples of individual men who fall from Fortune's wheel. All things counted, however (and I have not yet found a better description of the *Troy Book* as a whole), the second book is an encyclopedia of knowledge, too. Lydgate's manner of taking every opportunity for an additional story, for additional instruction and information, has appropriately been compared by Derek Pearsall with the manner of the philologist who adds a footnote to every second sentence, in order to show off his reading; just so, Pearsall maintains, Lydgate shows off his own erudition.[10] I hasten to add, however, that Lydgate also digressed in order to bring home to his readers what he thought to be no longer self-evident, what was perhaps no longer known to the widening circle of readers whose previous experience with literature he himself did evidently not know. It has to be admitted, though, that he was not able to integrate all of his many digressions into his main plot; many of them are clearly, according to medieval rhetorical teaching, digressions *a materia ad aliud extra materiam.*

Book III (5764 ll.). The third and the fourth book are mostly concerned with the battles in front of and outside the walls of Troy; apart from these battles, we learn about the love affair of Troilus and Criseyde. Most important in the third book, however, are the nearly endless descriptions of battles and fights; it is almost impossible to surpass the verbosity with which the monk lined up in a row speech after speech between the opponents, and their ensuing combats, until they are, one after the other, thrown off their horses and killed. These seemingly endless rows of speeches and battles are only interrupted by short periods of truce, and by Lydgate's moralising digressions. As far as the love affairs in his *Troy Book* are concerned (in the third book we hear more about that of Troilus and Criseyde only), Lydgate was not interested in the description of ardent emotions; he for one paid more attention to the tragic side of love, to those conditions of the love relationships which necessarily lead to their tragic ends. With epic breadth and an almost melodramatic display of rhetoric he moulded a moving scene of the departure of Troilus and Criseyde. And though Lydgate, like Guido in his source, already alludes to the treason of Criseyde and even comments on it, he was nevertheless able to catch something of the emotion and the wrench of both lovers in their formal 'Complaints', in spite of all their rhetorical decoration. Just like Chaucer's Criseyde, Lydgate's has to leave Troy as a barter; just like in Chaucer's *Troilus*, she swears to remain loyal to her lover, though in the fourth book she will leave him and love the Greek Diomede. Already in his third book Lydgate takes the tragic end of this love relationship as an opportunity to explain that the tragic circumstances find their basis in the nature of women; in so far he follows his source. In traditional antifeminist manner, he however expands Guido's attack on Criseyde to a long diatribe of some 150 lines against all women: ""Why should we", he says, ""criticise women of the type of Criseyde, as they are all, by their very nature, false and double-faced?" (III.4408-09). And in contrast to Chaucer and Hoccleve, he was serious about it: in his version, Troilus is the tragic character, and not that knight's lover Criseyde. Implicitly the monk criticised Chaucer's depiction of Criseyde: for this latter poet, Criseyde was a tragic character because she was in a

dilemma, and had to make her mind up as to whether she should stick to Troilus or leave him; furthermore, Chaucer's Criseyde is conscious of her guilt and suffers from it. What in Chaucer's version, then, appears to be a conflict of Criseyde and a mental suffering which he analysed paying much attention to psychological detail, is under a pretence of irony turned into a defect of the species by Lydgate: as all women are false, it is inevitable that Criseyde will betray her lover Troilus. Despite such comments on women, however, the main contents of book three consist of many battle scenes, and the great farewell scene of Troilus and Criseyde; furthermore, in one of the battles Hector suffers death from the hand of Achilles. As this great Trojan knight and hero cannot be overcome in a regular and knightly combat, false Achilles slays Hector when the latter, unarmed and defenceless, is just about to take away the costly weapons of a dead knight; he turns his back on Achilles, and the Greek slays him treacherously from behind. Hector as well as any prince, Lydgate adds, should not be too covetous. After a bitter attack on the false knight Achilles, the book ends with a death complaint and a eulogy for Hector who is the real knightly hero of the history of Troy. His death announces the final downfall and destruction of the city.

Book IV (7108 ll.). The fourth book continues with those duels with words and weapons which already characterise the third. One of the more important interruptions of the narrative and its sometimes monotonous row of disputes and fights is a truce during which the false Achilles falls in love with Polyxena, the sister of Hector; another digression is the treason of Criseyde, which gives Lydgate reason for praising women (*cuius contrarium verum est*), because of their pity (IV.2148-55):

> Loo! what pite is in wommanhede,
> What mercy eke and benygne routhe,
> That newly can al her olde trouthe
> Of nature late slyppe asyde
> Rather thanne thei shulde se abide
> Any man in meschef for hir sake!
> The change is nat so redy for to make
> In Lombard Strete of crowne nor doket ...

Lo, which great amount of pity resides in women, which mercy also, and which generous compassion, that they by their very nature may rather set aside their old loyalty than see a man be in grief for their sake! In Lombard Street [i.e. in the City of London, where the Italian bankers lived], the change is not as ready at hand, for a crown or a ducat ...

