

**“Uncommon Readers?
The Paston Family and the Textual Cultures of
Fifteenth-Century East Anglia”**

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PhD Thesis**

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PhD Thesis Abstract

This study brings together the extant evidence surrounding the literary and manuscript culture of the Paston family. By placing in dialogue bills, inventories letters, and manuscripts this thesis will map the circulation of texts and manuscripts within the networks of people associated with this prominent medieval gentry family and establish in what ways the Pastons were typical or atypical in their selection and acquisition of texts and manuscript. The project considers John Paston II's commissioning of manuscripts and his collaboration with the scribe, William Ebesham, to compile and curate London, British Library, MS Lansdowne 285 (a manuscript John Paston II called his “boke of knyghthode”). The thesis then moves to explore some features of John Paston II's wider library, looking at how it displays an engagement with a local hub of textual production, to which Paston had strong social connections, before turning to consider Paston as a reader of more widely circulating and popular works (such as those by Chaucer and Lydgate). In the final section of the thesis I consider the evidence for other members of the Paston family engaging with textual culture. Here I explore the ways in which both John Paston II and his sister, Anne Paston, are simultaneously quite typical in their owning and reading of works by John Lydgate and idiosyncratic in the *types* of text they had and how they were put to a form of cultural *use*. Finally, I look at the ways the texts of these manuscripts appear to have pervaded the writing of certain members of the Paston family. Through these lines of enquiry this project establishes the Pastons within an East Anglian textual culture but, through this collection of evidences, assesses the nature of that culture.

Elizabeth McDonald
UEA

List of Abbreviations

This edition uses the conventional abbreviations for the *Middle English Dictionary* (MED), *Publications for the Modern Language Association* (PMLA), and Early English Text Society (EETS).

BL	London, British Library
Bodleian	Oxford, Bodleian Library
c.	<i>Circa</i>
CCMI CCMII	M. C. Seymour, <i>A Catalogue of Chaucer Manuscripts</i> , 2 vols, (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1995 and 1997)
CUL	Cambridge, University Library
<i>Epistle</i> es	Christine de Pisan, <i>The Epistle of Othea</i> , trans. Stephen Scrope extra series
f./ff.	folio(s)
<i>Game</i>	William Caxton, <i>The Game and Playe of the Chesse</i>
MED	University of Michigan, <i>The Middle English Dictionary</i> (online), (Michigan: Michigan University Press, 2000)
MPJLI MPJLII	<i>The Minor Poems of John Lydgate</i> , ed. Henry Noble MacCracken, 2 vols, EETS es 107, os 192 (London: Oxford University Press, 1911-34)
MS(S)	manuscript(s)
NIMEV	Julia Boffey and A. S. G. Edwards, <i>A New Index of Middle English Verse</i> (London: British Library, 2005)
OED	<i>Oxford English Dictionary</i> (online)
ODNB	<i>Oxford Dictionary of National Biography</i> , ed. C. Mathew and B. Harrison, 60 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004)
os	original series
PE	<i>The Prologues and Epilogues of William Caxton</i> , ed. W. J. B. Crotch, EETS os 176 (London: Oxford University Press, 1928 (for 1927)
PLI PLII PLIII	<i>Paston Letters and Papers of the Fifteenth Century</i> , eds. Normans Davis, Richard Beadle and Colin Richmond, 3 vols, EETS ss 20-22 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004-05)
PM	New York, Pierpont Morgan Library
SJPGB	G. A. Lester, <i>Sir John Paston's 'Grete Boke': A Descriptive Catalogue, with an Introduction of British Library MS Lansdowne 285</i> (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1984)
ss	supplementary series

Manuscripts

Bodley	Bodleian, MS Bodley 414
Huntarian	Glasgow University Library, MS U. 1. 1
Lansdowne	BL MS Lansdowne 285
Pierpont Morgan	PM MS 775
Rye	Norwich, Norfolk Record Office, MS Rye 38

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STATEMENT OF LENGTH:

99 882 Words

Introduction

0.1: The Paston Letters and their critical reception

There are over 1051 extant documents associated with the Paston family, making this the largest corpus of medieval English letters, and related materials, outside of those written by royalty.¹ An extraordinarily important resource, they are famous for including the earliest surviving example of a Valentine's letter (sent from Margery Brews to John Paston III in February 1477),² as well as for providing insight into fifteenth-century letter-writing practices; the circulation and storage of correspondence; fifteenth-century gentry culture; a gentry experience of the Wars of the Roses;³ local power struggles and politics; attitudes to love, marriage and family; approaches to education; and myriad other subject matters. Any study of fifteenth-century England seems hardly to be complete without at least a passing reference to the Pastons, whether as a footnote or a more sustained case-study. This thesis will bring to the foreground an aspect of the letters that has previously been treated only as incidental support or illustrative example in wider thematic discussions: the Pastons and their interaction with literary culture. As I will shortly go on to show, the Pastons are invoked in studies of the fifteenth-century readership of

¹ The Paston letters are the largest of four extant collections of correspondence written by medieval gentry families. For editions of the other three contemporary and near-contemporary archives see, C. L. Kingsford, ed., *The Stonor Letters 1290-1483*, 2 vols., Camden Society, 3rd Series, 29 and 30 (1919); Alison Hanham, ed., *The Cely Letters 1472-1488*, EETS, 273 (1975); Joan Kirby, ed., *The Plumpton Letters and Papers 1346-1584*, Camden Society, 5th series, 8 (1996). For a brief introduction to the four families and a comparison of their experiences of the fifteenth century see Joan Kirby, "Survival and Betterment: the Aspirations of Four Medieval Gentry Families as Revealed in their Letters," *Family and Community History*, 15.2 (2012), pp.95-112.

² *PLI*, pp.662-63.

³ As Alison Truelove and Raluca Radulescu state in their introduction to *Gentry Culture in Late-Medieval England*, "the term 'gentry' was never itself used as a contemporary class designation, but is rather a modern construct that remains without firm definition." This thesis adheres to the resultant understanding of the 'gentry' 'as an amorphous, ever-fluctuating groups of individuals' 'taking in all of landed society below peerage, from knights down to gentleman, and including those aspirants to gentility who might under traditional socio-economic terms be excluded from the group.' Truelove and Radulescu, eds., *Gentry Culture in Late-Medieval England* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), p.1. I shall return to the question of the definition of 'gentry' and viewing the Pastons as members of this class a little further on in section 0.1 of this thesis.

Chaucer;⁴ as examples of the gentry readership of Arthurian romances;⁵ as women writers;⁶ as owners of printed works (one, Caxton's *Game and Playe of*

⁴ Alcuin Blamires, "Chaucer's Revaluation of Chivalric Honor," in *Mediaevalia*, 5 (1979), pp.245-269; Henrik Specht, *Chaucer's Franklin in the Canterbury Tales: The Social and Literary Background of a Chaucerian Character* (Copenhagen: Publications for the Department of English, University of Copenhagen, 1981); Ralph Hanna III and A.S.G. Edwards, "Rotheley, the De Vere Circle, and the Ellesmere Chaucer," *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 58.1 (1995), pp.11-35; Steve Ellis, "Framing the Father: Chaucer and Virginia Woolf," *New Medieval Literatures* 7 (2005), pp.35-52; Cathy Hume, *Chaucer and the Cultures of Love and Marriage* (Cambridge: Brewer, 2012).

⁵ Carol M. Meale, "Manuscripts, Readers and Patrons in Fifteenth-Century England: Sir Thomas Malory and Arthurian Romance," *Arthurian Literature IV* (1985), pp.93-126; Colin Richmond, "Thomas Malory and the Pastons," in *Readings in Medieval English Romance*, ed. C. Meale (Cambridge: Brewer, 1994), pp.195-208; Karen Cherewatuk, "'Gentyl' Audiences and 'Grete Bookes': Chivalric Manuals and the *Morte Darthur*," *Arthurian Literature XV* (1997), pp.205-216; Cherewatuk, "Sir Thomas Malory's 'Grete Booke,'" *The Social and Literary Contexts of Malory's Morte Darthur, Arthurian Studies XLII* (2000), pp.42-67; Cherewatuk, "Pledging Troth in Malory's 'Tale of Sir Gareth,'" in *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 101.1 (Jan. 2002), pp.19-49; Raluca L. Radulescu, *Arthurian Studies IV: The Gentry Context for Malory's Morte Darthur* (Cambridge: Brewer, 2003); Cherewatuk, "Aural and Written Reception in Sir John Paston, Malory and Caxton," *Essays in Medieval Studies*, 21 (2004), pp.123-131; Michael Johnston, *Romance and the Gentry in Late Medieval England*, (Oxford: OUP, 2014).

⁶ Norman Davis, *The Language of the Pastons*, Sir Israel Gollancz Memorial Lecture, British Academy, London, (1954); Norman Davis, "Style and Stereotype in Early English Letters," in *Leeds Studies in English*, n.s.1 (1967), pp.7-17; Norman Davis, "Margaret Paston's Uses of 'Do'," in *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen* 73.1/3 (1972), pp.55-62; Karen Cherewatuk and Ulrike Wiethaus (eds), *Dear Sister: Medieval Women and the Epistolary Genre* (Pennsylvania, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993); Roger Dalrymple, "Reaction, Consolation and Redress in the Letters of the Paston Women," in *Early Modern Women's Letter Writing, 1450-1700*, ed. J. Daybell (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001), pp.16-28; Johanna L. Wood, "Text in Context. A Critical Discourse Analysis Approach to Margaret Paston" in *Letter Writing*, ed. Terttu Nevalainen and Sanna-Kaisa Tanskanen (Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2007), pp.47-72; Diane Watt, *Medieval Women's Writing* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007), pp. 136-156; Alison Spedding, "'I shalle send word in writing: Lexical Choices and Legal Acumen in the Letters of Margaret Paston,'" in *Medieval Aevum* 7.2 (2008), pp.241-259; Jennifer Douglas, "'Kepe wysly youre wrytyngys': Margaret Paston's Fifteenth-Century Letters," in *Libraries and the Cultural Record*, 44.1 (2009), pp.29-49; J. Camilo Conde-Silvestre and Juan M. Hernández-Campoy, "Tracing the Generational Progress of Language Change in Fifteenth-Century English: the Digraph <th> in the 'Paston Letters,'" in *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen* 114.3 (2013), pp.279-299; Alexandra Barratt (ed.), *Women's Writing in Middle English*, 2nd ed. (London and New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2010) pp.260-281; Juan M. Hernández-Campoy, "Ladylikeness and Sociolinguistic Submission in Late Medieval English Society: Gender-based Use of Negation in John Paston I and Margaret Paston," in *Atlantis* 35.1 (June 2013), pp.11-33; Juan M. Hernández-Campoy, "Authorship and Gender in English Historical Sociolinguistic Research: Samples from the Paston Letters," in *Current Trends in Historical Sociolinguistics*, ed. Cinzia Russi, (De Gruyter Online, 2016), pp.180-142; Minako Nakayasu, "Space and Time in the Middle English

Chesse);⁷ and as possible commissioners of Lydgate's *Temple of Glass* and owners of other pieces of his work.⁸ However, this interest in what we might tentatively call the literary qualities of the letters and in the references to literature within them has been a relatively late development in the afterlife of these documents: between 1735 and 1912 studies of the letters had an almost exclusively historical focus.

In 1735, Francis Blomefield, the famous Norfolk antiquarian, was invited by the executors of William Paston, second Earl of Yarmouth, to assess a collection of documents. Blomefield recorded his impression of what he found in his Entry Book:

innumerable letters, of good consequence in history, still lying among the loose papers, all which I laid up in a corner of the room on a heap, which contains several sacks full; but as they seemed to have some family affairs of one nature or other intermixed in them, I did not offer to touch any of them, but have left to your consideration [Major Weldon, one of the executors for William Paston, second Earl of Yarmouth], whether, when I go to that part of the country, I shall separate and preserve them, or whether you will have them burned, though I must own 'tis pity they should; except it be those (of which there are many) that relate to nothing but family affairs only.⁹

Letters: Dialogues Between Paston Men and Women," in *Kwartalnik Neofilologiczny*, LXV.1 (2018), pp.120-135.

⁷ Charles Knight, *William Caxton, the First English Printer: a Biography*, (London: William Clowes & Sons; Harwicke & Bogue, 1877); George Duncan Painter, *William Caxton: A Quincentenary Biography of England's First Printer* (Chatto & Windus, 1976); Seth Lerer, "Chancery, Caxton, and the Making of English Prose," in his *Inventing English: A Portable History of the Language* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), pp. 115-128.

⁸ Henry Noble MacCracken, "Additional Light on the *Temple of Glas*," in *PMLA*, 23.1 (1908), pp.128-140. This critical debate surrounding the identity of the possibly commissioners of this work is outlined and discussed in Chapter Four of this thesis.

⁹ S. W. Rix, "Cursory Notices of the Rev. Francis Blomefield," *Norfolk Archaeology*, ii (1849), pp.201-24, esp. pp.210-11, as cited in Davis, who notes, "Rix modernized Blomefield's spelling. His [Blomefield's] autograph copy survives in his Entry Book, now MS Walter Rye 32 in the Norwich Central Library, pp.33-4". See, *PLI*, xxvi, ftnt.1. Davis's edition of the letters was published before the Norwich Central Library fire of 1994, after which Blomefield's Entry Book was moved to the Norfolk Record Office, still bearing the classmark MS Walter Rye 32.

Blomefield's appraisal of the letters foregrounded the value these documents have in furthering a particular understanding of England in the fifteenth century: he had separated those papers that were 'of good consequence in history' from those that 'seemed to have some family affairs of one nature or other.'¹⁰ We cannot know with any certainty what Blomefield meant by these 'family affairs': whether he referred to the myriad of seemingly minor details included in the daily affairs of running multiple estates; or to matters of personal import such as births, marriages, or deaths; or to the local gossip being recounted to a husband detained in London.¹¹ However, this account from his Entry Book does leave the reader to infer the possibility that, for Blomefield, the significance of the letters lay in what they could tell antiquarians and historians about the national, macro-history of the Wars of the Roses and how this related to the local experience of those histories.¹² Horace Walpole states such an interest in 1784:

[t]he historic picture they give of the reign of Henry VI makes them invaluable, and more satisfactory than any cold narrative.¹³

The humanity of the letters, the personalities, the foibles, the personal dramas, were seen as a means by which to add flesh to 'any cold narrative' of the reign of a king. John Fenn, the recipient of Walpole's letter and the first editor of the

¹⁰ Rix, 'Cursory Notices of the Rev. Francis Blomefield,' as quoted in *PLI*, xxvi.

¹¹ For example, in July 1444, as part of a request for money and an update on the various "herrendys" John Paston I had asked of her, Margaret Paston writes to her husband with news of the birth of John Heydon's bastard child: "Heydonnis wyffe had child on Sent Petyr Day. I herde seyne that herre husband wille nowt of here, nerre of herre child that sche had last nowdyre. I herd seyn that he seyde gyf sche come in hesse precence to make here exkewce that he xuld kyt of here nose to makyn here to be know wat sche is, and yf here child come in hesse presence he seyde he wyld kyllyn. He wolle nowt be intretit to have here ayen in no wysse, os I herde seyn." *PLI*, p.220. This incident is also discussed in Colin Richmond, "East Anglian Politics and Society in the Fifteenth Century: Reflections 1956-2003," in Christopher Harper-Bill (ed.), *Medieval East Anglia* (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2005), p.186.

¹² Rix, 'Cursory Notices of the Rev. Francis Blomefield,' as quoted in *PLI*, xxvi.

¹³ Davis notes that this letter from Horace Walpole to John Fenn, written in May 1784, survives "in a volume of letters collected by Fenn, now in the Colman Library, Norwich". It was published by R. W. Ketton-Cremer in 'Some New Letters of Horace Walpole,' *T.L.S.*, 15 March 1957, p.164. See *PLI*, xxiv, fnt.1. The Colman Collection was bequeathed to the Norwich Central Library and was distributed between the Norfolk Heritage Centre and the Norfolk Record Office after the fire of 1994. The "bound volume of letters to Fenn with draft replies re. the 'Paston Letters' (vols. I and II)" can now be found at the Norfolk Record Office, COL 8/97.

letters, articulated (if in a rather prolix manner) the value of the micro-histories, as well as the macro-history, in these documents, giving the first two volumes of his published transcriptions the title *Original Letters, written during the reigns of Henry VI, Edward IV, and Richard III, by various persons of rank or consequence; containing many curious anecdotes relative to that turbulent and bloody, but hitherto dark period of our history; and elucidating, not only public matters of state, but likewise the private manners of the age: digested in chronological order; with notes, historical and explanatory; and authenticated by engravings of autographs, paper marks and seals* (1787).¹⁴

Since this first publication, the letters have provided historians with insights into life in the fifteenth century. The letters have formed the core of an extended history of the family – Colin Richmond’s three volumes, *The Paston Family in the Fifteenth Century*, and Helen Castor’s single-volume popular history *Blood and Roses*.¹⁵ They have been used to furnish illustrative examples for historical studies on medieval marriage, land management, pilgrimage, midwifery, law, jousting, siege warfare, familial bonds, and a myriad of other subjects. For example, John Paston II, with his interest and aptitude for jousting (in 1467 he jousted on Edward IV’s side at Eltham palace), his *Grete Boke* of knighthood, his reports of the difficulties of making an impression at court,¹⁶ and his account of

¹⁴ Davis notes that “as early as 31 March of the same year [as publication]” customers were already shortening the title of Fenn’s work: “Hannah More wrote to her sister [saying] [...] “Well, I have got the ‘Paston Letters’.”” See *Memoirs of the Life and Correspondence of Mrs. Hannah More*, ed. W. Roberts (3rd edn., 1835), ii. 50, as cited in *PLI*, p. xxiv, ftnt. 4.