Apart from this traditional and antifeminist attack on bad women (and let me at least mention that Lydgate knew the praise of good women, too!), the fourth book lines up combat after combat in which the heroes of Troy die one after another, until finally the whole city is brought to destruction. Troilus, for example, does not die as in Chaucer's great poem; in that

poet's *Troilus*, he seeks his death on the battlefield, overcome with grief of Criseyde's treason; in Lydgate's version, he is like Hector treacherously slain by Achilles who then drags him along the battlefield at the tail of his horse. The cowardice of Achilles, the outstanding hero of the Greeks, is a depreciation of the Greek party which is already present in Dares Phrygius; it goes together with the upgrading of the Trojan point of view which is such a marked a feature of all medieval sources. During a truce, Achilles had seen Hector's sister widow in a temple of the town, had fallen in love with her and then asked for her hand. The Trojans had agreed on condition that the Greeks made peace with them and returned to their country; the Greeks, however, thought this to be an unreasonable request, and had rejected the kind offer of peace. Full of spite and wrath, Achilles had thereupon withdrawn to his tent and was no longer seen on the battlefield. He only returns to the fighting when one of his knights tells him that most of his men are dead, because Troilus made havoc of Achilles' knights. Mad with rage Achilles attacks Troilus as he attacked Hector: in terms of chivalry, he is also inferior to that Trojan hero and knight; he therefore slays him from behind. Lydgate again comments on the treachery of Achilles, and, following his source, adds a diatribe against Homer because the latter praised him as a knightly hero; he then delivers a long death complaint and a eulogy for Troilus. The Trojans revenge the death of their hero in their own way: taking advantage of his love for Polyxena and under pretext of a meeting with his beloved, they lure him into coming to a temple in the city, where he is then as treacherously slain as he himself slew both Hector and Troilus. When Paris, the last of the Trojans princes, is also killed in battle, we arrive at that point of the Trojan war which we all remember, the treason of the city and the story of the Trojan horse. In Lydgate's like in any other medieval version, the city is betrayed by Antenor and Aeneas. When a peace has been concluded, they bring a wooden horse into the town under the pretence of an offering to the goddess Minerva; as the horse does not fit through the city gate, the town walls have to be broken down. As a make-belief, the Greeks leave Troy after the offering, but return during the night, kill all inhabitants except the traitors and their immediate entourage, and destroy the greater part of the city. The Trojan seer Calchas advises that Polyxena should be sacrificed at the tomb of Achilles who died for her; but Aeneas hides her. When she is finally found, Aeneas is banished from the city, and she is killed by Pyrrhus, the son of Achilles, on the tomb of his father. This ritual sacrifice gives Lydgate reason to enlarge vehemently upon the cruelty of Pyrrhus; he expands his commentary so as to include a diatribe against the gods of antiquity who demanded and cherished such cruelty. The fourth book then ends with a long complaint about the ruin of Troy (IV.7036-85).

Book V (3612 ll., plus Envoy of 107 ll.). The fifth book recounts the adventures of the Greeks on their way home to their country (on the pattern of the Latin of Dictys Cretensis and Lydgate's immediate source, Guido delle Colonne); it concentrates on the fate of Odysseus as well as on that of the traitor Aeneas who was banished from Troy. Like Vergil and his own Latin sources, Lydgate connects the Trojan history with that of the foundation of Rome, by having Aeneas arrive in Rome after having passed by Carthage. The return of Odysseus is told

according to the plot we know from Homer. Once Odysseus is dead, Lydgate renders account of the Trojan war in a kind of statistics which include the number of dead as well as the consumption of weapons. The fifth book ends with an epilogue which deals with the transitoriness of all earthly things, and with the failings of all material goods; the life on earth, Lydgate concludes in a true monkish fashion, can only be a pilgrimage to the life in the other world, in which alone man should place his confidence. An envoy of 107 lines with a eulogy for the patron and a *captatio benevolentiae* of the poet finishes the whole poem: after 30,117 lines, you finally arrive at the poem's end.

Reception of the Troy Book

Lydgate's *Troy Book* was a success; the number of manuscripts and two the early prints testify to the interest which his version of the destruction of Troy found in England. One of the reasons for this benevolent reception is the fact that it was written as some kind of national epic in English. This was, at least according to Lydgate's claim in his prologue, the intention as well as the order of Prince Henry which were made known to him in October 1412. As a kind of pre-history to the Trojan conquest of Britain which had been told by Geoffrey of Monmouth, and by the Norman Wace or the English priest Layamon in their respective *Brut* stories, Lydgate was ordered to produce an English version of a widely read and known matter which might compare favourably with the French version of Benoît de Sainte Maure, or the Latin of Guido delle Colonne. As might be expected in view of the chivalrous interests of his patron, the commission included the order to compose a book about knighthood: Lydgate comes up to this demand in his comments on the behaviour of his protagonists. In these comments, he does not lose a single opportunity to recommend norms of chivalry, or to criticise any failure of their fulfilment. All things considered, however, he did not write a chivalrous romance which besides instructing its audience in norms of knightly behaviour, would line up adventures, would include a story of courtly love, and would also entertain its audience. Rather, the most outstanding characteristic of Lydgate's Troy Book is its learned and didactic bent, its emphasis on moral instruction; the main plot of the story as well as the feats of arms themselves serve as a mere occasion and foil to instructive and sermon-like digressions which in every instance claim to better the world and man. Comments on the role and social function of poets; satire against women; criticism of the Church and the clerics; general practical ethics; sermons on various sins, like envy or revengefulness; scientific treatises on astronomy or navigation; comments on rhetoric; meditations on the workings of the goddess Fortune; detailed descriptions of heraldry or weapons as well as care of weapons; a constant request to pay attention to the threat of the mutability which constitutes the world and which constantly threats what is achieved; edification by religious digressions; instruction in general education by discussion of, for example, the mythology of classical antiquity: - all this, and it is only a part of the many digressions, Lydgate worked into his poem. What in the first place may have been intended to be a praise of knighthood, became a work which, using the example of the history of a single town, treats of the mutability of the world, and deals with the disastrous