¹⁵ Colin Richmond, *The Paston Family in the Fifteenth Century: Volume 1, the First Phase* (Cambridge: CUP, 1990); Colin Richmond, *The Paston Family in the Fifteenth Century: Volume 2, Fastolf’s Will*, (Cambridge: CUP, 1996); Colin Richmond, *The Paston Family in the Fifteenth Century: Volume 3, Endings*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000); Helen Castor, *Blood and Roses*, (London: Faber & Faber, 2004). See also H. S. Bennett, *The Pastons and their England*, (Cambridge: CUP, 1922, reprinted 1991). Both Richard Barber and John Virgoe produced popular edited selections from the letters that sought to present the Pastons within their historical context: Richard Barber (ed.), *The Pastons: A Family in the Wars of the Roses*, (London: The Folio Society, 1981); Roger Virgoe (ed.), *Private Life in the 15th Century: Illustrated Letters of the Paston Family*, (London: Macmillan, 1989). Diane Watt has also edited a selection of the letters that foregrounds the Paston women: Diane Watt (ed.), *The Paston Women: Selected Letters*, Library of Medieval Women (Woodbridge: Brewer, 2004).

¹⁶ *PLI*, pp.199-200 (Clement Paston writing to John Paston I of the genuine difficulty suffered by John Paston II in finding social connections at court, 1461); pp.392-93

the battle of Barnet (1471),¹⁷ provides evidence for studies of jousting and heraldry such as that undertaken by the nineteenth-century antiquarian, Francis Douce or, rather more recently, works such as Maurice Keen's seminal study on medieval chivalry, warfare, and kingship.¹⁸

In the past decade, Margaret Paston's devotional practices have been examined by Joel Rosenthal to establish whether she was particularly pious or quite typical amongst her peers:

If she regularly went through the verbal drill I have sketched out— blessings, invocations, words of thanks or of hope regarding heaven's interest in Paston projects—she was by no means the most effusive, the most given to having pieties roll off the page. On the other hand, her usage was regular, typical, and fairly constant.¹⁹

Rosenthal establishes an image of Margaret as entirely pedestrian and orthodox in both her belief and the expression of those beliefs. Both the Lollards and the extreme practices of affective piety (such as those apparently exhibited by Margery Kempe) appear to have passed her by. She is firmly placed in the realm of gentry devotional practices, such as those outlined by Carole Hill in *Women and Religion in Late Medieval Norwich*, but the evidence does not necessarily point to her being a key participant in a 'highly innovative lay piety as well as [a] personal participant in an evolving and vibrant religion.'²⁰

(John Paston II writes to John Paston I explaining the "grete expens" he accrues in travelling with the Edward IV, 1462); pp.127-8 (John Paston I's disappointment in his son's inability to make an impression at court, 1465), pp.204-205 (Clement Paston chastising John Paston I for the tone of a letter the latter intended to send to a member of the court and reporting on the investments that would need to be made if John Paston II were to accompany the Edward IV to Scotland, 1466).

¹⁷*PLI*, pp.437-438.

¹⁸ Francis Douce, "On the peaceable Justs, or Tiltings of the middle ages," *Archaeologia*, XVII (1814), pp.290-96. Maurice Keen, "Chivalry and English Kingship in the Later Middle Ages," in Chris Given-Wilson, Ann Kettle, and Len Scales, eds, *War, Government and Aristocracy in the British Isles, c.1150-1500. Essays in Honour of Michael Prestwich* (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2008), pp.250-266 but particularly p.250. Also, Nigel Saul, "Chivalry and Nobility," in Saul, *Chivalry in Medieval England*, (Harvard University Press, 2011), pp.159-177, (particularly pp.162, 170-172).

¹⁹ Joel Rosenthal, *Margaret Paston's Piety*, (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), p.79.

²⁰ Carole Hill, *Women and Religion in Late Medieval Norwich*, The Royal Historical Society, Studies in History New Series (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2010), p.16.

Whilst the historical significance of these letters and documents has been investigated and celebrated for almost three hundred years, the importance of these documents to more narrowly “literary” scholarship has been realised more recently. While this amounts to just over a century of intermittent study, the Pastons’ involvement with the production and circulation of manuscripts, and their literary interests has, surprisingly, yet to be fully investigated and realised. These aspects have been considered as parts of other studies of medieval literary culture, but the corpus of evidence surrounding their commissioning, borrowing, and lending of manuscripts has not been attended to in any sustained detail. Neither have the different kinds of evidence been brought together systematically to allow them collectively to offer a picture of the Pastons’ engagement with their textual culture. This thesis brings together these documents, in part, to present a case study for the *kinds* of questions we might ask of a combination of evidence such as this, speaking to (and bringing together) some of the avenues of book history studies and lines of questioning offered by certain documents, as outlined in Ralph Hanna’s *Introducing English Medieval Book History*.²¹ These questions include: How did the Pastons come to own their manuscripts? What roles did they have in the creation of those manuscripts? What relationships did they have with their scribes? From where might they have obtained exemplars for their manuscripts? What might we come to understand about them as the commissioners, purchasers and readers of manuscripts? As Hanna states, “behind every newly produced volume, one can imagine a range of conversations designed to ensure that a customer receives what he wants at a pricing mutually satisfactory to both parties”.²² Exploring this combination of evidence allows us insight into those conversations surrounding the collections of texts and manuscripts associated with the Paston family.

The sites for such an investigation of the literary culture of the Pastons, and for those studies that seek to use the Pastons as examples in wider studies of

²¹ Ralph Hanna, *Introducing English Medieval Book History* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2013).

²² *Ibid.* p.166.

medieval literary culture, are a small selection of documents: two bills from a Westminster scribe, William Ebesham, to John Paston II; an inventory of English books; mentions of book ownership or literary references in the letters.²³ There are also five moments of seemingly original poetic compositions by members of the family: a piece of doggerel verse by John Paston I; an English and a Latin poem by John Paston III; and what Julia Boffey believes to be a few lines of original verse by Margery Brews in her famous valentine's letter.²⁴ There is also a piece of doggerel written by a John Pympe to John Paston II.²⁵ Alongside the evidence from these letters, bills and inventories, are two extant manuscripts, BL MS Lansdowne 285 (hereafter referred to as Lansdowne) and Norfolk Record Office, MS Rye 38 (hereafter referred to as Rye). There is also an extant manuscript, Bodleian MS Bodley 414 (hereafter referred to as Bodley), a fifteenth-century copy of the *Canterbury Tales*, in which the name "Iohan Paston" is inscribed on ff.1v and 8v.²⁶ Furthermore, the BL holds an incunable, C.10.b.23, containing Caxton's *The Game and Playe of the Chesse*, for which plausible connections with the Paston family are suggested by the inscription of the arms of Sir Thomas Wrythe (the subsequent owner of Lansdowne), suggesting that, as with Lansdowne, this had come from the library of John Paston II.²⁷

²³ For the bills of William Ebesham, see *PLII*, pp.386-7 and pp.391-2. For the Inventory of English Books, see *PLI*, pp.516-18. For Lydgate's *Siege of Thebes* see *PLI*, p.575. For the mention of the Arthurian court, see *PLI*, p.539. For John Paston II's discussion with Margaret Paston of the acquisition of the library of James Gloys, see *PLI*, pp.373, 476, 477, 484. For John Paston II's request for books to be sent to him, see *PLI*, p.447, *PLII*, p.379, and *PLIII*, p.71.

²⁴ For John Paston I's doggerel verse, see *PLI*, p.145. For John Paston III's English poem, see *PLI*, pp. 571-2, and, for the Latin, p.632. For Margery Brews' valentine's letter, see *PLI*, pp.662-663. Boffey discusses the composition of the few lines of verse within the valentine's letter, stating that it is "unmetrical and unpolished enough to seem an original composition spontaneously designed for the occasion." See Julia Boffey, *Manuscripts of English Courtly Love Lyrics in the Later Middle Ages* (Woodbridge: Brewer, 1985), p.85.

²⁵ Davis, *PLII*, pp.417-418.

²⁶ *CMII*, p.167.

²⁷ *SJPGGB*, pp.58-9; A. I. Doyle, "The Work of a Late Fifteenth-Century English Scribe, William Ebesham," in *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library, Manchester*, 39 (1956-7), p.307, fn.1.

Some of these sites reveal more than others. For instance, John Paston III's comparison of the Burgundian court to "Kyng Artourys" in a letter to his mother, Margaret Paston, indicates that both parties had a familiarity with a version of the tales of the Arthurian court.²⁸ We can use a document such as this to illuminate our understanding of the readership of the Arthurian literature, but the evidence does not really allow us to reconstruct a detailed picture of either John Paston III or Margaret Paston as readers. However, when placed in combination with the Inventory of English Books written by John Paston II, these almost incidental literary references in the letters take on a more substantial force. This inventory records that John Paston II owned a manuscript containing the "Dethe of Arthur".²⁹ If we then place this alongside the contents of another item in that inventory, his "boke of knyghthod", which survives as the aforementioned Lansdowne manuscript, we find a report of the joust at the Burgundian court in 1468 as part of the celebrations of the marriage of Margaret of York to the Duke of Burgundy, an event attended by both John Paston II and John Paston III.³⁰

This passing textual reference to tales of King Arthur by John Paston III's in the letter to his mother gains a greater significance when regarded in relation to these other documents: we see that another member of the Paston family had two manuscripts in which were recorded impressive chivalric events, and we have further evidence by which we can explore how those texts circulated within the Paston network and which texts circulated with them within the manuscripts owned by John Paston II.³¹ For Lansdowne we also have two bills

²⁸ Davis, *PLI*, p.539.

²⁹ *Id.* p.517.

³⁰ *Id.* p.518.

³¹ Here, and over the course of this thesis, I refer to the collective whole to which the Pastons belong as a "network" rather than "community" or an adjacent synonym. The *OED* defines 'network' as "an interconnected group of people; [...] a group of people having certain connections [...] which may be exploited to gain preferment, information, etc., esp. for professional advantage.' As we will see, the Pastons belong to, and move between, numerous *kinds* of social groups, often seeking to exploit their connections with other members of these groups. There is a transactional factor in their belonging to certain groups as well as a fluidity in their movement between groups or simultaneously belonging to multiple *kinds* of group that leads me to use the term 'network' across this thesis. For these same reasons I also describe the creation,

from the scribe, William Ebesham, who copied a substantial amount of the extant manuscript. From this we are able to consider the copying of the manuscript, the relationship between the patron and the scribe, and how this information may help us to understand not only the creation of the manuscript but also the organisation and composition of Paston's library. It is, thus, the inventory, Lansdowne, and the bills of William Ebesham that form the focus of much of this thesis.

This selection of documents has, as previously stated, received intermittent attention over the past century though not *in toto* and not for the light that they may cast on each other. The item to receive the earliest attention was Lansdowne, a collection of works primarily (but not exclusively) concerned with the ceremonies of the court and jousts, thus holding particular interest and significance for studies of medieval heraldry. Once it left the possession of the Paston family it was owned by Sir Thomas Wrythe (alias Wriothesly, d. 1534) who was Garter King of Arms from 1505 and "an avid collector of heraldic material".³² The earliest antiquarian work on the manuscript was by Francis Douce, in his 1814 essay for *Archaeologia*, "On the peaceable Justs, or Tiltings of the middle ages."³³ The work of Curt F. Bühler and G. A. Lester sought to confirm the identity of this manuscript – that it was, indeed, the one that once belonged to John Paston II – and to explore the nature of its production, with Bühler arguing that the manuscript was, in essence, a fifteenth-century "Best-Seller," and Lester producing a codicological description of the manuscript.³⁴ The work of A. I. Doyle complemented these studies in its consideration of the principal scribe, William Ebesham, looking at the entire corpus of extant work

transmission, and circulation of texts and manuscripts associated with as belonging to a textual or manuscript network. As an extension of this use of the word "network", I also use the word "node" to denote a point within the Pastons' network where various lines of social or cultural connections meet.

³² *SJPGB*, p.58.

³³ Douce, "On the peaceable Justs, or Tiltings of the middle ages," pp.290-96.

³⁴ Curt F. Bühler, "Sir John Paston's Grete Booke, a Fifteenth-Century "Best-Seller," *Modern Language Notes*, 56.5 (May, 1941), 345-351; and *SJPGB*.

associated with him and highlighting the aspects of his work for the Pastons that seem different from his usual scribal activity.³⁵

The other items in this small sub-section of the Paston documents have, almost exclusively, been used to illuminate our understanding of the medieval readership of certain writers, primarily Chaucer and Lydgate, as well as Malory. In 1925, in her work *The Common Reader*, Virginia Woolf, informed by James Gairdner's edition of the Paston Letters, characterised John Paston II's interest in literature thus:

For sometimes, instead of riding off on his horse to inspect his crops or bargain with his tenants, Sir John would sit, in broad daylight, reading. There, on the hard chair in the comfortless room with the wind lifting the carpet and smoke stinging his eyes, he would sit reading Chaucer, wasting his time, dreaming – or what strange intoxication was it that he drew from books?³⁶

Woolf appears both to romanticise John Paston II as he read his books by the fireside and simultaneously to channel John Paston I's criticism of his feckless son: "a drane amonges bees which labour for gaderyng hony in the felde and the drane doth nought but takyth his part of it. [...] he hath leved in jdelnes [...]." ³⁷ We will see over the course of this thesis, though, that John Paston II's engagement with literary culture was far from the idle "wasting" of time it was perceived to be by Woolf or John's own father.

For Woolf, the Pastons provided both a model of a Chaucerian reader and, if slightly anachronistically, a window on to the very world that Chaucer's work, according to Woolf, seeks to escape:

³⁵ Doyle, "William Ebesham," pp.298-325.

³⁶ Virginia Woolf, "The Pastons and Chaucer," in *The Common Reader. First Series*, (London: Hogarth Press, originally printed in 1925, reprinted 1962), p.23. Gairdner edited a complete six-volume edition of the then-known selection of letters in 1904: James Gairdner, *The Paston Letters, A.D. 1422-1509. New Complete Library Edition*, 6 vols. (London: Chatto & Windus, 1904).

³⁷ *PLI*, p.128.

He [Chaucer] turned instinctively, as if he had painful experience of their nature, from tempests and rocks to the bright May day and the jocund landscape, from the harsh and mysterious to the gay and definite.³⁸

Her description of the landscape echoes the sense of struggle and hardship she identifies in her summary of the lives of the Pastons. Whilst subsequent treatments of the Pastons as readers have been less evocatively romanticised and more scholarly in their approach, Woolf's desire to increase her understanding of Chaucer's work by way of the Paston letters has a rich legacy: they form important and insightful illustrations in studies of the late-medieval readership of works by Chaucer, Lydgate and Malory.

Studies of medieval writers and their readership often explore subsets of readers, patrons or commissioners of manuscripts.³⁹ They look at the female patrons of Lydgate or Bokenham, for example, and, in quite recent studies, the Pastons have been viewed within the grouping of "gentry readers" of Malory's *Morte Darthur* and, a little more widely, of romance.⁴⁰ To view the Pastons as "gentry readers" is to engage with an unstable definition. As Alison Truelove and Raluca Radulescu state in their introduction to *Gentry Culture in Late-Medieval England*, "the term 'gentry' was never itself used as a contemporary class designation, but is rather a modern construct that remains without firm definition."⁴¹ This thesis adheres to the resultant understanding of the 'gentry'

³⁸ Woolf, "The Pastons and Chaucer," p.26.

³⁹ Some of the key examples of works in this area are Julia Boffey, "Manuscripts and Print: Books, Readers and Writers," in Corinne Saunders (ed.), *A Companion to Medieval Poetry* (Chichester: John Wiley & Sons Ltd., 2010), pp.538-554; Carol M. Meale, "Patrons, Buyers and Owners: Book Production and Social Status," in Jeremy Griffiths and Derek Pearsall (eds), *Book Production and Publishing in Britain 1375-1475* (Cambridge: CUP, 1989), pp.201-38; Carol M. Meale, "'alle the bokes that I haue of latyn, englich, and frensch': laywomen and their books in late medieval England," in Carol M. Meale, (ed.), *Women and Literature in Britain, 1150-1500*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: CUP, 1996), pp.128-158; Mary Beth Long, "A Medieval French Book in an Early Modern English World: Christine de Pisan's *Livre de la Cité des Dames* and Women Readers in the Age of Print," *Literature Compass* 9.8 (2012), pp.521-537; Paul Strohm, *Social Chaucer* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 1989, repr. 1994).

⁴⁰ See Raluca L. Radulescu, *Arthurian Studies IV: The Gentry Context for Malory's "Morte Darthur"* (Cambridge: Brewer, 2003), and, more recently, Michael Johnston, *Romance and the Gentry in Late Medieval England*, (Oxford: OUP, 2014).

⁴¹ Alison Truelove and Raluca Radulescu, "Introduction" in Truelove and Radulescu, *Gentry Culture*, p.1.

‘as an amorphous, ever-fluctuating groups of individuals ‘taking in all of landed society below peerage, from knights down to gentleman, and including those aspirants to gentility who might under traditional socio-economic terms be excluded from the group.’⁴² The potential interpretations licensed by such an identification of a group of readers can be seen in Radulescu’s subsequent work, *The Gentry Context for Malory’s Morte Darthur*.⁴³ Having argued that the Malory who wrote this text was Sir Thomas Malory of Newbold Revel in Warwickshire, Radulescu posits that the writer and Sir John Paston were shaped by the same social contexts and would have shared political views and literary tastes.⁴⁴ Radulescu explored fifteenth-century gentry correspondence ‘with a view to understanding the main forces that shaped gentry life in the locality and their relationships.’⁴⁵ Here the Pastons are used as a case study by which Radulescu is able to look at the involvement of the gentry in local and wider national politics, identifying the importance of the letters not only as the records of people, interactions, actions and events but also for tone and language, and considering how all of these elements may help in the understanding of gentry reading interests.