consequences of human discord and strife. Many comments in his *Troy Book* point to an understanding of the poem as an appeal for peace, for

> And it is bet by pes to han redresse,
> Than gynne a werre without aviseness,

'it is better to choose the way of peace than to begin a war, without carefully considering advantages and disadvantages' (II.1265-66). As an appeal to further peace, Lydgate's version of the Troy story insists on *historia* as *magistra vitae*. However, it does not at all intend to tell the story as such; the plot and the matter were well-known in 15th-century England, at least among those who were educated and cherished literature. His poem is rather a compendium of the knowledge of his time which chiefly aims at instructing in and educating to one's responsibilities, to moral behaviour; it does explicitly propagate what the monk thought to be the norms of such behaviour. In Lydgate's words, the story became, so to speak, a programme of morals through learning and knowledge, a simple starting point for comprehensive instruction; or, in Derek Pearsall's words, Lydgate always "moves from narrative concretion to abstract truth".[11] Though Lydgate translated Guide delle Colonne's *Historia*, he took every opportunity to subordinate the plot to the didactic aims he wanted to achieve, and he did this so with a story which belonged to the best-known matters of the whole middle ages.

The Manuscripts

The success of Lydgate's *Troy Book* may partly be gathered from the number of manuscripts which were transmitted to our day. The EETS editor of the text knew 19 manuscripts, together with two early prints and a modernisation of 1614;[12] four additional manuscripts have since come to light, together with an extract which was only recently identified as part of Lydgate's Troy story.[13] Most of these manuscripts date to the fifteenth century; only four of them may be later than 1500. Of the 23 manuscripts we now have, eight are or were illustrated.[14] Among these latter, John Rylands University Library MS English 1 must still be singled out as occupying an exceptional place: it is by far the most lavishly illustrated of all extant manuscripts. Fortunately at least some of the manuscripts may be connected with their early owners (if not their patrons), so that something like an original audience may be outlined. The armorial indications which appear in initials, in decorative borders or in full-page coats of arms, link three of the manuscripts to families of the gentry; it thus becomes apparent that royal patronage and presentation miniatures do not necessarily imply that Lydgate's *Troy Book* was ever actually handed to King Henry V, or that copies of it circulated in the aristocracy. Manuscript BL Royal 18.D.ii seems to provide the exception to the rule of gentry ownership: it may be connected with William Herbert who became Earl of Pembroke in 1468, but was executed in 1469; as the manuscript is however usually dated to 1450-1475, the evidence of

aristocratic as opposed to gentry ownership is not conclusive. Most of the *Troy Book* manuscripts show a carefully executed layout, with borders or initials structuring the text; they indeed indicate that they were "intended for ostentatious display".[15] The manuscripts thus testify to an interest in an English version of the Troy story among the rich and wealthy, among those who could afford illustrated books, and use them as a sign of their social status, too.

John Rylands University Library MS English 1

As to the date and provenance of MS English 1, proposals for dating it vary, the dates ranging from the 1440s to 1475.[16] The manuscript may have been executed in London, though attempts to be more precise (or to link the manuscript with the workshop of the limner 'William Abell') remain tentative and inconclusive because of the lack of real evidence. The first fly-leaf on f. 173r may contain a statement of ownership: in a full-page miniature, the coat of arms of the Carent family are displayed. As J. J. Alexander has argued, these may be the arms of William Carent (c.1395-1476), or of his son John (c.1425-1483); this gentry family owned land in the south-west of England (Dorset, Somerset).[17] Again, however, the evidence is not of the first water, for the fly-leaf may have been added later, or displaced; already Bergen noticed that its worm-holes "do not penetrate into the rest of the book".[18] From other records in the manuscript it appears that it passed on to the Mundy family; on f. 173v we have the testimony of John Mundy (d. 1537) that he bequeathed to his "Welbelovyd Son Vyncent Mundy this pre[se]nt booke of the Seig of Troy the xxvth day of May Anno xxv no[s]tri Regis Henr. VIII [i.e. 1533] and dely[v]ered it to him with myne owne hands with Godes Blessyng and myne".[19] Alexander was able to establish a link between the Carent and Mundy families, thus giving added weight to the assumption that the Carents may have been the original owners. Through whose hands the manuscript passed until it surfaced in the sales catalogues of the 19th century, is unknown. Its binding is modern, in purple velvet, with the bookplate of the Earl of Crawford and Balcarres on its cover in whose collection the manuscript was before it came to John Rylands Library in 1901. In its present state, the manuscript consists of 174 pages; the two fly-leaves at the end may not belong to the original manuscript. The text is written in double columns, amounting to between 43 and 47 lines in a column without illustration.