Radulescu’s study uses a wide range of documentary evidence to consider the ‘grete bokes’ of the gentry class, an approach that is also evident in Michael Johnston’s work, *Romance and the Gentry in Late Medieval England*. Where Radulescu’s work draws on political, national history, Johnston draws on socioeconomic history at the local level. Johnston’s work focuses on the emergent gentry class and its consumer power; he explores the gentry in the context of their more day-to-day life.⁴⁶ By following Radulescu’s example and exploring the ‘grete bokes’ and other manuscript evidence from the gentry, Johnston identifies a number of suggestive peculiarities in how gentry book-owners commissioned their codices, leading him to conclude that “the English provincial elite made up the main public of these romances: the earliest readers,

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ Radulescu, *Malory’s “Morte Darthur”*.

⁴⁴ *Id.* p.14.

⁴⁵ *Id.* p.13.

⁴⁶ Johnston, *Romance and the Gentry*, p.6.

as well as the commissioners or even, on occasion, scribes of the surviving miscellanies.”⁴⁷ Whilst John Paston II’s Inventory of English Books records his possession of a version of the death of Arthur alongside a number of other romances, this manuscript is no longer extant and so does not appear among the nine key miscellanies that Johnston examines.⁴⁸ In both of these studies the literary works and manuscripts are investigated for their expression of certain concerns and interests that are viewed as belonging to a certain class (or caste) within late-medieval English society, of which both Malory and the Pastons were members. Malory’s work and the Paston documents are brought together to map out this social group’s concerns and anxieties.

Such works add to our understanding of gentry readers, as well as to our understanding of Malory’s work, but they also obscure other areas of potential interest within the data: we might also wish to consider with what other texts Malory’s work (if in fact it is Malory’s work) appears in the manuscript owned by John Paston II and whether this was a common combination of texts for an East Anglian gentleman to own or, if it was unusual, what this might indicate about his commissioning of the manuscript and his reading habits and tastes.

The approaches taken by Radulescu and Johnson to the idea of the Pastons as “gentry readers” also obscures a fundamental element to late medieval textual culture, as Deborah Youngs notes, and which this thesis will explore: the exchange of manuscripts, by which new manuscripts are created and texts are circulated, reveal numerous networks of contact which often transcend not only

⁴⁷ *Id.*, p.90.

⁴⁸ For Johnston (*Romance and the Gentry*, p.92), the following set of manuscripts “accurately represents the dominant circulation patterns of the nine gentry romances” of his study: Aberystwyth, National Library of Wales, MS Brogyntyn II. I (*olim* Porkington 10); CUL, MS Ff.1.6. (the Findern MS); CUL, MS Ff.2.38; Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland, MS Advocates 19.3.1. (the Heege Manuscript); Lincoln, Cathedral Library, MS 91 (the Thornton MS); BL, MS Cotton Caligula a.2; BL, MS Egerton 2862; Bodleian, MS Ashmole 61; Princeton, University Library, MS Taylor 9 (the Ireland MS).

localities but also status; the gentry's reading habits are shown to resemble both those of the nobility and those of the urban elite.⁴⁹

The following section of this introductory chapter will highlight the involvement of both the nobility and gentry (being seen as two groups of people with different socio-economic concerns, practices and capabilities) in the creation and circulation of texts and manuscripts in East Anglia. One of the key questions of this thesis is to explore the Pastons' place within the overlap of these two classes as created by their participation in this culture, to reassess what it means to view them as "gentry readers".

The material contexts of the texts owned by the Pastons have, surprisingly, yet to be fully explored. This is not to suggest that they have been quite overlooked. Julia Boffey, in her 1985 work, *Manuscripts of English Courtly Love Lyrics*, found that John Paston II's request for a text by Lydgate implied a reading practice at odds with the leisurely "dreaming" of Woolf's characterisation:

John Paston's urgent need of his copy of *The Temple of Glass* during the period of his courtship of a wife neatly epitomises the situation.⁵⁰ On one level, Lydgate was an 'author', with 'works' to be commissioned, collected, preserved; on another level he was a source of practical help, a fund of easily-extracted *vers d'occasion*.⁵¹

The letter shows Lydgate's poem being put to a practical use and that it is not, perhaps, being read in its entirety or prompting idle dreaming but, rather, in this instance, as something from which verses might be carefully extracted and effectively appropriated. This Lydgate text in particular may also have had a

⁴⁹ Truelove and Radulescu summarise Young's work in, "Introduction" in *Gentry Culture*, p.8. See also, Deborah Youngs, "Cultural Networks" in Truelove and Radulescu, *Gentry Culture*, pp.119-133.

⁵⁰ Boffey refers here to the letter in *PLI*, p.447.

⁵¹ Boffey, *English Courtly Love Lyrics*, p.86. Here Boffey draws on the work of Derek Pearsall: cf. Derek Pearsall, *John Lydgate*, (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1970), p.18. Pearsall, in turn, makes considered use of Ethel Seaton's work, *Sir Richard Roos: Lancastrian Poet* (London: Hart-Davis, 1961), p.376, a book that aimed "to establish Roos as the major poet of fifteenth-century England by assigning him much of its anonymous poetry" (Pearsall, *John Lydgate*, pp.20-1, fn.42). Pearsall was also responding to MacCracken, "Additional Light," pp.128-40.

familial association with marriage. Henry MacCracken first highlighted the appearance of the Paston motto, “de mieulx en mieulx” on the dress of the lady in the B group of manuscripts of the *Temple of Glas*.⁵² This led to the theory that Lydgate wrote this poem for William Paston on the occasion of his marriage to Agnes Berry in 1420.⁵³ Derek Pearsall has raised doubts over this theory, but the use of mottos in different groups of manuscripts at least indicates a personalisation of the text.⁵⁴ These texts were functioning within a set of cultural codes that went far beyond the idle passing of time by the fireside. This thesis builds on the work of studies such as Boffey’s to illuminate further both the material and the cultural importance of these texts and manuscripts to the Pastons, to ask what cultural or social *use* these texts might have held for various members of the Paston family?

To find our way through the evidence surrounding the Pastons’ interaction with text and manuscript culture, it is crucial that we consider this complex of material *together*, at the same time; we cannot study them in isolation. This thesis proposes that it is important for us to address the numerous different ways in which the Pastons engaged with fifteenth-century textual culture, in order to foreground what has previously been treated only fleetingly and disparately in works on medieval literary culture. Such a study, however, is inevitably both informed by and contributes to research into late-medieval gentry readership and the literary culture of East Anglia. In order to analyse and characterise the findings of this investigation into the documents associated with the literary culture of the Pastons I must first establish some of the ideas and findings surrounding key examples of the wider landscape of East Anglian textual culture. It is against this background that we can start to assess to what extent the Pastons deserve their place within literary criticism as “typical” East

⁵² MacCracken, “Additional Light,” p.131. As previously stated, this will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Four of this thesis.

⁵³ *Ibid.* The theory was supported by Walter Schirmer in his work on Lydgate, *John Lydgate: A Study in the Culture of the XVth Century*, trans. Ann E. Keep (London: Methuen, 1961), pp.37-8.

⁵⁴ *Cf.* Pearsall, *John Lydgate*, p.72 (*italics mine*): “if we accept MacCracken’s suggestion that the *Temple of Glass* was originally commissioned for the marriage of William Paston in 1420.”

Anglian gentry readers and begin to question what it means to be a “gentry reader” or an “East Anglian reader”.

0.2: The Literary Culture of Fifteenth-Century East Anglia

Fifteenth-century East Anglia was both culturally rich and culturally distinctive. Part of its distinctiveness lies in the sheer abundance of extant manuscripts, documents and physical artefacts from the area in which literary activity is recorded in one form or another. These include the diverse and numerous works of John Lydgate; the earliest work to be written by a woman in English, Julian of Norwich’s *Revelations of Divine Love*; the earliest biography to be ‘written’ by a woman, *The Book of Margery Kempe*; the works of John Capgrave, Osbern Bokenham, and John Metham; a range of further manuscripts once commissioned by or able to be identified as having belonged to the gentry or magnates of East Anglia; and the decoration of churches re-built in the fifteenth century with text (such as the notable example of the Clopton Chapel at Holy Trinity Church, Long Melford).⁵⁵ It is also marked by a remarkably rich set of surviving dramatic materials: most notably, perhaps, the so-called *N-Town Plays*, the Croxton *The Play of the Sacrament*, the Digby *Mary Magdalen*, *Mankind*.⁵⁶ Drama appears to have been something Capgrave noted as especially distinctive of the region for, in *Ye Solace of Pilgrimes*, Capgrave records his travels to Rome and, in his encounter with the Roman amphitheatres,

⁵⁵ Lydgate, Capgrave, Bokenham, Metham and some of their key East Anglian patrons are discussed below as case-studies of the textual culture of the region. Lydgate, his East Anglian patrons, and the Clopton chapel at Holy Trinity Church, Long Melford, Suffolk, are discussed in Chapter Five of this thesis but one of the key works on the mid-fifteenth-century rebuilding and refurbishing of the church is McMurray Gibson, *Theatre of Devotion*, pp.79-96. For the works of Julian of Norwich and Margery Kempe see, Nicholas Watson and Jacqueline Jenkins (eds.), *The Writings of Julian of Norwich: “A Vision Showed to a Devout Woman” and “Revelation of Love”*, (Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2006); Barry Windeatt (ed.), *The Book of Margery Kempe*, (Cambridge: Brewer, 2006).

⁵⁶ For the *N-Town* plays, see Stephen Spector (ed.), *The N-Town Play: Cotton MS Vespasian D.8* 2 vols. EETS ss 11-12 (1991); Peter Meredith (ed.), *The “Mary Play”. From the N.Town Manuscript*, (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1997); and Peter Meredith (ed.), *The “Passion Play”. From the N.Town Manuscript*, (London and New York: Longman, 1990). For the *Croxton Play of the Sacrament*, see “Croxton, *The Play of the Sacrament*,” in Greg Walker (ed.), *Medieval Drama an Anthology*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), pp.213-33; and, for *Mankind*, see “*Mankind*,” in *Medieval Drama an Anthology*, ed. Walker, pp.258-279.

is reminded of the playing spaces of East Anglia.⁵⁷ John Coldewey writes of the wealth of extant plays associated with this region that, the surviving texts,

[t]aken together with the records of play performances, [...] suggest a richness and diversity of theatrical practices unmatched in any other region of the country.⁵⁸

These works attest to a rich and distinctive local devotional and theatrical tradition.

Norman Tanner identified fifteenth-century Norwich as “the capital of one of the most advanced regions in the kingdom.”⁵⁹ Gail McMurray Gibson, in her seminal work on East Anglian drama, describes the culture of the area as “distinctive and self-sufficient, impatient, even suspicious, of life and customs elsewhere on the island of Britain.”⁶⁰ Documents such as the Paston letters or the record of the life of Margery Kempe articulate pride in the region and indicate the ways in which these writers saw East Anglia as different and distinctive. Sarah Salih points, for instance, to a moment in the Paston letters where John Paston I indicates the pride he has in his Norfolk identity:

John Paston I, imprisoned in the Fleet in London, wrote to his wife to ask for two ells of the finest worsted of local manufacture, ‘for I wold make my doblet all worsted for worship of Norffolk’.⁶¹

Salih goes on to explain that John Paston I’s some-time colleague, some-time enemy,

⁵⁷ See John Capgrave, *Ye Solace of Pilgrimes: A Description of Rome, circa AD 1450*, ed. C. A. Mills (London: OUP, 1911), p.17 and Sarah Salih, “Two Travellers’ Tales,” in Harper-Bill (ed.), *Medieval East Anglia*, p.319.

⁵⁸ John C. Coldewey, “The non-cycle plays and the East Anglian tradition,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval English Theatre*, Richard Beadle (ed.), (Cambridge: CUP, 1994), p.190. Other studies that focus on the East Anglian nature of these extant plays include: Victor I. Scherb, *Staging Faith. East Anglian Drama in the Later Middle Ages*, (London: Associated University Presses, 2001); Alan J. Fletcher, “The N-Town plays,” in Beadle, *Medieval English Theatre*, pp. 163-188; Gail McMurray Gibson, *The Theatre of Devotion. East Anglian Drama and Society in the Late Middle Ages*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994).

⁵⁹ Norman P. Tanner, *The Church in Late Medieval Norwich, 1370-1532*, (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1984), xvii.

⁶⁰ McMurray Gibson, *The Theatre of Devotion*, p.19.

⁶¹ *PLI*, letter 77, quoted in Sarah Salih, “Two Travellers’ Tales,” p.319.

William Worcester, travelling in the West Country, noted East Anglian connections whenever possible, mentioning twice, for example, that an apparently western saint was in fact 'born in the city of Norwich'.⁶²

Salih argues that these instances, as well as comments within the book of Margery Kempe, imply a situatedness to the writer's understanding of the world outside of their home region: that, in the travels of these individuals outside of East Anglia, they establish something about the nature of East Anglia itself. For Kempe, it is the almost talismanic respectability of the ruling elite of Lynn and the presumption that such a group would not only be known elsewhere in the country but revered there too. For Worcester, it may be that he was thinking (directly or otherwise) of an East Anglian network of readers for his work, given his involvement with the literary community of Sir John Fastolf (which will be discussed in Chapter Two). John Paston I focusses on one of the products by which East Anglia became wealthy, worsted, the fabric that led to the means by which the great "wool churches" of the region were built.

The trade in wool and worsted not only made East Anglia a wealthy region but led also to a particular focus on its links with Europe, especially the Low Countries, rather than (or, at least, alongside) those with the rest of England.⁶³ The impact this had in creating a complex diversity in its cultural influences can be seen, to some degree, in John Metham's prologue to *Amoryus and Cleopes* (which is discussed in more detail in the case-studies below). Metham writes that he obtained a source text for his translation in Greek, a language he could not read and was unable to undertake his work until,

And as yt fortunyd, ther come rydyng
To Norwyche a Greke, to home I schewyd in specyal
Thys forsayd boke, and he iche word bothe gret and smal

⁶² William Worcester, *Itineraries*, ed. John H. Harvey (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), p.125; cf. Salih, "Two Travellers' Tales," p.319.

⁶³ David Bates and Rob Liddiard (eds.), *East Anglia and its North Sea World in the Middle Ages* (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2013).

In Latyne yt expugned; and thus be hys informacion

I had the trwe grownd and very conclusyon.⁶⁴

Whilst this is more likely to be a literary conceit rather than anecdotal, the effectiveness of such a conceit partially relies on its plausibility, in turn indicating something about the influence of the international community of Norwich on the textual culture of East Anglia. Owning a Greek text and being able to read Greek appears strikingly scholarly, as we will see, alongside the more common Latin, French and English works within a gentry library. We know that William Worcester owned a manuscript containing works by Sophocles, Euripides, Hesiod, Pindar, and Theocritus and that he had attempted to learn Greek under the tuition of William Selling of Canterbury.⁶⁵ In Metham's prologue, then, the pertinent factor is the cultural (and ethnic) diversity one could encounter (or, at least, *claim* to have encountered) in Norwich. Metham's Greek traveller may not have been a trader, but the anecdote is indicative of a city both through which and to which Europeans travelled, influencing the literary culture of the area in turn.

If the literary culture of East Anglia was informed in part by the way its geography and trade routes turned its focus towards Europe rather than the rest of England, it was also influenced by the particular ways in which the politics of the Wars of the Roses played out that were peculiar to this region. Colin Richmond's work on mid-fifteenth-century East Anglia provides a picture of viciously competitive factions aligned with one of the three key local magnates: William de la Pole, Duke of Suffolk; John de Mowbray, Duke of Norfolk; John de Vere, Earl of Oxford. Such an impression is drawn from the letters of both the Pastons and Sir John Fastolf, which are often emphatic in their portrayal of the villainy of de la Pole. As Richmond writes,

[i]t could be countered that this is what I believe because of my belief that William, duke of Suffolk, his followers and familiars, of whom

⁶⁴ John Metham, *Amoryus and Cleopes*, ed. Stephen F. Page (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 1999), ll.67-70.

⁶⁵ K.B. McFarlane, "William Worcester: a Preliminary Survey," in *England in the Fifteenth Century*, by K.B. McFarlane (London: The Hambledon Press, 1981), p.223.

Reginald Rous was one, were a thoroughly bad lot who 'governed' East Anglia for a decade or so entirely to their own advantage. Such a belief only demonstrates that I have swallowed the Fastolf case against the duke, hook, line and sinker.⁶⁶

Whilst there have been studies that go some way to adding nuance to this vision of the duke, for the Pastons he was not unlike "Herrod in Corpus Crysty play".⁶⁷ The Duke of Norfolk, on the other hand, was, for the Pastons, a more complicated figure: once their patron and protector against de la Pole, de Mowbray would become a surprising and significant issue when he took Caister castle by force and ousted the Pastons from the jewel in the Fastolf inheritance, leaving John Paston II to lament,

[f]ore, in good feythe, thys mater stykyth more nyghe myn hart and me than I kan wright on-to yow, and to my brother and seruatys more nere than, as God knowyth, they wot off.⁶⁸

Finally, their affiliation with the Earl of Oxford would bring the status and social stability for which they spent much of the fifteenth century fighting. The letters convey a very personal view of the power dynamics between these three local rulers and, yet, this is a peculiarly East Anglian experience of the mid-fifteenth century. Whilst we may focus on the abundance of wealth in the area and how this funded the building and re-building of lavish churches across the area, the groundswell of newly self-made men (eager to hide their nouveau-riche status), such as William Paston I, created sharp competition for land. The re-building of churches across Norfolk and Suffolk in the fifteenth century was as much an expression of the wealth and stability (and instability) this land created for local gentry families as it was of their piety.

The power-struggle between these three magnates and the difficulties that they caused for the Pastons are partially responsible for the generation and survival of the letters and papers of the family. The trips to London to plead the cause of the family to the King or to defend (and be imprisoned on) accusations of being

⁶⁶ Richmond, "East Anglian Politics and Society," p.186.

⁶⁷ *PLII*, p.426.