Despite its outstanding importance in the group of manuscripts of Lydgate's *Troy Book*, and despite its exceptionally extensive series of illustrations, there is as yet no adequate description of MS English 1. Apart from a few references in footnotes, and apart from a comparisons with other Troy manuscripts and English manuscripts of the 15th century,[20] MS English 1 has not yet found the art historian's intriguing analysis it deserves; the best and most complete description to date is that of Kathleen L. Scott in her second volume of later Gothic manuscripts, in the *Survey of Manuscripts Illuminated in the British Isles*.[21]

As mentioned above, the manuscript is lavishly illustrated; a series of 69 miniatures and numerous large as well as champ initials help to distinguish between the different parts of the text. In most of the illustrations, the main figures are labelled; it is a characteristic of MS English 1 that labels giving the names of the protagonists are applied systematically, throughout the manuscript, though with a few misnomers. Four half-page miniatures introduce the books. The Prologue and Book I are preceded by a presentation miniature showing Lydgate who presents his book to the king, kneeling before Henry V, on f. 1r. The illustration is linked to the text by a rubric which gives the book a title (Sege of Troye), and refers to the contents of Book I; it runs as follows:

> Here begynneth the boke of the sege of Troye. compiled by Daun Iohn Lydgate Monke of Bery atte excitacioun and steryng of the moost noble worthi and myghty Prynce Kyng Henry the fyfthe. Firste rehersyng the conquest of the golden flees acheued by the manly prowesse of Iason. Vnder the correccioun of euery prudent reder.[22]

Book II is introduced with a half-page illustration of the goddess Fortune and her wheel on f. 28v, referring to Lydgate's discussion of the workings of Fortune. Book III which is mostly concerned with the battles in front of Troy, begins with a half-page miniature in two parts on f. 78v: in the foreground, King Merion is seen mounting his horse, and Hector slaying Patroclus; the background has Greek tents with armed men to the left, and the city of Troy to the right. Book IV is preceded by another half-page illustration, showing Achilles as crowned king lying wounded in his bed, with soldiers surrounding him, and the city of Troy in the background, on f. 112r. An exception to the rule of introducing the books by half-page miniatures is the one at the beginning of Book V on f. 151v: here, we have a miniature within the right-hand column only, showing three figures which are labelled as Daniel, Ezechiel and Zedekiah, together with knights in the foreground, and a king and three soldiers in the back. Though the scene may be taken to represent the contents at the beginning of Book V, namely the discussion hot dispute between Telamon Ajax and Ulysses, the labeller evidently mistook the miniature to refer to the end of Book IV in which Lydgate laments the final downfall of Troy, and refers to the prophets. Despite this slip in the pictorial programme, it is nevertheless obvious that a clear structural design is at the back of placing these miniatures at the beginning of new books in the text; they are clearly meant to underline the division of the text into larger units.

A number of smaller miniatures accompanied by partial borders and a large initial serve to introduce the chapters of Lydgate's books, thus further underlining its narrative structure; as a rule, these miniatures are placed in the wide margins. Champ initials indicate another substructure of the narrative, referrindicating the beginning of a new section within the chapters. As Lesley Lawton has argued, the miniatures and the initials thus provide a hierarchy for the narrative, and guide the reader's understanding of the structure of Lydgate's version of the story of Troy.

However, a closer analysis of the illustrations and the text they refer to reveals that the function of the illustrations is at least two-fold.It seems obvious that the function of the illustrations is at least two-fold. Lawton's main thesis that ""a strong and authoritative sense of the work's structure prevailed throughout the production of manuscripts" of Lydgate's *Troy Book* (1983:69),[23] and that a ""strong sense of propriety" influenced the location of the illustrations which was "conditioned by an idea of the structure of the work contained in the earliest manuscripts" (61), underlines the formal function of the miniatures as repeating the structure of the narrative. We have to keep in mind, however, that MS English 1 presents the most extensive cycle of illustrations in all known manuscripts of the poem. Now many of these illustrations serve, I think, an additional purpose. Even if we discount the misnomers, the textual references they establish often cover more than just a reference to the beginning of a new section, a chapter or a book; when they assemble scenes or show events which refer to long stretches of text, suspiccion is strong that they also serve as a kind of contents of important events which follow in the next section, and that they partly retell the story as found in the text. When 'read' without their text, then, the miniatures seem to tell their own story, and that story appears to be one of the deeds and actions of princes and kings. This is probably true of nos. 20, 23, 26, 27-31, 37, 40, 42-43, 48-49, 52, 58, 61, and 69 which among them account for a fourth of the whole cycle. Furthermore, 25 out of 69 miniatures assemble two or more scenes (two-part: nos. 11, 14, 27-31, 36-37, 40, 48-49, 52, 59, 67; three-part: 20, 61-63, 65, 69; four-part: 13, 23, 43, 58), and closer inspection may even yield more insight into their references to the relationship with the text. And though we may dismiss the use of the Venus symbol as a "cliché" on the ground of stereotyped patterns used to create pictures (Lawton 1983:66 fn. 68),[24] it nevertheless establishes a strong sense of unity in that it continuously refers to those drives behind the actions of men which Lydgate thought destructive, and to which he returns time and again in his text (cf. nos. 28, 29, 30, 47, 53, 58, and 59). There is more, then, behind the cycle of illustrations in MS English 1, than a mere structural device. It is hoped that the publication of MS English 1 which finally makes both text and miniatures of this important manuscript available, will help to solve those problems which still remain.

Notes

1   For the political dimensions of the Troy matter, cf. GRAUS (1989).

2   See, among others, YOUNG (1948), and SCHERER (1963). Cf. Also BUCHTHAL (1987), LIENERT (1989), and THOSS (1989) who describe illuminated versions of Guido's, Konrad von Würzburg's and Benoît's Troy stories.

3   TATLOCK (1950) 427 fn. 22.

4   For the Troy stories in England, see e.g.cp. BENSON (1980).

5   EISENSTADT (1969); TURNER (1980).

6   LOWE (1997) 132-135.

7   NORTON-SMITH *Lydgate*,(1966) 195.

8   Ffor his reputation in the 15th to 17th centuries, which see the first volume of SPURGEON (196114-24).

9   GLUCK/MORGAN *Hawes*, xiii)

10 PEARSALL (1970) 130.

11 PEARSALL (1970) 131).

12 BERGEN (1935) 1.

13 RENOIR/BENSON (1980) 2168; EDWARDS (1989).RENOIR/BENSON (1980) 2168; EDWARDS (1989).

14 LAWTON (1983) 52 with fn. 48.

15 LAWTON (1983) 52.

16 SCOTT (1996, II) 259; RENOIR/BENSON 2168.

17 DORSET, SOMERSET; ALEXANDER (1972).

18 BERGEN (1935) 32.

19 BERGEN (1935) 31-32.

20 LAWTON (1983) 52-66 *passim*.

21 SCOTT (1996, II) 259-63; ibid. 262-263 contain an up-to-date list of all references to the manuscript, in sales catalogues as well as scholarly literature.

22 BERGEN (1935) 30.

23 LAWTON (1983) 69.

24 LAWTON (1983) 66 fn. 68.

Description of the Miniatures

What follows is a brief description of all the miniatures contained in MS English 1, relying on that of Bergen (1935: 32-36); and Scott (1996, II: 259-261), with corrections and additions. Line references in brackets refer to the printed text in Bergen's edition of BL MS Cotton Augustus A.iv; they are meant to help with the identification of text, and correspond to the text in MS English 1. In the spelling of names, I follow Bergen's index to Lydgate's poem.

No. folio Contents

1   1r   The poet Lydgate as Benedictine monk, kneeling before King Henry V and presenting his work; a sword-bearer standing behind the King; the antelope on the copula is the badge of Henry V [no relation to text; relation to Book I established by rubric underneath miniature]

Book I

2   3r   King Pelleus kneeling, and the metamorphosis of ants into the Myrmidons who issue in armour from the ground [facing ll. 1 ff, but illustrating ll. 34 ff. on f. 3v]

3   5v   Pelleus sends Jason forth to win the Golden Fleece, with a squire leading a horse [ll. 429 ff.]

4   6v   Jason, Hercules and the Argonauts in their ship [marking new chapter in l. 623, in 2nd column, but illustrating ll. 650 ff. on f. 7r]

5   7r   The Argonauts disembarking and disporting themselves in the Trojan King Lamedown's territory [ll. 723 ff.]

6   8v   Lamedown's messenger addressing Jason, Hercules, and the Argonauts [ll. 977 ff.]

7   9v   Hercules embarking, with Jason and the Argonauts on shore [ll. 1197 ff.]

8   10v   Jason and his troops received by King Cethes and courtiers [ll. 1345 ff.]

9   11v   Jason, Medee and Cethes seated at the banquet, with a man splitting a log [ll. 1513 ff.]

10   16v   Jason and Medee conversing at the cleared banquet table, with a courtier attending [ll. 2373 ff.]

11   18v   Two-part miniature next to ll. 2723 ff.: in the background, Medee hands Jason the silver image, the phial and the bille [ll. 2988 ff.]; in the foreground, both standing together outside the castle gate, with a mounted squire in attendance leading a second horses

12   20v   Jason taking leave of King Cethes, with saddled horses and squires in the fore-ground [ll. 3093 ff.]

13   21r   Four-part miniature illustrating Jason's adventures [ll. 3201 ff.], from bottom to top: Jason disembarking [ll. 3210 ff.]; Jason killing the dragon [ll. 3319 ff.]; with knights slaying one another [ll. 3399 ff.]; Jason's fight with the bulls [ll. 3260 ff.]; Jason shearing the golden sheep [ll. 3408 ff.], with Medee watching [ll. 3219 ff.]