⁶⁸ *PLI*, p.402.

low-born (as John Paston I was in 1461 and 1465), as well as the management of a number of estates over two counties, generated a great deal of correspondence.⁶⁹ Margaret Paston articulated the importance of such letters and documents to her eldest son as he became the head of their household:

And in alwyse I avyse you for to be ware that ye kepe wysly youre wrytyngys that ben of charge, that it com not in here handys that may hurt you hereaftere. Youre fadere, wham God assole, in hys trobyll seson set more by hys wrytyngys and evydens than he ded by any moveabell godys.⁷⁰

Margaret's use of the word "wrytyngs" here is somewhat ambiguous but potentially, purposefully inclusive, intended to address indentures, deeds, and correspondence, the different kinds of documentary evidence that might be of use in pursuing their legal cases against men like the Dukes of Norfolk and Suffolk. She also states that the loss of these documents or entrusting them to someone untrustworthy could "hurt [him] hereaftere". These "wrytyngs" could act as invaluable evidence on behalf of the Pastons, be destroyed by their enemies, or used against them. There are numerous occasions in the letters where a writer will refuse to comit a comment or incident to writing and enigmatically write "as the bearer here-of can tell you", with arguably the most salacious example being Margaret's account of the fight between one of John Wymondham's men and the Pastons' servant, James Gloys:

And than Wymondham called my mother and me strong whores, and said þe Pastons and all their kin were ... [unclear] Myngham ... [unclear] e said he lied, knave and churl as he was. And he had much large language, as ye shall know hereafter by mouth.⁷¹

Wymondham was a prominent supporter of the Duke of Suffolk, William de la Pole (father of the John de la Pole that would attack Hellesdon and Drayton in 1465). The letter also records that the men of another member of Suffolk's

⁶⁹ For John Paston I and the Fleet prison see *PLI*, pp.140-45, 270-71, 304, 327, and 529.

⁷⁰ Margaret wrote this letter to John Paston II on the 29th of October, 1466. John Paston had died on 21st or 22nd May of that year. See *PLI*, p.333 for Margaret's letter, and p.lv for the dates of John Paston I.

⁷¹ *PLI*, p.224.

faction, Lord Moleyns, “gaderyth up þe rent at Gresham a gret pace”.⁷² Margaret reports the events of this altercation and uses emotive language but is also wary of saying too much, perhaps for fear that they might come into “here handys that may hurt you hereafter.”⁷³ Should these words fall into the hands of Wymondham, Moleyns or even the Duke of Suffolk, might things be made even harder for the Pastons? Letter writing, to Margaret Paston, is thus the means by which the Pastons might preserve their estates and protect themselves against the powerful men of the different political factions of the mid-fifteenth century but they also held the potential to provide ammunition for their enemies.

The national politics of the Wars of the Roses are certainly a factor in the creation of this corpus and they are, unsurprisingly, often discussed in the letters. The politics or communities forged in political factions might also be expressed through cultural activities. Shelia Delany and Carole Hill both argue that the patrons of Osbern Bokenham’s *Legends of Hooly Wummen* were all Lancastrian supporters and that these works reflected those interests.⁷⁴ Simon Horobin argued that the more likely unifying factor among these patrons was their support of and proximity to Bokenham’s priory at Stoke Clare, suggesting a local, devotional community rather than a political one.⁷⁵ However, Lydgate did write works for Henry V and Henry VI, as well as for Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester and the Duchess of Suffolk. John Capgrave also wrote works for the Duke of Gloucester and attended important ecclesiastical ceremonies conducted by Henry VI. The work produced by these writers was not devoid of politics (how could it be?), but whether such projects were undertaken in order to speak directly to those politics or, rather, to promote a more local connection to the writer’s particular religious house is, clearly, a matter of debate. For those gentry patrons commissioning works and manuscripts the shared values that led to violent competition for land also led to a common cultural framework.

⁷² *Id.* p.225

⁷³ *Id.* p.333.

⁷⁴ Shelia Delany, *Impolitic Bodies: Poetry, Saints and Society in Fifteenth-Century England. The Work of Osbern Bokenham*, (Oxford: OUP, 1998). Hill, *Women and Religion in Late Medieval Norwich*.

⁷⁵ Simon Horobin, “Politics, Patronage, and Piety in the Work of Osbern Bokenham,” *Speculum*, vol. 82, no. 4 (Oct. 2007), pp.932-949.

What we shall see when we turn to some more sustained case-studies from this area is that, despite often fierce personal animosity, the daily responsibilities and social duties of the gentry meant that they were circulating within the same hubs of literary production, commissioning works from the same poets, using the same scribe or illuminators, and even lending one another manuscripts.

The earliest work to consider in significant detail the production of manuscripts within East Anglia was Samuel Moore's two-part essay, "Patrons of Letters in Norfolk and Suffolk, c.1450."⁷⁶ Moore's work identified some of the key literary patrons within this area and highlighted the links of these patrons to particular poets (Lydgate, Metham, Capgrave, and Bokenham) and hubs of productions (the Abbey of Bury St Edmunds and Clare Priory).⁷⁷ The essays highlight the centrality of the patron to the act of creation, whether that is the copying of a manuscript or the writing of a new text. Speaking of the general career prospects of a scribe, Moore writes,

[i]f he had found a patron he was fortunate, and when he had supplied that patron's needs, or had carried to a conclusion the work upon which he had, by his patron's interest and support, been encouraged to engage, he had little incentive to further literary production unless he could find new patronage.⁷⁸

Moore's work expresses the dependence of East Anglian scribes on a local collective of wealthy people interested in the creation of manuscripts and the transmission of texts (though this transmission was primarily only directly from another library into their own). However, in focusing on the patrons of

⁷⁶ Samuel Moore, "Patrons of Letters in Norfolk and Suffolk, c. 1450. Part I," *PMLA* 27, no. 2 (1912), pp.188-207 and Samuel Moore, "Patrons of Letters in Norfolk and Suffolk, c. 1450. Part II," *PMLA* 28, no.1 (1913), pp.79-105.

⁷⁷ Over the course of this thesis I refer to key geographical sites of production within the textual culture of East Anglia as "hubs". These locations are associated with the composition of texts, the copying of manuscripts, as well as associated artistic practices such as manuscript illumination. Whilst we will follow the movement of manuscripts through the Pastons' textual network, these hubs present significant points of origin for numerous contributing components to that network. Whilst "node" might also be an appropriate term, given my employment of the language of network theory, the figurative centrality of these locations to the textual culture of East Anglia leads me to prefer the term "hub".

⁷⁸ Moore, "Patrons" I, p.188.

Norfolk and Suffolk, this work, for all of its insight, produced a tantalising but limited view of the extent of literary production undertaken for these patrons and, more widely, by the scribes of East Anglia. From his emphasis of the occasional nature of scribal work we might be forgiven for inferring that there was quite a small market for the creation of manuscripts within this area.

In his survey of the literary culture of East Anglia, however, Beadle identified no fewer than 147 extant manuscripts, dated, primarily, to the fifteenth century, that may be securely associated with the county.⁷⁹ Through his survey of these manuscripts, Beadle distinguished multiple scribal hands and estimated that there were approximately 200 Norfolk scribes at work. These scribes and manuscripts did not always remain in Norfolk, but Beadle posits that the features of the regional scribal dialect (such a *xal* for ‘shall’, *qwat* for ‘what’, *hefne* for ‘heaven’) would have meant that the movement of such distinctively East Anglian manuscript copies or of such regionally distinctive scribal hands (in this form) outside of the region was rare.⁸⁰ The majority of the 147 manuscripts he lists were, therefore,

most likely to have been copied by Norfolk scribes in Norfolk or the border areas of one of the immediately adjacent counties, for the use of those familiar with the local spelling system: and, equally, those manuscripts are on the whole not likely to have moved far from these areas whilst they were still in regular use.⁸¹

Beadle’s work on late-medieval Norfolk scribes indicates that, in addition to the few families whose commissions we know of and whose manuscripts survive, there must have been a great many more patrons involved in the textual culture of East Anglia in order to support this level of scribal activity.

The potential of the wealth of material recorded by Beadle in his survey has – rather surprisingly – yet to be fully explored, for all that it has formed the foundation of subsequent key studies of medieval East Anglian literary culture,

⁷⁹ Beadle, “Prolegomena,” p.102.

⁸⁰ *Id.* p.90

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

such as McMurray Gibson's *The Theatre of Devotion* and the case studies discussed below. Gibson's work draws on the extant manuscripts, information about their known patrons (and records of patrons where manuscripts have subsequently been lost), evidence of manuscript production in the area, as well as the church art and architecture of East Anglia. Gibson presents a compelling account of the ways in which the dramatic culture of Norfolk and Suffolk in the fifteenth century operated in close cultural dialogue with the devotional practices of the area. Her work builds on Arthur Brown's suggestion that there is a locational specificity to the kinds of drama that was produced in the area:

a local product, influenced to a great extent by local circumstances, reflecting local conditions and attitudes, produced and performed by local people, often tradesmen, regarded as a local responsibility.⁸²

By using extant manuscripts for which an East Anglian provenance has been established, for example Bodleian Library, MS Digby 133 and Folger Shakespeare Library, MS V1 354 (more commonly known as the Macro manuscript), Gibson looks at the similarities between the East Anglian morality plays to establish this sense of "local conditions and attitudes", but also studies the ownership and copying of these manuscripts and, thereby, generates her argument that the Abbey of Bury St. Edmunds was a key hub in the production of manuscripts containing the scripts for East Anglian plays.⁸³

Gibson's work uses the extant evidence of medieval East Anglian culture to reconstruct a picture of drama within the society of the area during the late middle ages. Her work gathers manuscript evidence to establish points of production and networks of circulation, but it also utilises case studies, such as her discussion of the characteristics of the commissions made by John Baret,

⁸² Arthur Brown, "The Study of English Medieval Drama," in *Franciplegius: Medieval and Linguistic Studies in Honor of Francis Peabody Magoun, Jr.* (New York: New York University Press, 1965), pp.269-70, as quoted in McMurray Gibson, *The Theatre of Devotion*, p.1. One might compare these understandings of the medieval drama with the more recent work of Greg Walker and John McGavin, *Imagining Spectatorship: from Mysteries to the Shakespearean Stage*, (Oxford: OUP, 2016).

⁸³ McMurray Gibson, *The Theatre of Devotion*, pp.107-135. Also, Gail McMurray Gibson, "Bury St. Edmunds, Lydgate, and the *N-Town Cycle*," *Speculum*, 56.1 (January 1981), pp.56-90.

John Clopton, and Anne Harling in her chapter “In Search of East Anglian Devotional Theatre.”⁸⁴ This focus on notable individual instances within the wider landscape of East Anglia’s literary culture has become an increasingly popular, and illuminating, approach to the data. These case studies present much more detailed explorations of the kind of work originally suggested by Moore but utilising the more sophisticated evidence gathered by Beadle. By bringing together these studies we gain a sense both of the specifics of individual acts of the commissioning of a text or the copying of a manuscript and, as in Gibson’s work, of wider trends characteristic of East Anglian society and its literary culture. It is against this background that the peculiarities of the Pastons’ engagement with textual culture can be most richly explored.

0.3: Case-studies in Fifteenth-Century East Anglian Textual Culture

Attempts to extract and organise meaningful information from this rich abundance of evidence have tended to encourage three interlinked approaches: a focus on literary patronage and book ownership; a focus on the authors of the texts; and a focus on the makers of the manuscripts. The potential of these routes, which are often tightly interlinked, was first realised in Moore’s two-part article for *PMLA* in the early twentieth century. Aside from the Paston family, Moore’s survey identified the production of literature within the household of Sir John Fastolf (1380-1459) by William Worcester and Stephen Scrope (which will be discussed in detail in Chapter Two);⁸⁵ the writing of the romance, *Amoryus and Cleopes*, by John Metham for Sir Miles Stapleton (d. 1466); the poetic works written and commissioned by William de la Pole, Duke of Suffolk (1396-1450); and the patronage of John Lydgate by Alice Chaucer, Countess of Suffolk (c. 1404-1475).⁸⁶ This, as Beadle’s survey of scribes indicates and as will quickly become apparent in this thesis, is hardly an exhaustive list of patrons in East Anglia, but these figures and the texts associated with them are certainly notable within the surviving evidence, either

⁸⁴ McMurray Gibson, *The Theatre of Devotion*, pp.67-106.

⁸⁵ For Fastolf, see G. L. Harriss, “Fastolf, Sir John (1380-1459),” *ODNB*, (September 2004): <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/9199> - accessed 8th August 2018.

⁸⁶ Moore, “Patrons” I and II.

because of the quality of the manuscripts or texts produced for these patrons or because of the particular nature of the evidence we have concerning the production of these texts – and, in some cases, both. Moore’s work constitutes the starting-point for a number of subsequent studies over the course of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries that have re-considered these patrons, their manuscripts, and the local production of both texts and books. Two nodes by which several of these lines of transmission may be mapped are, on the one hand, the intersection of patron and poet in the commissioning of Lydgate’s *Virtues of the Mass* by Alice Chaucer, and, on the other, Osbern Bokenham (1392/3-1464) and his association with Clare Priory which similarly forms a centre-point from which to survey a differently organised network of patrons and writers within East Anglia.⁸⁷

0.3.i: Patrons and Poets: Alice Chaucer and John Lydgate

In reading more recent studies of the literary patrons of East Anglia, what becomes increasingly clear is the importance of Alice Chaucer to unpicking this overlapping matrix of patrons and writers. Moore identified the familial ties that connected together members of the East Anglian gentry, relating them through their proximity to the de la Poles. Alice Chaucer and her patronage of at least one work by John Lydgate forms a site of illuminating intersection within the coinciding networks of family and patrons that support her engagement with the textual culture of East Anglia. Whilst the influence of Geoffrey Chaucer’s work on the poetry of Lydgate is well-documented (often by the monk himself), there were also personal connections between the Chaucer family and the Black Monk of Bury, as recorded in Lydgate’s poem for Alice’s father, Thomas Chaucer: *Complaint on the Departing of Thomas Chaucer*.⁸⁸ Alice

⁸⁷ For the dates of Alice Chaucer, see Rowena E. Archer, “Chaucer [*married names* Phelip, Montagu, de la Pole], Alice, duchess of Suffolk,” *ODNB*: <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-54434> - accessed 14th December 2017. For the dates of Osbern Bokenham, see Douglas Gray, “Osbern Bokenham,” *ODNB*: <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-2785?rskey=2Qt9zR&result=1> – accessed 14th December 2017.

⁸⁸ The poem survives in British Library, MS. Additional 16165 and is transcribed by Henry Noble MacCracken in *MPJLII*, pp.657-659.

would go on to commission at least one work from the literary successor to her grandfather, *The Virtues of the Mass*.⁸⁹ Moreover, more recent scholarship has departed from Moore's interpretation of the extant evidence and investigated the possibility that the commissioning of the copying of further texts by Lydgate might be reattributed directly to Alice, rather than to two of her husbands, the earl of Salisbury and the Duke of Suffolk. The evidence used to re-evaluate Alice Chaucer's role as literary patron and commissioner of manuscripts (a combination of inventories, letters, and extant manuscripts) mirrors those documents associated with the textual culture of the Pastons. Such evidence can be used to gain an insight into the characteristics of her engagement with manuscript production and the circulation of texts.

On f.76v of Oxford, St. John's College, MS 56, the *incipit* for the poem now generally known as *The Virtues of the Mass* records "Hyc incipit interpretacio misse in lingua materna secundum Iohannem litgate monachum de Buria ad rogatum domine Countesse de Suthefolchia."⁹⁰ This translation of the Mass into English was, for much of the twentieth century, believed to be the only evidence of Alice Chaucer's literary patronage. Carol Meale, in her re-evaluation of the evidence surrounding Chaucer's interest in textual culture, highlighted that a list of books mentioned within the collection of Ewelme Muniments was,

as recently as 1989 [...], erroneously attributed to Alice's third husband, William de la Pole, [which] concurred with a mid-nineteenth-century judgement that they were, properly-speaking, in the possession of Alice's son John, as William's heir.⁹¹

⁸⁹ The poem is extant in Oxford, St. John's College, MS 56, ff.76v-84v, and is edited in *MPJLI*, pp.87-115.

⁹⁰ *MPJLI*, p.86.

⁹¹ Carol Meale, "Reading Women's Culture in Fifteenth Century England: The Case of Alice Chaucer," in Piero Boitani and Anna Torti (eds), *Mediaevalitas: Reading the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Brewer, 1996), pp.81-101. Here Meale refers to J. P. M. Jansen, *The "Suffolk" Poems: An Edition of the Love Lyrics in Fairfax 16 attributed to William de la Pole* (Groningen: Groningen University, 1989), p.15. The "mid-nineteenth-century" works to which Meale refers are H. A. Napier, *Historical Notices of the Parishes of Swyncombe and Ewelme in the County of Oxford* (Oxford: James Wright, 1858), pp.127-8; and *Historical Manuscripts Commission, 8th Report* (London: Royal Commissioner, 1881).

Although, as Meale recognises, S. W. H. Aldwell's study of 1925 "acknowledges Alice's ownership of the books and other movable artefacts," the dominant narrative surrounding this document indicated that these were the books of Chaucer's second husband.⁹² For Meale, the probability that these were Alice's books rests on the fact that the document addresses the Duchess of Suffolk's move from her castle at Wingfield, Suffolk, to her manor of Ewelme, Oxfordshire, which took place in 1466 (sixteen years after the death of William de la Pole).⁹³ An undated note to William Bylton, indicates both Alice's ownership of and her concern for her books:

pray you/my good William yef my books be in myther closette // by
grounde pat ye woll put them in some other place for takyng of harme.⁹⁴

If the collection of books recorded in Ewelme Muniments VII. A. 47 [3] is, as Meale argues, the property of Alice Chaucer, then we find ourselves presented with a patron whose tastes are "at one with certain of her contemporaries."⁹⁵ The document lists fourteen religious books (a mass book, three antiphoners, two grails, 'a boke for Rectors', two 'lectornalls', 'a collectall boke', three 'processionalls', and a volume of plainsong) and seven manuscripts that contain secular items ('a legend of Ragge hand', 'a frensh boke of quaterfitz', 'a frensh boke of temps pastoure', 'a frensh boke of le Citee de dames', 'aboke of latyn of pe morall Institucion of a prince', 'a frensh boke of pe tales of philisphers', and 'a boke of English in papir of pe pilgrimage translated by daune John lydgate out of frensh').⁹⁶ We find Chaucer to be multi-lingual, with most of her secular texts written in French; her single English translation is identified by Meale as the translation Lydgate made of Guillaume Deguileville's *Pelerinage de la Vie Humaine* in 1426 for Thomas Montague, 'my lord / Of Salysbury', Alice's second husband.⁹⁷ Chaucer's library may stand as an especially richly documented

⁹² S. W. H. Aldwell, *Wingfield, Its Church, Castle and College* (Ipswich: W. E. Harrison, 1925), p.18.

⁹³ Bodleian, Ewelme Muniments VII. A. 47 [3], indicates that the books were received at Ewelme on 10th September in the "vjth yere of kyng Edward fourth".

⁹⁴ Bodleian, Ewelme Muniments VII. A. 28 [1], as quoted in Meale, "Alice Chaucer," p.84.

⁹⁵ Meale, "Alice Chaucer," p.91. Alice Chaucer's first husband was Sir John Phelip (c.1380–1415), see Archer, "Chaucer, Alice, duchess of Suffolk".

⁹⁶ Bodleian, Ewelme Muniments VII. A. 28 [1], as quoted in Meale, "Alice Chaucer," p.86.

⁹⁷ F. J. Furnivall and Katharine B. Locock (eds.), *The Pilgrimage of the Life of Man, englished by John Lydgate*, EETS es 77, 83, 92 (1899, 1901, 1904, repr. in 1 vol., 1973),

instance but also a fairly representative one for a member of the fifteenth-century East Anglian gentry, against which we may usefully compare the literary culture of the Pastons.

The influence of Alice Chaucer's grandfather on Lydgate's work is clear both within the style and content of the monk's works and in the numerous direct invocations of the man he deemed his poetic forefather.⁹⁸ However, the connections between the monk and the Chaucers became more personal through Alice's father, Thomas Chaucer (c. 1367-1434).⁹⁹ At some point between 1414 and 1420 Lydgate wrote the occasional poem, *Balade at the Departyn of Thomas Chaucyer into France*.¹⁰⁰ Thomas Chaucer owned little land in East Anglia, although he did for a brief period own the manor of Gresham, selling it to William Paston I in 1427.¹⁰¹ The most significant portion of his land was in Oxfordshire, constituting what Carol Rawcliffe has characterised as a

p.4, ll.123-34, quoted in Meale, "Alice Chaucer," p.87. Meale acknowledges Richard Firth Green's scepticism that the work listed in Ewelme Muniments VII. A. 47 [3] was Lydgate's translation of Deguileville, as he argues in 'Lydgate and Deguileville Once More,' *Notes and Queries*, 223 (1978), pp.105-6.

⁹⁸ See, for example, the *Siege of Thebes*, in which Lydgate writes himself into the *Canterbury Tales*, joining the pilgrims on their return from Canterbury and giving the first tale, a work designed to speak to *The Knight's Tale*. Axel Erdmann (ed.), *Lydgate's Siege of Thebes*, EETS os 108 (London: OUP, 1911).

⁹⁹ Carole Rawcliffe, "Chaucer, Thomas," *ODNB*:

<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-5192?rsk=y=wOdxS9&result=1> – accessed 15th December 2017.

¹⁰⁰ Both Henry MacCracken and Walter Schirmer state that this poem was written in 1417: *MPJLII*, p.657; Schirmer, *John Lydgate*, p. 59. Also see, Derek Pearsall, *John Lydgate*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd (1970), p.161. However, there is a lack of specific internal evidence to support the claim that it was this particular expedition to France that inspired Lydgate. Chaucer also went on diplomatic missions to France in 1414 and 1420 and Meale, in "Alice Chaucer" (p.91), points out that at this earliest of possible dates for Lydgate writing this text, Alice would have been no more than ten years old. Ralph Hanna III, in his essay "John Shirley and British Library, MS Additional 16165," *Studies in Bibliography*, 49 (1996), pp.95-105 (p.100), notes that 1417 is the earliest possible date for the composition of the poem with the possibility of "later appointments [in] 1420 or 1424". Hanna goes on to point out that the manuscript in which this poem survives, British Library, MS Additional 16165, does not contain "those works Lydgate composed for Shirley's employers, the Beauchamp family, dated with some assurance c.1423-27," which leads him to tentatively conclude that Shirley compiled the contents of the manuscript before 1423, although the scribe may have copied it after this time. This, then, reduces the likelihood that Lydgate's poem records Thomas Chaucer's "later appointment" of 1424.

¹⁰¹ *PLI*, liii.

'power base between the Chilterns and the Cotswolds'.¹⁰² At the figurative heart of these estates was the manor of Ewelme, which he had gained through his marriage to Maud Burghersh (c.1379-1437, married to Thomas Chaucer about 1395).¹⁰³ In his bio-bibliography of John Lydgate, Derek Pearsall suggests that it was most probably in Oxfordshire that Lydgate made the acquaintance of Thomas Chaucer and that it was through this connection and what Walter Schirmer describes as the "centre of social and cultural activity" at Ewelme that the poet met some of his most influential patrons, including Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester.¹⁰⁴ This literary household is represented in miniature by the only extant manuscript to contain Lydgate's *Balade*, John Shirley's British Library, MS Additional 16165, a collection of works by Chaucer, works misattributed to Chaucer and Chaucerian works and poems by Lydgate. Ralph Hanna has characterised the collection in this manuscript as a "domestic library" within a very particular, aristocratic context.¹⁰⁵ Discussing Shirley's expectations for the collection, Hanna writes,

[h]e envisions [the] borrowing of his book for private and unsupervised use, perhaps even recopying, [...]. The book belongs within a social situation, one in which [...] life is thoroughly imbued with literary activity.¹⁰⁶

The works of Pearsall and Schirmer show Lydgate's involvement within the "social situation" at Ewelme, mapping the numerous connections that were forged there as well as those made through Lydgate's proximity to the court of Windsor during his time as Prior of Hatfield.¹⁰⁷ Moreover, recent re-evaluations of two extant manuscripts have further emphasised the importance of the Chaucer connection to Lydgate in his production of works for Thomas de Montague, Earl of Salisbury (1388-1428), and William de la Pole, Duke of Suffolk.

¹⁰² Rawcliffe, "Chaucer, Thomas."

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁴ Pearsall, *John Lydgate*, p.162; Schirmer, *John Lydgate*, p.60.

¹⁰⁵ Hanna, "John Shirley and BL Add. 16165," p.103.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁷ Douglas Gray, "Lydgate, John (c.1370-1449/50?), poet and prior of Hatfield Regis," *ODNB*: <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/17238> - accessed 9th August 2018.

Alice Chaucer married her second husband, Thomas de Montague, Earl of Salisbury, sometime after 1421.¹⁰⁸ In 1426 Lydgate was commissioned by Montague to translate Guillaume Deguileville's *Pelerinage de la Vie Humaine*.¹⁰⁹ Lydgate and Montague were both in Paris at this time and Meale questions Pearsall's assumption that Alice was "the instigator of the translation" as, at this time, Salisbury "could have made [Lydgate's] acquaintance at first-hand".¹¹⁰ However, we know, from the three possible dates of Lydgate's poem for Thomas Chaucer, that his first known literary work for the Chaucer family could feasibly predate this meeting with Montague in Paris possibly by up to a decade (Chaucer's first mission to France taking place in 1410 but with Ralph Hanna suggesting that the poem is more likely in commemoration of Chaucer's "1417 service in France") but probably by at least two years (with Hanna raising the possibility of a further diplomatic mission to France in 1424).¹¹¹ It is, thus, at the very least, feasible that Lydgate's connection with Montague began with an introduction via the Chaucer family and, whether Alice instigated her husband's commission or not, a manuscript of this work remains in her collection after her husband's death, which is recorded as moving with her from the home of her third husband at Wingfield in Suffolk to her family home of Ewelme, Oxfordshire, upon her return in 1466.¹¹² Richard Firth Green has questioned whether the manuscript of this text mentioned in Chaucer's inventory of books was the original presentation copy, arguing that the manuscript recorded in this movement of Alice's library, "a boke of English in papir of pe pilgrimage translated by daune Iohn lydgate out of frenshe couered with blak lether w[ith]owte bordes," was more probably a copy of the text subsequently made, possibly at Alice's request.¹¹³ Karen K. Jambeck has also noted that two other

¹⁰⁸ Archer, "Chaucer, Alice, duchess of Suffolk".

¹⁰⁹ British Library, MS Stowe 952. Furnivall and Locock, *The Pilgrimage of the Life of Man*, p.4, ll.123-34.

¹¹⁰ Meale, "Alice Chaucer," pp.39-40; Pearsall, *John Lydgate*, p.162.

¹¹¹ Hanna, "John Shirley and BL Add. 16165," p.101.

¹¹² Bodleian, Ewelme Muniments VII. A. 47 [3].

¹¹³ Karen K. Jambeck also engages with this question in "The Library of Alice Chaucer, Duchess of Suffolk: A Fifteenth-Century Owner of a 'Bok of le Citée de Dames'," *Misericordi International* VII.2 (1998), pp.106-135 (pp.120-121). Jambeck responds to the work of Richard Firth Green, "Lydgate and Deguileville Once More," *Notes and Queries* 223 (April 1978), pp.105-106.

translations of Deguileville's works were linked to female patrons: Chaucer's "ABC" was, "according to Speght, composed for Blanche of Lancaster" and that "it has been [...] proposed that Hoccleve may have translated all fourteen Deguileville poems and perhaps the entire *Pelerinage de l'ame* for Joan FitzAlan, Countess of Hereford."¹¹⁴ The scholarship surrounding Lydgate's translation of this work for Montague indicates that, at the very least, Alice shared her husband's interest in this text and she was not, seemingly, unusual amongst members of the gentry of either gender in reading translations of Deguileville's work. Whether she, or her father, introduced Lydgate to Montague or not cannot be ascertained, but the link between the poet and Alice continued in her third marriage.

0.3.ii: Patrons and Poets: William de la Pole and Charles d'Orléans

British Library, Arundel 119 contains the only surviving complete copy of Lydgate's *Siege of Thebes*.¹¹⁵ A popular text, the poem is attested, in incomplete form, in twenty-one manuscripts. We also know, from a letter between her brothers John II and John III, that Anne Paston owned a copy of this work.¹¹⁶ This is one of the few poems by Lydgate for which we do not know the identity of his patron but, based on the astrological and astronomical descriptions that appear at the start of the text, the poem is dated to c.1421. In trying to establish the date of creation for Arundel 119, Meale considers the coat of arms that appears on f.4, which is that of the Earls of Suffolk, indicating that it was inscribed

¹¹⁴ For the commissioning of the "ABC", see L. Benson *et al.* (eds.), *Riverside Chaucer* (Oxford: OUP, 2008), pp.637-640. For the commissioning of Hoccleve's translations of Deguileville, see Frederick J. Furnivall and I. Gollanz (eds.), *Hoccleve, Works. The Minor Poems*, EETS os 61 and 73 (1892 and 1897. Revised reprint in one volume. London and New York: OUP, 1970) lxxiii; and Jambeck, "Library of Alice Chaucer," p.121.

¹¹⁵ For a description of "the best" extant manuscripts see Axel Erdmann, ed. *Lydgate's Siege of Thebes*, EETS os 108 (London: OUP, 1911), viii. The arms of William de la Pole, Duke of Suffolk appear on f.4 of British Library MS Arundel 119, see BL, "Arundel MS 119," *Explore Archives and Manuscripts*:

http://searcharchives.bl.uk/primo_library/libweb/action/display.do?dscnt=1&doc=IA MS040-002039402&displayMode=full&dstmp=1514993594999&vid=IAMS_VU2&ct=display&tabs=detailsTab&fromLogin=true - accessed 3rd January 2018.

¹¹⁶ *PLI*, p.575.

before William de la Pole was created the Duke of Suffolk in June 1448.¹¹⁷ Meale presents the possibility that a date of production could be c.1430, the year in which Alice Chaucer was betrothed to William de la Pole.¹¹⁸ Meale and Jambeck both consider the possibility that this was a joint commission or that Alice Chaucer may even have, as Meale speculates, “been responsible, either directly or indirectly, for the commissioning of Arundel 119,” with Jambeck pointing to the “additional dimension of interest in that [the text] claims to be one of the *Canterbury Tales*.”¹¹⁹ However, as with Chaucer’s second husband, there are connections between Lydgate and the male owners of these manuscripts of his work outside of the household: as Pearsall highlights, de la Pole “supported Lydgate’s application, in 1441, for the renewal of his grant from the crown” and, “[a]s great East Anglian landowner, [...] sat on commission several times with William Curteys, Lydgate’s abbot.”¹²⁰ We also have a number of examples of de la Pole’s keenly pursuing an interest in literature beyond both Lydgate and Alice Chaucer, pointing to what Meale identifies as a military network that overlapped with an English and French network of courtier-poets.¹²¹

When Suffolk went to France to negotiate the marriage contract between Margaret of Anjou and Henry VI in 1444, his retinue included Sir Robert Roos (brother of Richard Roos, the translator of *La Belle Dame sans Mercy* and owner of British Library, Royal MS 14E.III) and Adam Moleyns.¹²² The authorship of *The Libel of English Policy* (the text most likely to be Item Nine in John Paston II’s inventory) was long thought to be associated with Adam Moleyns; whilst this theory has now been rejected, there is evidence of his literary interests: he was a correspondent of Aeneas Silvius Piccolomini, later Pope Pius II, who complimented his Latin, and it is claimed that Moleyns was equal to his

¹¹⁷ Johnston Parr, ‘Astronomical Dating for some of Lydgate’s Poems,’ *PMLA*, 67.2 (1952), pp.251-258 (p.256).

¹¹⁸ Meale, “Alice Chaucer,” p.92.

¹¹⁹ *Id.* pp. 92-3 and Jambeck, “Library of Alice Chaucer,” pp.124-5.

¹²⁰ Pearsall, *John Lydgate*, p.162.

¹²¹ Meale, “Laywomen and their books,” pp.128-158 (pp.148-9).

¹²² *Id.* p.140. Derek Pearsall, “The Literary Milieu of Charles of Orléans and the Duke of Suffolk, and the authorship of the Fairfax Sequence,” *Charles d’Orléans in England, 1415-1440* (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2000), pp.145-156.

contemporary Italian humanists in his rhetoric.¹²³ Perhaps the most significant literary influence on the Duke of Suffolk from within this group of courtier-poets, though, was Charles, Duke of Orléans, as it is from this connection that de la Pole's own compositions of verse stem.

As with Thomas and Alice Chaucer, the primary seat of the Duke of Suffolk's literary connections was not in East Anglia but, rather, in Oxfordshire. De la Pole had been in the custody of Charles d'Orléans' half-brother, Jean, count of Dunois, following his surrender to Joan of Arc at the siege of Orléans in 1428-1429, but it was his return to England, following his release in 1430, that placed him in regular contact with Charles.¹²⁴ In 1433 the Duke of Suffolk acquired the custody of the Duke of Orléans and for the following four years "Orléans lived with Suffolk at Wallingford Castle and elsewhere", including at "Suffolk's house in London".¹²⁵ Whilst this increasingly personal connection would go on to have political implications for both men, it was also this period of Suffolk's life that "witnessed the production of Orléans' *Poème de la Prison*, under which name his early sequence of roundels, ballades, and chansons may be grouped."¹²⁶

MacCracken may slightly over-interpret the implications of this connection:

[i]t would seem most natural, then, that Suffolk, as a courteous host and welcome friend, often helped to while away a day at Wallingford or elsewhere, by encouragement of his friend's poetic gifts, or in the friendly poetic rivalry which was then the fashion.¹²⁷

What we can state is that, when imprisoned, both d'Orléans and de la Pole appear to have spent part of their time in similar endeavours and that d'Orléans may have been what Pearsall describes as 'a model of the learned courtier-

¹²³ Bill Smith, 'Adam Moleyns (d. 1450),' *ODNB*:

<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/18918> - accessed 18th December 2015.

¹²⁴ John Watts, 'Pole, William de la, first Duke of Suffolk (1396-1450),' *ODNB*:

<https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/22461> - accessed 3rd January 2017.

¹²⁵ For the date on which de la Pole acquired the custody of Charles d'Orléans, see Watt's "Pole, William de la". For a summary of d'Orléans' location during this period of time, see H. N. MacCracken, "An English Friend of Charles of Orléans," *PMLA*, 26.1 (1911), pp.142-180 (p.144).

¹²⁶ MacCracken, "Friend of Orléans," p.144.

¹²⁷ *Id.* p.145.

poet.”¹²⁸ As Pearsall also points out, Suffolk’s interest in courtly love lyrics predates his imprisonment following the siege of Orléans:

A little story told by Guillaume Benoit, Suffolk’s servant in France, in testimony of 1427 relating to a supposed English plot to murder the duke of Burgundy in 1425, gives a vivid picture of this world. He tells how Suffolk, pining for love of some unnamed lady, had Guillaume read some love-poems to him. The servant then summoned one ‘Binchoiz’ (the poet Gilles Binchois), who there and then composed a rondel, ‘Ainsi que a la foiz my souvient’, which so pleased the earl that he gave him a handsome present. This shows Suffolk not as a poet, but as someone who appreciated love-poetry, or at least as someone who was appropriately perceived in that role.¹²⁹

Pearsall is more cautious than MacCracken in establishing the extent of de la Pole’s literary activity. We are presented with an enthusiastic consumer of poetry, perhaps a sporadic or occasional patron, and a strong case is made for at least some creative output from the Duke.