14   22v   Two-part miniature: in the bottom, Jason arriving with Golden Fleece, received by courtiers; in the top, Jason bearing the Golden Fleece is received by King Cethes [ll. 3431 ff.]

15   23r   Jason and Medee sailing away from Colchos [ll. 3589 ff., of which only six lines appear in the bottom of 2nd column of f. 23r]

16   24r   Jason, Hercules and their knights received by King Pelleus [ll. 3721 ff.]

17   25r   First Greek expedition to Troy: with ships of Jason, Hercules, Nestor and Pelleus [ll. 3907 ff.]

18   26r   The battle before the walls of Troy: Lamedown, Nestor, and Castor on horseback, with troops of armed knights [ll. 4069 ff.]

Book II

19   28v   Fortune and her wheel: a king, two queens, an empress, and two more figures reaching for the wheel, three secular figures on it, two kings, a bishop, a lawyer, a clerk, a monk, and a pagan falling from it (half-page miniature to introduce Book II)

20   29v   Three-part miniature: in the centre, Priam's attack on the rebel castle, with a soldier aiming a cannon at the castle and a stone ball emerging from it, bowmen and sappers [ll. 203 ff., of which only five lines appear in bottom of 2nd column of f. 29v]; to the left, a camp with Castor and messenger kneeling before King Menelaus; to the right, Nestor in King Pelleus' camp [ll. 213 ff.]

21   31v   King Priam rebuilding Troy, with swordbearer, messenger, and craftsmen in the background constructing the city [ll. 479 ff.]

22   34v   Priam holding a council in Troy which is represented as a moated castle on the sea, with townspeople [ll. 1067 ff.]

23   36r   Four-part miniature illustrating Anthenor's voyage, from top to bottom: Anthenor before King Pelleus, with ship on shore [ll. 1323 ff.]; King Nestor [ll. 1635 ff.]; King Thelamoun Ajax [ll. 1406 ff.]; Castor and King Pollux [ll. 1557 ff.]

24   38v   King Priam at council, receiving Anthenor on his return [ll. 1745 ff.]

25   39v   Two-part miniature: to the left, Priam at council in Ilion; to the right, three scribes writing the briefs and letters to summon to a parliamentary meeting in a separate building, with courtier [ll. 1903 ff.]

26   40v   The parliament: King Priam, his sons Dephebus, Hector, Paris, and nobles [ll. 2063 ff.]

27   42r   Two-part miniature referring to new chapter in l. 2305 ff.: in the foreground, Paris on horseback aiming an arrow at Diane's stag [ll. 2423 ff.]; above, his vision and judgement, with Venus standing in blue water, her head surrounded by white doves, Juno clad in red robes holding a sceptre, with a peacock, Minerva in armour bearing a spear and a golden shield, and winged Mercury appearing before the sleeping Paris with pipe, caduceus, and cock [ll. 2465 ff.]

28   47v   Two-part miniature referring to new chapter in l. 3319 ff.: to the left, Paris and Anthenor land at Cythera [ll. 3426 ff.]; Eleyne, Hermione, Castor, Pollux, and Menelaus worshipping in the temple of Venus who appears on the altar as naked idol standing in water encircled with fire and holding a torch [ll. 3435 ff.;this same idol appears again in illustrations no. 29, 30, 47, 53, 58, and 59]

29   50r   Three-part miniature referring to new chapter in l. 3735 ff.: bottom left, battle at Cythera near the temple, with Anthenor, Paris, and knights [ll. 3819 ff.]; bottom right, Paris and Eleyne clasping hand, together with Anthenor and Hermione before an altar with the idol of Venus [cp. no. 28; ll. 3831 ff.]; above, Paris and his knights issuing from a walled city [ll. 3848 ff.]

30   52r   Two-part miniature: below, return of Paris, Eleyne and Anthenor to Troy, welcomed by King Priam and a swordbearer in front of the city gate [ll. 4097 ff.]; above, marriage of Paris and Eleyne in the temple of Minerva, with idol of Venus [cp. no. 28; ll. 4164 ff.]

31   53r   Two-part miniature: in the top, Menelaus swooning when receiving the news of Eleyne's abduction, being held up by Nestor and "Pira" [which is actually the place where Menelaus received the news, ll. 4255 ff.]; below, Menelaus, Nestor and "Pira" in their ships in the storm [ll. 4451 ff. retell Castor's and Pollux's shipwreck, the labels are therefore wrong; the next storm occurs only in ll. 6172 ff., and there is no mention of any king]]

32   54v   Guido delle Colonne and two pupils, each holding a book [ll. 4509 ff.; though the label says "Guido", ll. 4509-5066 refer also to "Dares Frigius"]

33   57v   The ships of Epistrofus is stored, while the ships of Agamenoun, Menelaus and their knights are sailing away [ll. 5067 ff.]

34   59v   Achilles and "Pirrodus" [error for Patroclus which also occurs in the text at l. 5396 etc.] at the oracle of Apollo, praying before a pageant waggon with a naked (?) woman holding bow and arrow, with sun on a shaft beside [ll. 5391 ff., 5941 ff.]