Cambridge, Trinity College, MS R.3.20 is an anthology of Chaucerian poems, and amongst these are six French poems, copied by John Shirley. Of these poems, Shirley ascribes five to the Duke of Suffolk, stating that “[o]ne of them was written “after his comyng oute of prysoune.”¹³⁰ Pearsall sees no reason to doubt this ascription, indicating that, whilst “Shirley could be careless in his attributions [...], he was well-informed on many matters, and there is no strong reason to disbelieve what he says about the authorship of the five poems.”¹³¹ However, there is a greater question-mark over MacCracken’s argument that Suffolk also wrote the “Poems by an English friend” in Bibliothèque Nationale, MS fr. 25248, a manuscript of, primarily, autograph poems by Charles d’Orléans with an interpolated quire on ff.310-313 of “six roundels and a ballade in

¹²⁸ Pearsall, “Milieu of Orléans,” p.148.

¹²⁹ Pearsall, “Milieu of Orléans,” p.148. Here Pearsall draws on Boffey’s *English Courtly Love Lyrics*, pp.99-100.

¹³⁰ *Id.* p.151 and MacCracken also includes this statement by Shirley, MacCracken, “Friend of Orléans,” p.146.

¹³¹ Pearsall, “Milieu of Orléans,” p.151.

English” which are not in the hand of d’Orléans.¹³² Pearsall, along with J. P. M. Jansen and following Eleanor Prescott Hammond, are sceptical of this attribution, with Pearsall writing that “an assessment of the genuineness of Suffolk’s claims to the authorship of these poems must rest upon a number of criteria, none of them firm.”¹³³ What we can say with some certainty is that he was of a social group that “lived and breathed poetry, especially the poetry of love-complaint. It was an international currency or contagion.”¹³⁴ Of course, as we have previously seen, de la Pole’s literary interests were not limited to this genre, this network, or even this slightly gendered approach to literary activity (as characterised by Pearsall), for de la Pole shared with Alice Chaucer an interest in the works of Lydgate.¹³⁵ Nonetheless, in considering the debates concerning the possibility of de la Pole’s authorship of certain poems, we see that, for some of those patrons often characterised as East Anglian, their literary influences and engagement with textual culture spanned multiple networks and was not necessarily narrowly bound within a single, local geographical area. This was also true of writers, as we have seen with Lydgate’s involvement with the Chaucer family at their household at Ewelme. Julia Boffey writes that some “East Anglian works (some of those produced by Lydgate for patrons close to Bury St. Edmunds, or Bokenham’s *Legend of St. Dorothy*, for example) appear in anthologies with no discernible local associations.”¹³⁶ However, for all of this circulation outside of East Anglia, there are also nodes within the network described by Samuel Moore where the activities of these “Patrons of Norfolk

¹³² *Id.* p. 142. MacCracken’s work is based on the discovery of Bibliothèque Nationale, MS fr. 25248 by Pierre Champion: see “Le Manuscrit autographe des poésies de Charles d’Orléans,” *Bibliothèque du XV^e Siècle* (1907), pp.1-89.

¹³³ Eleanor Prescott Hammond, *English Verse between Chaucer and Surrey* (Durham, North Carolina, and London, 1927), pp.221–23; Jansen, “The ‘Suffolk’ Poems,” p. 11. Pearsall, “Milieu of Orléans,” p.153.

¹³⁴ Pearsall, “Milieu of Orléans,” p.153.

¹³⁵ Pearsall’s full statement (p.153) attributes these literary activities as follows: “Men of this class, as we know from the better documented case of Orléans, or from the sporadic evidence of poetry-writing by other members of the class, lived and breathed poetry, especially the poetry of love-complaint.”

¹³⁶ Julia Boffey, ‘Manuscript and Print: Books, Readers and Writers,’ in *A Companion to Medieval Poetry*, ed. Corrine Saunders (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), pp.538-554 (p.546).

and Suffolk” are expressed within a more narrowly local East Anglian landscape.

0.3.iii: Patrons and Poets: Katherine de la Pole and John Metham

The network of patrons presented in Moore’s work is centred, in part, around kinship. Whilst Moore states that Metham wrote *Amoryus and Cleopes* for Sir Miles Stapleton, the dedication of the poem was written for both Sir Miles and his wife, Katherine de la Pole, first cousin to William de la Pole, Duke of Suffolk.¹³⁷ In her recent work on Katherine de la Pole, Carol Meale argues for an adjustment to our view of the patronage of John Metham by the Stapletons, suggesting that it was Katherine that commissioned two extant manuscripts: Princeton University Library, MS Garrett 141 and Tokyo, MS Takamiya 38.¹³⁸ The first contains *Amoryus and Cleopes* whilst the second manuscript links the Stapletons to a text not included in Moore’s work: *pe Priuyté of Priuyteis* by Johnannes de Caritate.¹³⁹ MS Takamiya 38 has several folios missing, which has made the identification of its owner difficult. However, Meale identified the manuscript to be by the same scribe as MS Garrett 141, thus linking it to the Stapletons. Furthermore, Meale’s consideration of the dedication at the beginning of the *Priuyté* indicates that Sir Miles is referred to in the past tense, suggesting that it was written after his death in 1466.¹⁴⁰ The manuscript also has the name ‘Henry Harcourt’ inscribed on fol. 59v; Harcourt was the family name of Katherine’s second husband.¹⁴¹ The date of the work by the second artist of the Garrett manuscript more concretely indicates Katherine’s patronage, rather than that of her first husband:

¹³⁷ Carol M. Meale, ‘Katherine de la Pole and East Anglian Manuscript Production in the Fifteenth Century: An Unrecognized Patron?’ in Carol M. Meale and Derek Pearsall (ed.), *Makers and Users of Medieval Books. Essays in honour of A. S. G. Edwards* (Cambridge: Brewer, 2014), pp.132-149 (p.132). For Moore’s survey of Sir Miles Stapleton’s patronage, see “Patrons” II, pp.197-201.

¹³⁸ Meale, “Katherine de la Pole,” p.149.

¹³⁹ *Id.* p.133.

¹⁴⁰ *Id.* p.139.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*

If the second border artist in Garrett worked on the manuscript later in the 1460s or c.1470, as seems likely, then Katherine's patronage of the booktrade seems assured.¹⁴²

It would, thus, seem that, whilst Metham's dedication of *Amoryus and Cleopes* celebrates both of the Stapletons, the manuscripts associated with the couple are most likely to have been commissioned after the death of Sir Miles by his widow, possibly "in part as a memorial to her late husband[.]"¹⁴³

Whilst Meale's work suggests a slight readjustment to our understanding of the active members of Moore's small network of patrons, Sir Miles and Katherine Stapleton were both linked to a key centre of literary production in East Anglia, the Abbey of Bury St. Edmunds. Derek Pearsall stated, in his bio-bibliography on John Lydgate, that "admissions during the abbacy of [William] Curteys include William Paston, Richard Beauchamp, earl of Warwick, Eleanor, duchess of Gloucester, Elizabeth Vere, countess of Oxford, and the earl of Suffolk and his wife Alice."¹⁴⁴ The Stapletons were not only linked to the Abbey through their relation to the de la Poles but, as Moore states, during his time as sheriff of Norfolk and Suffolk, Sir Miles paid John Lydgate, monk of Bury, £3 16s. 8d. on his annuity.¹⁴⁵ Lydgate's work influenced Metham and the prologue to *Amoryus and Cleopes* seems to lament the recent passing of the monk.¹⁴⁶ However, we do not have any evidence that links the Stapleton household directly with Lydgate's writing.

0.3.iv: Centres of Production: Bury St. Edmunds

The first part of Moore's study primarily surveyed the extant evidence through the links of kinship, whilst the second part considered the significance of the ways in which other patrons were connected through their links to particular religious communities. In part I, Moore recognised the monastery at Bury St. Edmunds as a node within this network of kinship, not only through the

¹⁴² *Id.* p.142.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁴ Pearsall, *John Lydgate*, p.27.

¹⁴⁵ Moore, "Patrons" II pp.200-201.

¹⁴⁶ *Id.* p.198.

commissioning or ownership of works by John Lydgate but also through admission to the confraternity of the Abbey (mentioned above).¹⁴⁷ Here we have an important East Anglian social group participating in a particular religious community that reaffirms their social importance and a collective identity outside of kinship. Moreover, it also marks their connection to a hub of textual production. William de la Pole's copy of *The Siege of Thebes*, British Library, MS Arundel 119, was written in the same hand as that found in two other manuscripts, as identified by Jeremy Griffiths: a manuscript in the Takamiya collection containing the *South English Legendary* and a manuscript in the library of Martin Schøyen, Norway, (MS 615), which contains Walton's translation of the *Consolation of Philosophy*.¹⁴⁸ In the second manuscript appears the name Thomas Hingham, a monk of Bury who, as Meale posits, "may be the same Hingham whose name also occurs on pages of the copies of the East Anglian plays of *Mankind* and *Wisdom* in the Folger Library in Washington (MS V.a.354)."¹⁴⁹ In the Abbey of Bury St. Edmunds we see social and religious interests and textual activity collapse on to one another; at the same time, when we consider the relationship between Lydgate and the Chaucers, we quickly see that this node appears as moments of focus in a highly mobile network. These patrons are connected outside of their associations with the abbey. Lydgate's success, although partially made possible by his access to the extensive library at Bury St. Edmunds and the freedoms and advantages of his religious order, is aided by his movement outside of the abbey. Yet, there is also a sense of returning to the Abbey, whether as a religious, political, or social centre, or as a hub of literary production in East Anglia.

0.3.v: Centres of Production: Osbern Bokenham and Clare Priory

Part II of Moore's work expanded on this relationship between a group of East Anglian patrons and a particular site of production, with his study of the Abbey

¹⁴⁷ Pearsall, *John Lydgate*, p.27.

¹⁴⁸ Meale, "Alice Chaucer," p.93. See also Jeremy Griffiths, *English Manuscript Studies*, 5; Richard Beadle, "Monk Thomas Hyngham's Hand in the Macro Manuscript," in Richard Beadle and A. J. Piper (eds), *New Science Out of Old Books: Studies in Manuscripts and Early Printed Books in Honour of A. I. Doyle* (London: Scolar Press, 1995), pp.315-41.

¹⁴⁹ Meale, "Alice Chaucer," p.93.

of Clare, in Suffolk, and the work of the friar and poet, Osbern Bokenham. The collection of his work now known as the *Legends of Holy Women* is the result of thirteen individual commissions, beginning with his life of St. Margaret, written for Thomas Burgh, also a friar, in 1443.¹⁵⁰ Simon Horobin describes this work as sparking “a local demand for similar English lives of female saints.”¹⁵¹ The “prolocutorye” to his life of Mary Magdalen records the more specific nature of this local demand. Here, Dame Isabel Bouchier, Countess of Eu and sister to Richard, duke of York, during a party on Twelfth Night 1445, appears to take the writer to one side in order to request the composition of a life of Mary Magdalen.¹⁵² Bokenham’s patrons were members of the gentry and aristocracy, often with links of kinship, and seemingly, according to both Horobin and Shelia Delany, “sympathetic to the Yorkist cause.”¹⁵³ The following list shows the names of those patrons or dedicatees for which the evidence is extant:¹⁵⁴

Thomas Burgh	Friar	Life of St. Margaret
Katherine Denston	Daughter of William Clopton of Long Melford	St. Anne St. Katherine
Katherine Howard	Wife of John Howard (Duke of Norfolk in 1483) Daughter of William Lord Moleyns	St. Katherine
Elizabeth de Vere	Wife of the 12 th Earl of Oxford Daughter of Katherine and John Howard	St. Elizabeth of Hungary
Isabel Bouchier	Countess of Eu Sister of Richard, duke of York	St. Mary Magdalene

¹⁵⁰ Osbern Bokenham “prologus” to the legend of St. Margaret, in Mary S. Serjeantson (ed.), *Legendys of Hooly Wummen, by Osbern Bokenham*, EETS os. 206 (1938), ll.187-91.

¹⁵¹ Horobin, “Politics, Patronage, and Piety,” p.932.

¹⁵² Bokenham, *Legendys of Hooly Wummen*, ll.5004-5075.

¹⁵³ Horobin, “Politics, Patronage, and Piety,” p.149. Delany presses the evidence a little further and proposes that the collection of works is politically motivated as well as a response to Chaucer’s *Legends of Good Women*. See Delany, *Impolitic Bodies*.

¹⁵⁴ For a full description of these patrons and their connections to one another and Clare priory see “Introductions” in Delany, *Impolitic Bodies*, pp.3-28. The table included above is an outline of the connections explored by this chapter of Delany’s work.

Agatha Flegge	Wife of John Flegge, knight and “business associate of some of Bokenham’s other patrons.” ¹⁵⁵	St. Agatha
John and Isabel Hunt		St. Dorothy ¹⁵⁶

Whilst Delany discusses the political and professional connections within this network of patrons, Horobin focuses on the connection these people had with Clare, pointing out that the Denston family owned a significant amount of property there, that the Duke of York was the patron of Clare Priory, and that Isabel Bouchier lived at Clare Castle.¹⁵⁷ Delany points to a social connection between the de Veres and Bouchier, stating “the countess of Oxford accompanied her husband to Rouen in the retinue of the duke of York, along with Isabel Bouchier and her husband.”¹⁵⁸ Horobin believes that it is for one member at the centre of this community that a presentation copy of another work by Bokenham was made. In 2008, Horobin identified Advocates Library, Abbotsford MS as the only extant copy of Bokenham’s once-thought-lost work, his translation of the *Legenda Aurea*.¹⁵⁹ He suggests that the “evidence may indicate that, like the Additional MS [British Library, Additional MS 11814, a copy of Bokenham’s translation of Claudian’s *De Consulatu Stiliconis*, which includes ‘the Yorkis badges of fetterlock, falcon, white rose and white hind at the openings of each part of the text], the Abbotsford manuscript was intended as a presentation copy for the Duke of York, and was probably copied at Clare,”¹⁶⁰ or, given the primarily female readership for Bokenham’s work, perhaps Cecily of York.¹⁶¹ Whilst the patronage of John Lydgate shows the movement of his work through a large network of members of the gentry and aristocracy that crosses different counties, Bokenham’s work appears more concretely rooted at

¹⁵⁵ Delany, *Impolitic Bodies*, p.19.

¹⁵⁶ The commissioning and dedication of St. Dorothy is discussed by Horobin, “A Manuscript found in the Library of Abbotsford House and the Lost Legendary of Osbern Bokenham,” *English Manuscript Studies 1100-1700*, vol. 14 (2008), pp.132-64 (p.144).

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.* p.149.

¹⁵⁸ Delany, *Impolitic Bodies*, p.19.

¹⁵⁹ Horobin, “The Lost Legendary,” pp.130-162.

¹⁶⁰ *Id.* p.150.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*

Clare Priory. Here, we see the commissioning of Bokenham's work spread through a small group of people personally connected with the priory, and with one another, whilst the priory itself seems to have been a site for the production of high-quality presentation manuscripts.

0.3.vi: Centres of Production: John Capgrave and King's Lynn (and Cambridge)

We find Lydgate, Bokenham and Metham at the centre of groups of interested and engaged literary patrons. The nature of the relationship between poet and patron varies but the case studies outlined above imply certain kinds of intimacy mediated by or expressed through the creation of a text. However, a slightly different network and relationship is highlighted through the works of the final, key, named East Anglian writer of Moore's article, John Capgrave.¹⁶² In many respects Capgrave's writing endeavours mirror those of Lydgate. He writes for key members of the English court: *In Genesim* (1437/8) and *In Exodum* (1440) for Duke Humphrey; *De illustribus Henricis* for Henry VI, after the king had visited Lynn in August 1446; and a chronicle for Edward IV, which M. C. Seymour believed was intended for Edward's coronation in 1461.¹⁶³ He also wrote English hagiographies: *St. Norbert* (1440) for John Wygenhale, abbot of the Premonstratensian house at West Dereham; a life of *St. Katherine* (written before 1445) for which the original address is lost; *St. Augustine* (c.1450) for an unnamed woman; and *St. Gilbert* (1451) for Nicholas Reysby, Master of the Gilbertines at Sempringham in Lincolnshire. His more theological works included the *Concordia* (c. 1442) for the Abbot of Watford and *Manipula doctrine cristiane* (c.1452) for Archbishop Kempe.¹⁶⁴ He also wrote a religious tract, *Solace of Pilgrimes*, for a member of the local gentry, Sir Thomas Tuddenham.¹⁶⁵ Seymour, in his appraisal of Capgrave's work, foregrounds the similarities between this prior of Lynn and his fellow monk-poets, seeing him as

¹⁶² Moore, "Patrons" II, pp.97-101.

¹⁶³ M. C. Seymour, "John Capgrave," in *English Writers of the Late Middle Ages*, part of the series *Authors of the Middle Ages*, edited by M. C. Seymour, Volume III, nos. 7-11 (1996) pp. 195-256.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁵ Seymour, "John Capgrave," pp. 195-256.

the imitator of John Lydgate and the inspiration for Osbern Bokenham. Of Capgrave's hagiographies Seymour writes,

After their completion Capgrave wisely abandoned any ambition to emulate Lydgate, whom he may have known in person as well as by repute. His confrère Osbern Bokenham of Stoke Clare convent, who studied with him at Cambridge, was encouraged by Capgrave's example to write his *Legends of holy women*, and his imitation and the survival of four copies of *St Katherine* attest to contemporary and more flattering evaluation.¹⁶⁶

Bokenham praises Capgrave's work in the prologue to *St Katherine* in his *Legendys of Hooly Wummen*:

But who-so lyst knowleche for to haue,
And in pat mater enuereyd to be,
My fadrys book, maystyr Ioon Capgrave,
Wych pat but newly compyld he,
Mote he seke, & he pere shal se
In balaadys rymyd ful craftily
All pat for ignorance here now leue I.¹⁶⁷

This may well be only the conventional profession of humility that we expect in a prologue such as this, but it may also act as a marker of the links between Capgrave and Cambridge. Speaking in his prologue to *Legendys of Hooly Wummen* of his friend Thomas Burgh, who had "re quyryd wyth humble entent" Bokenham's translation of the life of St Margaret, Bokenham makes a point of Burgh's residence in Cambridge.¹⁶⁸ Bokenham then goes on to give the reader an impression of the sorts of work produced there:

Where wyttys be manye ryht capcyows
And subtyl, wych sone my lewydnesse
Shuld aspwe [...].¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁶ *Id.* p.221.