35   74v   The battle at the landing of the Greeks: Diomedes near the city gate of Troy, and Desabus, with their troops fighting; King Protheselaus and his knights, with his ship driven ashore; Trojan warriors pouring out of Troy, with "Y" for Ilion on their banner [ll. 8015 ff.; the labels may have been misplaced, as "Diomedes" and "Desabus" are clearly coming from the city, and attacking "Protheselaus" and his knights coming from the ship]

Book III

36   78v   Two-part miniature: to the left, King Meryon mounting his horse, with Greek soldiers and their tents; to the right, city of Troy, and Hector slaying Patroclus (half-page miniature to introduce Book III)

37   83v   Two-part miniature marking new chapter in l. 819 ff.: in the background, Hector's brother Cyncybar on horseback with other knights, and Hector with his knights [no specific reference to text]; below, Hector fighting Duke Meneste on foot, with Meryon falling wounded to the ground, and "Duke Antropus" lying dead who is incorrectly turned into a Greek knight [*Antropos*, man, is a figure of Death in the *Troy Book*; ll. 1005 ff.]

38   92r   A fight between Achilles and Hector, on horseback, with troops, and the city of Troy in the background [ll. 2365 ff.]

39   94r   Hector and Enee fighting Achilles and Diomedes, all on horseback, with the Trojan Paris and the Greek Politite and Ulixes and their resp. knights accompanying them on foot [marking new chapter in l. 2667 ff., but illustrating ll. 2763 ff. beginning on f. 94v]

40   97v   Two-part miniature marking new chapter in l. 3323 ff.: in the centre, Hector and Enee slaying Cedius and Alphenor [ll. 3362 ff.]; to the right, Centaur shooting arrows into the Greek rank and file standing between their tents on the left [ll. 3424 ff.]

41   100r   Hector and Achilles meeting, dismounted but armed, with tents, horses and soldiers nearby [ll. 3755 ff.]

42   102r   Cryseide swooning, Anthenor holding her up, and Thoas seated, with knights issuing into the room [marking new chapter in l. 4077 ff.]. The "Anthenor" may be a misnomer for Troilus (Lawton 1983: 65 fn. 65), but then you would have to explain why Thoas is also present; the miniature is therefore best seen as the actual exchange of Anthenor for Thoas and Cryseide. Lydgate's story of the exchange is muddled and scattered over many lines: negotiations for the exchange occur in lines 3664-3754; Cryseide's swooning is in lines 4135-39 while she is alone; the lover's meeting occurs in lines 4154-85; and the actual exchange is never mentioned at all.

43   106v   Four-part miniature, from left to right: Andronomecha sleeping in her bed dreaming of Hector's death [ll. 4889 ff.]; three women pleading with "Diomede" (error for Hector) not to go into battle, one of them mistakenly labelled "Cryseide" (error for either Cassandra, Eccuba, Eleyne or Pollycene) [ll. 5073 ff.]; Diomedes in battle with Paris, together with their knights and soldiers [ll. 5144 ff.]; Achilles slays Hector from behind, the latter being unarmed [ll. 5384 ff.]

44   109v   The funeral procession of Hector, clerics going before his coffin [ll. 5412 ff.]

Book IV

45   112r   Crowned Achilles lying wounded in bed in his tent, wearing a white beard, with knights attending, and city of Troy in landscape (half-page miniature to introduce Book IV)

46   114r   Priam and Palamedes fighting [ll. 34372 ff.]

47   115r   Achilles, Eccuba, and Pollycene with attendants in the temple of Apollo, praying before an altar with the idol of Venus [cp.no.28; ll. 54551 ff.]

48   119r   Two-part miniature: to the right, Dephebus wounded to the death [ll. 122376 ff.]; to the left, Paris and Palamedes in single combat on horseback, Thelamoun Ajax and another king on ground [ll. 1339 ff., 1255 ff.]

49   121v   Two-part miniature: to the left, Achilles is visited in his tent by Nestor and soldiers who plead with him [ll. 16815 ff.]; to the rightin the centre, Agamenoun and Menelaus with other kings at councillors in a tent, with landscape to the right [ll. 1901 ff.]

50   123v   Combats between Troilus and Diomedes, Menelaus and an unnamed knight, all on horseback [ll. 20249ff.]

51   125v   Combats between Paris and Menelaus, and between Anthenor and Meneste [ll. 243012 ff.]

52   126r   Two-part miniature to mark new chapter in l. 2525 ff.: to the left, mounted combat between Troilus and Achilles, each with troops, and Anthenor on foot [ll. 2559 ff.]; to the right, Achilles dragging the headless corpse of Troilus tied to his horse's tail [ll. 2756 ff.]