¹⁶⁷ Bokenham, *Legendys of Hooly Wummen*, p.172.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p.3.

¹⁶⁹ Bokenham, *Legendys of Hooly Wummen*, p.6.

Seymour argues that there were strong intellectual links between Cambridge and Capgrave, that the bonds of theology and study between Lynn and Cambridge shaped Capgrave's rather orthodox theological writings and that his literary activities may overlap with his writing of sermons.¹⁷⁰ For Capgrave, then, we see the influence of his continued links with Cambridge in both what he chose to write and the style of those writings.

Within Seymour's assessment of Capgrave's literary merit, the poet appears as a weigh-station between two more accomplished writers, Bokenham and Lydgate. Capgrave's writing primarily focuses on biblical commentaries, which included the *The Pentateuch*, *The Histories*, *The Books of Poetry*, and *The Prophets*.¹⁷¹ Of these, only the two works produced for Duke Humphrey survive, *In Genesim* and *In Exodum*.¹⁷² The Duke gave both of these works to Oxford University along with two other volumes by Capgrave (*Super Regum Primum* and *Super Regum 3*, neither of which are extant), as part of his donation of 135 books in 1444.¹⁷³ Whether Duke Humphrey read these works or not is unclear. In the *Fall of Princes* (written for the duke in 1437), Lydgate praises his patron's intelligence and the joy he takes in discussing his rearing with "clerkis".¹⁷⁴ Capgrave seems to start with a similar impression of his patron. As Karen Winstead writes, "In Capgrave's opinion, the duke's interest in Scripture is especially remarkable "in these bad days" ("in his diebus malis") when even the clergy are all to prone to neglect it." However, Winstead notes that Capgrave may have been mistaken in the nature of his patron. Noting the differences between the dedications in *Genesis* and *Exodus* (the second biblical commentary Capgrave wrote for the duke), in which Humphrey moves from being depicted as a scholar to a sponsor of books, Winstead wonders "whether Capgrave might

¹⁷⁰ Seymour, "John Capgrave," p. 224.

¹⁷¹ *Id.* p.216.

¹⁷² The rest of the texts are listed by sixteenth-century bibliographers who claim that Capgrave wrote further biblical commentaries. For the evidence of these claims for Capgrave's lost works, see Seymour's appendix (pp.246-249).

¹⁷³ *Id.* p.216.

¹⁷⁴ Henry Bergen, ed. *Lydgate's Fall of Princes*, EETS es 121 (1924), p.12, l.415; p.11, l.287. As highlighted in Karen A. Winstead, *John Capgrave's Fifteenth Century*, (Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007), p.6.

not also have been disappointed in Humphrey as an intellectual.”¹⁷⁵ Further to the disappointing reception of Capgrave’s work implied here, Seymour stresses that Capgrave’s involvement in the production of those manuscripts of his work that do survive, which are either in his hand or show signs of being written under his supervision, indicate that his work had very limited circulation. Whilst, then, we do not have, in this snap-shot of Lynn, the more organic networks of patrons that surrounded Bokenham’s priory at Clare, the political aspect of patronage and book production is clearly evident. Seymour believes that, for Capgrave, literary patronage overlapped with good lordship:

[this] meant primarily the protection of his order, and those to whom he addressed his books were primarily persons with the power to deflect enemies of the Hermits, Duke Humfrey, Henry VI, Edward IV, and as many archbishops and bishops and territorial magnates as he could find. [...] The fortunes of the Hermits fared the better because of this network of patrons cultivated by Capgrave with his books.¹⁷⁶

For Capgrave, as for Bokenham and Lydgate, the political element to the pursuit of literary patronage may have been less about national conflict and more about protecting his own local institution.

0.3.vii: Some Characteristics of these Case-Studies in Late-Medieval Textual Culture in East Anglia

The research into the creation of texts and the commissioning and ownership of manuscripts in fifteenth-century East Anglia, as outlined above, highlights a number of characteristics about the textual culture of the area. I have deliberately deferred until this point consideration of what these case studies *collectively* suggest. Perhaps the most self-evident point is that there were a number of members of the gentry that were actively participating in this culture. For some, such as Alice Chaucer, Thomas de Montague, William de la Pole, and Katherine de la Pole, this could involve the patronising of a specific poet. For men such as William de la Pole and Charles d’Orléans, an interest in literature extended to the writing of poetry. However, these case-studies

¹⁷⁵ Winstead, *John Capgrave’s Fifteenth Century*, p.6.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.* p.249.

quickly make clear that an enthusiasm for literature was not straightforwardly gendered. A number of landmark studies on medieval reading communities and textual networks have considered women readers as a distinct group;¹⁷⁷ however, Meale's and Jambeck's studies of the manuscripts associated with the various branches of the de la Pole family, whilst promoting our understanding of women patrons, also show that these women participated in the same culture as their husbands and in very similar ways. The patrons of Osbern Bokenham demonstrate that this was also happening elsewhere in East Anglia, and it appears to filter down into Anne Paston's ownership of a copy of Lydgate's *Siege of Thebes*.

The textual culture of East Anglia is both alert to the locations in which it was created and, yet, also not bound by that area. The patrons of Osbern Bokenham are linked through their connection to Clare priory and the commissioning of these lives of female saints appears to gather traction amongst this lay community as each member seeks to engage in a distinctively local communal literary culture. For Bokenham, such works and the demonstration of patronage by these members of the local gentry and aristocracy consolidates the support of these powerful people for his priory. Something similar also happens with Lydgate at Bury St. Edmunds and Capgrave at King's Lynn. Whilst the production of original works might well be local, and the copying of manuscripts might also centre on particular regional hubs, the circulation of manuscripts and texts was not necessarily bound within the borders of East Anglia. For particularly powerful and wealthy members of the gentry, such as Alice de la Pole, a library might travel out of Suffolk and back to a family home in Oxfordshire. William de la Pole would be influenced by his time with Charles

¹⁷⁷ Key studies on the reading networks of women in the fifteenth century include the volume in which Meale's study of Alice Chaucer appears, Meale (ed.), *Women and Literature in Britain, 1150-1500*; Ralph Hanna III, "Some Norfolk Women and their Books, ca. 1390-1440," and Karen J. Jambeck, "Patterns of Women's Literary Patronage: England, 1200-ca.1475," both in June Hall McCash (ed.), *The Cultural Patronage of Medieval Women* (Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 1996), pp.288-305 and pp.228-265, respectively; Mary C. Erler, *Women, Reading and Piety in Late Medieval England* (Cambridge: CUP, 2002); and D. H. Green, *Women Readers in the Middle Ages* (*Cambridge Studies in Medieval Literature*) (Cambridge: CUP, reissue 2007).

d'Orléans at Wallingford Castle and whilst the latter was under house arrest at de la Pole's London residence. However, wealth and property were not the only factors in the movement of this culture. Lydgate would gain commissions for his work whilst he was Prior of Hatfield and whilst he visited the Oxfordshire home of Alice de la Pole. Writers and commissioners of works are influenced by the cultural and personal connections made outside of East Anglia and, for some, this extended to being inspired by the culture of the continent. Whilst the centres of production were local, the work of this area was, on occasion, fundamentally informed by influences from further afield.

It is against the characteristics exemplified by the patrons of these studies that the textual activity of the Pastons, and particularly John Paston II, will be explored. John Paston II spent a lot of his time in London and attended the court of Edward IV as well as accompanying Margaret of York to Burgundy on the occasion of her marriage to the Duke, and we can look to his inventory of books to see what influence his travels outside of East Anglia had on his collection of manuscripts. We can, in some instances, reconstruct his acquisition of manuscripts to consider whether (or in which instances) he was drawing on the local hubs of production and whether there are instances in which he engages with the hubs of production in London. I will not seek to argue that John Paston II was not engaging with the textual activity of East Anglia during his prolonged periods of time away from the area; rather, I will suggest that the complex characteristics of the textual culture of the area are particularly compellingly expressed within the case of John Paston II's Inventory of English Books. We may ask in what ways is John Paston II a typical and atypical member of the fifteenth-century East Anglian gentry in his various activities as reader, acquirer, and commissioner of his books?

0.4: The Evolution of the Project

This project emerged from a single question: why did John Paston II commission his *Grete Boke*? One of the striking elements of the story of the Paston family is that they often struggled financially. The letters are littered with requests for money, discussions of the repaying of loans, and of the selling

off of woodland or silver.¹⁷⁸ Equally, there are numerous requests for items that would visually denote their gentry status: Margaret Paston's request for a new necklace or John Paston III's desire for a more fashionable hat or a better hawk.¹⁷⁹ The *Grete Boke*, with its neat but unassuming appearance, seemed an extravagance that would not fulfil the visual demonstration of wealth and status in the way that Margaret's necklace or John III's hat and hawk did. I have always suspected, then, that the *content* of this manuscript held a less tangible cultural significance.

My initial line of questioning stemmed from the kinds of success John Paston II enjoyed at the court of Edward IV (his attendance at the wedding of Margaret of Burgundy, which was celebrated with a week of jousting, and his jousting with the king at Eltham) and the change in the appellation of the manuscript, from the *Grete Boke* in the bill of William Ebesham to "my boke off kyghthod" in John Paston II's Inventory of English Books. I first read the texts of this manuscript in an attempt to understand what kinds of knightly identity were being conveyed by this evident anthology. I then sought to ascertain how this manuscript might speak to other items within the inventory, such as "Pe Dethe off Arthur," "[Guy of] Warwyk," "Kyng Richard Cure delyon," or "the Greene Knyght".¹⁸⁰ Whilst it was interesting to notice the thematic echoes between these different texts, I became increasingly aware that I had imposed a focus on the collection that

¹⁷⁸ For the selling of the wood at Sporle, see *PLI*, p.461 and p.569. Many letters amongst the Paston documents record requests for money; some examples can be seen in *PLI*, p.515, where John Paston records how he "rewardyd" those that had helped resolve matters with the Duke of Suffolk with "xx s." but that he was now left with "x li." and was in great need of the "c s." from Margaret and "c s." from the rents at Paston he presumed to have been collected by his servant, Pekok. For an instance of John II borrowing money, see *PLI*, pp.411-412, where John Paston II writes to Roger Townsend for "x li".

¹⁷⁹ For Margaret Paston's request, see *PLI*, pp.248-250. For John Paston III's request for a hat, see *Ibid.*, pp.540-541. There are also several occasions on which Margaret laments the quality of the garments offered by the merchants in Norwich. For example, she also writes requesting the purchasing of "ij hattis" from London as she "can none getyn in pis town," *Ibid.*, p.240. John Paston II also places a value on his clothing. In letter no. 275, when he hears that his servant (who has his belongings) has been attacked, he confesses that part of his concern was that "all my gownes and pryde had goon; but all was saffe". *Ibid.*, p.461. For John Paston III's request for a hawk see *Ibid.*, p.580.

¹⁸⁰ *PLI*, p.517.

came from a very limiting definition of knightly identity. I sought to extend this thematic approach to the rest of the securely identifiable texts of John Paston II's library. I spent a year reading my way through the texts recorded in the inventory in order to understand the imaginative culture that seemed to have been curated within this collection of works (or likely to have been generated by it). Unfortunately, there are only two extant manuscripts that may be confidently linked to John Paston II's record of this library and these both lack annotation of John's. It became increasingly clear, then, that this approach to understanding Paston as a reader and his engagement with this imaginative culture would be highly speculative. I therefore returned to the sites of evidence which give more concrete indications of John Paston II's engagement with textual culture.

Thus, rather than focusing on the texts of this inventory *as texts*, this project became a study of the relationships that can be traced through the circulation of these texts and manuscripts within the social networks of the Paston family. This opened the thesis up to include the other sites of evidence within the Paston documents (the mentions of texts within the letters and the writing of poetry) and, thus, other members of the Paston family. Whilst John Paston II, because of the kinds of evidence associated with his engagement with textual culture, remains a primary focus of my research, he is seen within the contexts of the textual relationships represented by these manuscripts, inventories, bills, and letters. If this project was prompted by a single question, it was sustained by the evolution of that question to ask in what ways are the Pastons typical or atypical of their social network in their engagement with the literary culture of the late fifteenth century? The results of the asking of this question constitute what follows as the thesis, with the mode of proceeding outlined directly below.

0.5: Chapter Breakdown

The above case studies of the literary patronage and commissioning of manuscripts by members of the East Anglian gentry take as their focus an individual codex or a small collection of manuscripts. These are examined for

what they can reveal about their production, their commissioner, and the wider textual network in which they circulated. This study will apply the methods underpinning these case studies to map out and explore what the textual activities of the Pastons (as revealed by the small sub-set of their documents) adds to this growing understanding of the textual culture of the East Anglian gentry.

Whilst the studies of the library of the Duke and Duchess of Suffolk, or Katherine de la Pole, or Bokenham's network of patrons focus on quite contained sites of evidence, the evidence for the Paston family's interaction with or appreciation of literary culture is, as outlined above, substantial and varied. The ways in which the sites associated with the Pastons differ both in the nature of the content of the item and in the combinations in which the artefacts survive, means that they must be approached in different ways in order fully to release the things they have to tell us about the Pastons as commissioners of manuscripts, collectors of manuscripts, readers, and writers. Thus, the structure of this thesis reflects these different kinds of evidence. I shall consider first the copying and collation of John Paston II's *Grete Boke*, and the movement of the *Epistle of Othea* from a proposed place within this manuscript to its inclusion in a section of John Paston II's "Inventory off Englysshe bokis" marked as "in quayers". We will then turn to a discussion of two bound items from the "Inventory off Englysshe bokis" before finally turning to the texts mentioned in the Paston letters and consideration of other members of John Paston II's family as owners, readers and writers of texts.

Chapter One: The most substantial evidence for the textual activities of the Paston family belong to John Paston II, for whom we have the extant manuscript (Lansdowne); a bill and letter from William Ebesham, the scribe of that manuscript; the likely exemplar from which the manuscript was copied (New York, Pierpont Morgan Library, MS M775); other examples Ebesham's work as a scribe; and John Paston II's inventory of books, in which the manuscript and its texts are recorded. From these documents we can trace the journey of one of the Paston manuscripts from its commission, through its creation, to its place

within his library. We can study the nature of the patron-scribe relationship that led to the collation of the manuscript and look at how Ebesham's work for Paston may have differed from his other commissions. This study, in looking at the way in which this manuscript was produced also introduces us to how Paston got hold of some of his manuscripts and exemplars as well as suggesting Paston's preferences in his reading habits, investigations that continue through the following three chapters.

Chapter Two: In this and the following chapter we look at sections from John Paston II's Inventory of English Books. The removal of the *Epistle of Othea* from its apparently originally intended inclusion in the *Grete Boke* to sit amongst a group of texts within the inventory marked as "in quayers" highlights a connection between the textual culture of John Paston II and a specific regional, private, hub of translation and copying, the household of the Pastons patron, Sir John Fastolf. The works collected by Paston, in this part of his inventory, show the influences of the French Royal library on Fastolf's own collection of texts and record the distinctive ways in which that household engaged with those works. This section of the inventory firmly situates John Paston II within the literary culture of East Anglia, but the output and interests of the Fastolf household (as recorded in Paston's inventory) show the ways in which this culture was informed by the libraries of both the French and Burgundian courts.

Chapter Three: The first two chapters consider a completed manuscript and, I argue, a manuscript that was yet to be bound at the time the inventory was written. In those chapters we see John Paston II as a commissioner of manuscripts. With Items Three and Five of Paston's Inventory of English Books, we consider him as a reader of manuscripts: more specifically, as a reader of the works of Geoffrey Chaucer. Here we look at what has tentatively been identified as a copy of the *Canterbury Tales* that belonged to the Paston family, alongside the other Chaucerian works recorded in the inventory, and compare Paston's ownership of these with other known East Anglian owners of Chaucer's works. From this we can draw out Paston's position within the circulation of Chaucerian works in East Anglia and, through considering the ways in which he

was typical or atypical in his owning of such works, see him within the wider textual landscape of reading popular, “best-selling” works.

Chapter Four: Whilst much of the extant evidence associated with the literary culture of the Pastons focusses on John Paston II, we know that Anne Paston owned a copy of *The Siege of Thebes* and that it was lent to the Earl of Arran.¹⁸¹ We can consider the ownership of that text within the gentry of East Anglia, which will return us to an idea raised in Chapter Three and continued in Chapter Five: the ways in which these networks of commissioners, readers and writers of texts include both men and women. Anne Paston is not the only member of her family to own a work by John Lydgate and, as we will see, John Paston II’s request for his copy of the *Temple of Glasse* hints at culturally coded use for that text in his attempt to obtain a wife, a set of behaviours that are echoed in a similar request for a copy of Ovid’s *De Arte Amandi* and in Margery Brews’ famous Valentine’s Letter to John Paston III.