53   129v   Achilles and Anthilogus, represented as white-bearded old men, are murdered by Paris and his knights in the Temple of Apollo, with the idol of Venus [cp. no. 28; marks new chapter in l. 3107 ff., illustrates ll. 3168 ff. on f. 129v-130r]

54   130v   Agamenoun and council before his tent, with city in the background [ll. 3271 ff.68]

55   131r   Thelamoun Ajax and a knight fighting "Quene "Pollidamaus" and King Philymene [marks new chapter in l. 3363 ff., illustrates(error for ?Penthesilea) and

King Philymene [ll. 3470 ff]. The label of ""Quene pollidamaus" must beis a misnomer; the person labelled is clearly female, and therefore cannotshould be the Amazon Queen Penthesilea. THowever, the fight as illustrated occurs in lines 3470-98, Thelamoun Ajax entering the battlefield only in line 3486; the miniature should therefore represent the Trojan knight Polydamas. Lawton thinks the error arose because line 3429 with its reference to ""Philymene and Pollydamas" is close to the illustration (1983:65).

56   136r   Battle between the Amazons on the one hand, and Pirrus and his Greek knights on the other, with Pirrus slaying ""Pollidamas" (in this case, clearly an error for Penthesilea) [ll. 428160 ff., 4321 ff.]

57   138r   Two-part miniature: to the left, Priam holding a council in Troy [ll. 4637 ff.]; to the right, the Greek tents with troops in between

58   145v   Four-part miniature, from left to right: the Horse of Brass saddled by Calchas [ll. 60523 ff.]; king on horseback riding towards the city; the walls of Troy breached for the Horse's entrance, and massacre of the Trojans [ll. 6206 ff., 6298 ff.]; King Priam killed in the temple of Apollo, with idol of Venus [cp. no. 28; ll. 6404 ff.]

59   149v   Two-part miniature: to the left, Pirrus, white-haired and white-bearded, killing Pollycene at Achilles' tomb in a temple, with idol of Venus [cp. no. 28; ll. 6731852 ff.]; to the right, Queen Eccuba is killed by Pirrus on an island, near a chapel [ll. 6894 ff.]

Book V

60   151v   Three-part miniature: to the right, prophets Danyel, Ezechi

el, and Sedechie disputing [actually this part of the miniature with its labels of the prophets refers back to Book IV.7063-7084 in the 1st column, whereas Book V in the 2nd begins with a quarrel between Ulixes and Thelamoun Ajax, with Agamenoun mediating between them, ll. 40 ff.; the labels should therefore be Thelamoun for Ezechiel, Agamenoun instead of Daniel, and Ulixes for Sedechie]; to the left, an army of knights; in the back, king with three soldiers (miniature to introduce Book V, within the column, covering the space of c. 16 lines of text)

61   153r   Three-part miniature marking new chapter in l. 217 ff.: to the left, Ulixes with knights [?ll. 269-273161 ff.]; in the centre, two figures in bed; to the right, Thelamoun is found murdered in his bed, the three knights men probably representing Menelaus, Agamenoun, and Ulixes [ll. 2745 ff.]

62   155v   Three-part miniature marking new chapter in l. 697 ff.: to the left, Ulixes and Diomedes seize Palamedes [ll. 865 ff.]; in the centre, Palamedes is killed by Diomedes and Ulixes in a well by casting stones on him [ll. 894 ff.]; to the right, the false signal fires are set on the shore by King Naulus, and Agamenoun's shipwreck [ll. 929 ff.]

63   157v   Three-part miniature: to the right, Agamenoun's reception by Clemestra [ll. 101177 ff.] ; in the centre, his death at the hand of Egistus [ll. 1117-20]; in the top, the marriage of Clemestra and Egistus [ll. 1120-25]

64   158v   Assandrus, Diomedes's brother-in-law, is killed with a dart by Thelefus [ll. 1207 51 ff.]

65   161r   FourThree-part miniature, from left to right: ship on shore, signalling Menelaus's return [ll. 1665 ff.]; in the foreground, Nestor and Menelaus with kings and courtiers at council conversing [ll. 1707 ff.]; in the back, MenelausMenelaus attending the marriage of Horestes and Hermione [ll. 1758 ff.]; to the right, Erigona, daughter of Clemestra and Egistus, hangs herself [ll. 1772 ff.]

66   162r   Ulixes conversing with King Ydumene, in hall, with soldiers outside and ship on shore [ll. 183928 ff.]

67   164v   Two-part miniature marking new chapter in l. 2315 ff.: to the left, Pirrus coming to Pelleus on an island [text has him in a cave, l. 2403], with ship on shore and Pirrus [ll. 2407 ff.]; to the right, Menalippus and Polistenes are killed by Pirrus while hunting [ll. 2488 ff.]

68   166v   Two-part miniature: to the left, Pelleus and Atastus offer their crowns to Pirrus [ll. 26230 ff.]; centre to the right, Pirrus is crowned, with Atastus and Pelleus attending [ll. 2679 ff.]

69   168r   Three-part miniature: in the top, Ulixes in bed dreaming of a beautiful maiden who appears crowned and with banner [ll. 2957 ff.]; in the centre, Ulixes conversing with three clerks who expound his dream, with his son Thelamoun shut up in a tower [ll. 3038 ff., 3060 ff.]; in the bottom, Ulixes is killed by Thelagonus, his son by Circe [ll. 3147 ff.]

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