Chapter Five: Finally, we turn to those moments of what we *might* term original verse composition in the letters of the Paston family. We return to consider Margery Brews’ as a writer within the context of a network in which petitionary verses are being written, looking at those pieces written by the recipient of her Valentine’s Letter, John Paston III. Whilst Margery’s verses are sent as part of a Valentine’s celebration (and as an important part within a difficult marriage negotiation), they speak to John Paston III’s interest in composing verses, as seen in two poems he wrote to his patron, the Earl of Oxford. The petitionary nature of Margery’s verse not only engages with the same kind of writing as that produced by her future husband, but also echoes verses written by John Pyme to John Paston II. These verses draw heavily on the works of Chaucer and Lydgate, a literary practice also on display in other extant poems written by members of the fifteenth-century gentry and aristocracy. In this chapter we will, then, consider members of the Paston family as writers of verse, looking at their

¹⁸¹ *PLI*, pp.574-75.

work against the literary context of other, contemporary, amateur poets and writers.

In mapping out the network of commissioners of manuscripts, scribes, translators, writers, lenders and borrowers surrounding the Pastons' acquisition of texts and manuscripts we will see how they engage with known hubs of production in East Anglia, we will see how John Paston II's library compares with those of other members in his social network and if similarities between his manuscripts and those of other members of the East Anglian gentry might denote a now obscured personal connection. The Pastons and, in particular, John Paston II, remain as examples of East Anglian gentry readers, but, in bringing together these documents, we not only gain a clearer understanding of what such a term might mean, but also a greater understanding of how the Pastons may, and may not, have been representative.

Section One: John Paston II's "Grete Boke"

Chapter One: John Paston II, William Ebesham, and the making of the "Grete Boke".

In the spring of 1469, John Paston II (1442-1479) received an itemized bill from the scribe, William Ebesham.¹⁸² This bill provides evidence of the numerous acts of copying undertaken by this scribe for his patron. The first half of the bill addresses, for the most part, a number of legal documents.¹⁸³ The first item in the bill is a request for xx d. as payment for "a litill booke of pheesyk," but this is followed by the copying of two privy seals, eight "witnessis", another privy seal in both rough draft and then "aftir cleerely in parchement", another witness and 'othir dyuers and necessary wrytynges".¹⁸⁴ This section of the bill concludes with "to quairs of papir of witnessis".¹⁸⁵ The second half of the bill, however, addresses the copying of rather different texts for what Ebesham refers to as "the Grete Boke":

Item, as to the Grete Booke, first for wrytyng of the Coronacion and othir tretys of knyghthode in that quaire which conteyneth a xiiij levis and more, ij d. a lef	ij s. ij d.
Item, for the tretys of were in iiij bookes which conteyneth lx levis aftir ij d. a leeff	x s.
Item, for <i>Othea Pistill</i> which conteyneth xliiiij ^{ti} leves	vij s. ij d.
Item, for the <i>Chalenges</i> and the <i>Actes of Armes</i> which is xxviiij ^{ti} lefes	iiij s. viij d.
Item, for <i>de Regimine Principum</i> which conteyneth xlv ^{ti} leves aftir a peny a leef, which right wele worth	iiij s. ix d.
Item, for the rubrisshyng of all the booke	iiij s. iiij d. ¹⁸⁶

This bill contains the most detailed account of Ebesham's work for John Paston II but a similar request for payment had already been sent to Paston in 1468

¹⁸² *PLII*, pp. 391-2.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁵ *Id.*, p.392.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

from which we can glimpse the growth of this “Grete Boke” and gain our first impression of how this manuscript was designed.

Item, for vij quairs of the grete boke wherein is conteyned the iij^d parte
of the seide boke, I wote wele, for the remenaut will be five

Xiiijs.¹⁸⁷

Here, in the letter of 1468, Ebesham seems to account for a third of the total *Grete Boke*, that is, covering the contents of seven quires. However, he also states that the “remenaut” is for another five quires, which does not correspond to the impression of the copied seven quires accounting for a third of the planned manuscript. The 1468 letter thus presents a discrepancy and an uncertainty over the work being planned by Ebesham and John Paston II. The “third part” mentioned may have referred to the third sub-heading in the 1469 bill, that is, the “*Othea Pistill*,” which would indicate that the collation of the final binding was already being considered before the copying had been complete. Ebesham does state the length of the quire in which are the “Coronacion and othir tretys of knyghthode” as thirteen leaves “and more”. The quires “of papir witnessis” for which Ebesham claims before the *Grete Boke* contain fourteen leaves and, based on the understanding that the quires of the *Grete Boke* would be of a similar length, the forty-three leaves mentioned in 1469 would most likely run to just over three quires, not seven.¹⁸⁸ Rather, then, we return to the possibility “the iij^d parte” may well indicate that Ebesham had copied a third of the total intended scheme. The total leaves for the works in Ebesham’s bill of the following year is 189, this would cover approximately fourteen quires (if each booklet had fourteen leaves), two more than the total of twelve quires given in the account of 1468 but an increase that only presents two-thirds of the apparently intended twenty-one quires.¹⁸⁹ The documents thus suggest that there was a clear sense, shared by commissioner and scribe, of what the *Grete*

¹⁸⁷ *Id.*, p.387.

¹⁸⁸ *Id.*, p.392. The account of 1468 also claims for quires of fourteen and twenty-eight leaves in length. *Id.*, p.387.

¹⁸⁹ However, it should be noted that whilst Ebesham’s “papir witnessis” runs to fourteen leaves, quires of sixteen or twelve were more common. Were the quires to contain sixteen leaves then the 189 leaves for which Ebesham charges would run to almost twelve quires.

Boke would look like at the end of the copying process: that it would contain twenty-one quires, that it would be fully rubricated. Discrepancies remain and these could indicate that the final third of the manuscript was to be copied by another scribe, although, even here, Ebesham's account reflects that both he and John Paston II are aware that another seven quires are to be bound together with Ebesham's work.

Even this brief consideration of a few of the details of the two accounts for the copying of the "Grete Boke" hints at how these documents may be consulted to excavate questions about John Paston II as a commissioner of manuscripts. We may also use these artefacts to consider the circulation of the texts recorded by Ebesham, where Ebesham was located when he copied this manuscript, and how his work on the *Grete Boke* sat alongside his copying of legal documents for the Paston family. We may also consider the literary preferences of its owner, and further explore the relationship between patron and scribe.

An integral component to such lines of questioning is the survival of the book discussed in Ebesham's bill, BL MS Lansdowne 285 (hereafter referred to as Lansdowne). For much of the twentieth century there was some debate about the identification of this manuscript as that of Ebesham's account. Whilst I will briefly go on to outline this debate, we may say at once that these are the same codex. Lansdowne provides us with a distinct impression of the quality of manuscripts commissioned by John Paston II, as well as some of the organisational choices undertaken by either the patron or the scribe in the compilation of the book. A further site of evidence is New York, Pierpont Morgan Library, MS M775 (hereafter referred to as Pierpont Morgan), which shares a significant number of texts with Lansdowne. This, as we shall see, is thought to be related to the "Grete Boke", either as the exemplar from which Ebesham copied these works, a work copied from the "Grete Boke" or as a sister manuscript copied from the same shared exemplar as Lansdowne. Pierpont Morgan allows us both to consider the ways in which the "Grete Boke" may be similar to manuscripts owned by John Paston II's contemporaries and peers and to map out elements of the manuscript that are peculiar to his copy and thus

may indicate something about his tastes and reading habits. Finally, another kind of supporting evidence in this consideration of the creation of the “Grete Boke” is the collection of extant manuscripts associated with William Ebesham. From a comparison between his work for the Pastons and the types of other works he produced, as well as the evidence pointing towards the identities of his other patrons, we can investigate the ways in which his work for this Norfolk family may have been a suggestive anomaly in his professional life. The “Grete Boke” and this supporting evidence, therefore, provide a specific, rich and detailed route to understanding John Paston II as a commissioner and owner of manuscripts and how he may be placed within the textual culture of late-fifteenth-century East Anglia.

1.1: The “Grete Boke” and British Library, MS Lansdowne 285

Lansdowne is a paper codex (with three parchment flyleaves) measuring 225mm x 310mm (with a paper size of 215mm x 300 mm).¹⁹⁰ It is quite a large manuscript, containing 223 folios, although, as G. A. Lester noted in his detailed study of the manuscript, ff.203-223 are in a sixteenth-century hand, possibly copied by Sir Thomas Wriothesley and Sir William Dethick (both of whom were subsequent owners of the codex).¹⁹¹ Ff.200r-202v were originally blank but an unfinished item was added to f.200v during the sixteenth century.¹⁹² As such, the content of Lansdowne for which the copying is contemporaneous with John Paston II and William Ebesham runs from ff.2r-199v, with the full list of texts presented in Table I in the Appendix to this thesis.

Lester completed an extensive codicological description of Lansdowne, calling his work *Sir John Paston's 'Grete Boke': A Descriptive Catalogue, with an*

¹⁹⁰ BL, “Detailed record for Lansdowne 285,” *Catalogue of Illuminated Manuscripts*: <http://www.bl.uk/catalogues/illuminatedmanuscripts/record.asp?MSID=5248> - accessed 2nd April 2018. A more detailed study of the manuscript is provided by *SJPGGB*.

¹⁹¹ *SJPGGB*, p.12. See p.64 for Lester’s identification of ff.203-223 as the work of Sir Thomas Wriothesley and Sir William Dethick, which is first suggested by Henry Ellis and Francis Douce in *A Catalogue of the Lansdowne Manuscripts in the British Museum* (London, 1819), no.285. For Wriothesley and Dethick’s ownership of the manuscript see pp.58-59 of *SJPGGB*.

¹⁹² *SJPGGB*, p.12.

*Introduction, of British Library MS Lansdowne 285.*¹⁹³ Lester's work on the identification of this manuscript as that discussed by William Ebesham and John Paston II is compelling; however, the connection of this codex to the Paston family was debated for much of the nineteenth and twentieth century. In 1819, the catalogue of the Lansdowne manuscripts identified British Library, Lansdowne 285 as "a volume once belonging to Sir John Paston, Knight [...]" and it was taken to be "the Grete Booke" of Ebesham's bill.¹⁹⁴ James Gairdner, however, was hesitant over this connection, presenting the theory that

A professional transcriber, no doubt, copied and recopied the same treatises often for various customers, and though the contents are very much the same there is nothing positively to show that the Lansdowne volume was Sir John Paston's copy of the "Grete Booke" at all.¹⁹⁵

Gairdner articulated the key criticism of viewing Lansdowne as the "Grete Boke": the contents of the manuscript are not an exact match for those items laid out in Ebesham's bill. Gairdner accepted that 'the greater part of the contents [of Lansdowne] was written by William Ebesham' but believed that it was more likely to be another copy of the manuscript he made for John Paston II.¹⁹⁶ This was not a unanimously accepted view and James W. Thompson agreed with the association presented by the British Library catalogue in his 1939 study, *The Medieval Library*.¹⁹⁷ However, in 1941, Curt F. Buhler resurrected Gairdner's theory, promoting the concern that there are a great number of discrepancies between the contents of Ebesham's bill and that of the extant manuscript: there are a number of additional texts in Lansdowne, and the *Epistle of Othea* is missing.¹⁹⁸ A. I. Doyle refuted Buhler's work in 1956-57

¹⁹³ An integral work to this thesis, as you can see from the Table of Abbreviations at the front of this thesis and the previous footnotes, references to this book are given as *SJPGB*.

¹⁹⁴ Ellis and Douce *Catalogue of the Lansdowne MSS*, p.99. As cited in Curt F. Bühler, "Sir John Paston's Grete Booke, a Fifteenth-Century "Best-Seller"," in *Modern Language Notes*, 56.5, (May 1941), pp.345-351.

¹⁹⁵ James Gairdner, *Sailing Directions for the Circumnavigation of England and for a voyage to the Straits of Gibraltar (from a 15th Century MS)*, (London: Hakluyt Society, 1889), pp.8-9.

¹⁹⁶ *Id.*, pp.3-4.

¹⁹⁷ James W. Thompson, *The Medieval Library*, (New York: Hafner, 1939, repr.1957), p.409.

¹⁹⁸ Bühler, "Sir John Paston's Grete Booke," p.347.

with his study of the work of William Ebesham, stating that he thought that Buhler had not seen the manuscript in question.¹⁹⁹ Finally, the work of G. A. Lester in 1984 gave a detailed and extensive argument for Lansdowne as the extant manuscript of the texts mentioned in this bill.

Addressing the reservations presented by those scholars that believed Lansdowne to be another manuscript copied by Ebesham raises a number of interesting questions about manuscript design, the creative relationship between scribe and patron in the compiling of a manuscript, and how the scribe or the patron came into contact with exemplars. In looking at the work of Doyle and Lester as well as the evidence provided by John Paston II's Inventory of English Books and other Paston letters one can build a very strong case for the identity of Lansdowne but we can also start to see why there might be discrepancies between the bill and the codex and what those discrepancies might tell us about the tastes and reading habits of John Paston II.

1.2: John Paston II, his "Grete Boke" and New York, Pierpont Morgan MS M775

From scholars for whom the absence from Lansdowne of the *Epistle of Othea* and the addition of texts not mentioned in Ebesham's bill discredits the identification of this manuscript as John Paston II's "Grete Boke" the most common argument is that the British Library manuscript and the "Grete Boke" represent, to use Bühler's term, "a Fifteenth-Century 'Best-Seller'".²⁰⁰ This theory is usually supported by references to another manuscript, Pierpont Morgan, a miscellany of chivalric texts, recipes, and prognostications, that shares a number of items with both Lansdowne and the contents of the "Grete Boke" as laid out in Ebesham's bill (Table II in the Appendix contains the full list of texts in Pierpont Morgan).

¹⁹⁹ A. I. Doyle, "The Work of a Late Fifteenth-Century English Scribe, William Ebesham," in *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library, Manchester*, 39 (1956-57), (repr. Liechtenstein: Kraus Reprint, 1970), p.298, fn.4.

²⁰⁰ Bühler, "Sir John Paston's Grete Booke," pp.345-351.

A comparison of the table of contents for these two manuscripts (see Tables I and II in the Appendix) with Ebesham's bill makes clear how the theory of these being "best-sellers" arose:

Ebesham's Bill	Lansdowne	Pierpont Morgan
"the coronacion"	1. The coronation of Kings & Queens of England 2. The coronation procession & banquet of Henry VI, 1429	4. The coronation of Kings & Queens of England 5. The coronation procession & banquet of Henry VI, 1429
"othir tretys of knyghthode"	4. The ceremony for creating the Knights of the Bath 5. The armour & equipment needed for foot combat 6. Instructions for 'jousts of peace' 7. Thomas of Woodstock, Duke of Gloucester, regulations for trial by combat	11. "How Knyghtis of the bath shulde be made" 7. <i>How a Man shall be Armed at his ease</i> 1. <i>The Abilment for the Justs of the Pees, To crie a justus of pees, The coming into the felde</i> 8. Thomas of Woodstock, Duke of Gloucester, regulations for trial by combat
"tretys of were in iiii books"	24. <i>Epitoma Rei Militaris</i>	6. <i>Epitoma Rei Militaris</i>
<i>Othea Pistill</i>	-	13. <i>Epistle of Othea</i>
"the challenges and actes of armes"	8. Challenge of Phillippe de Boyle & John Astley, 1442; 9. Challenge of Piers de Masse & John Astley	15. Challenge of Piers de Masse & John Astley, 1438, Challenge of Phillippe de Boyle & John Astley, 1442
<i>De Regimine Principum</i>	31. <i>Secrees of old Philisoffres</i>	10. <i>Secrees of old Philisoffres</i>

The two extant manuscripts also share a text not included in Ebesham's bill, the sailing directions around the coast of the British Isles and the continent, although the table of expenses, prognostications, medical recipes and zodiac-man of Pierpont Morgan appear in neither Lansdowne nor Ebesham's account for his work. Bühler explained the process of copying that underpinned these similarities and differences thus:

The "standard" volume, from which all three manuscripts were probably derived, apparently contained the three longer articles noted above as well as a number of shorter tracts suitable for the quiet enjoyment of a knight; to this special items were added to suit the tastes of the individual purchaser.²⁰¹

²⁰¹ Bühler, "Sir John Paston's Grete Booke," pp.350-1

Dillion had previously argued that both Lansdowne and Pierpont Morgan were “doubtless copied from some original [...] called in Sir John Paston’s accounts [...] “The Grete boke”.”²⁰² Bühler refuted this, stating that the manuscripts were contemporary with one another and that the “Grete Boke” could not have left the possession of the Pastons until after 1475 and thus it was “most unlikely copies would have been made from it before that date”.²⁰³ Each of these theories tries to understand why, what are understood to be three manuscripts, share multiple texts and seeks to excavate some understanding of the circulation of manuscripts and the process of copying behind these shared items. These interpretations of the relationship between the manuscripts point towards an unidentified hub of manuscript production with these popular texts being, in a sense, “mass-produced”. These theories allow for elements of personalisation in the copying process, for example, the additional “special items” or the collation of texts, but the impression such theories give is of a scribal hub at the centre of a circle of manuscript commissioners. I do not seek to refute such an understanding of fifteenth-century book production and, as I will go on to discuss in Chapter Three, there are items within John Paston II’s Inventory of English Books that suggest he engaged with this kind of manuscript production, but, through a more sustained consideration of the differences and similarities between Lansdowne and Pierpont Morgan, I will show that, in this particular instance, such an impression occludes the personal considerations and connections that went into the production of John Paston II’s “Grete Boke”.

One of the most immediately apparent differences between Pierpont Morgan and Lansdowne is their status as material objects. Pierpont Morgan measures 244mm x 165 mm (compared to Lansdowne at 225mm x 310mm) and contains 320 leaves (compared to Lansdowne at 223, 199 of which are part of the fifteenth-century version of the manuscript). The two manuscripts are, therefore, not too dissimilar in their dimensions and the Pierpont Morgan codex contains the *Epistle of Othea*, which would account for roughly 74 of the 120

²⁰² Dillion, “Ordinances of Chivalry,” p.2.

²⁰³ Bühler, “Sir John Paston’s Grete Booke,” pp.350-1, nt.29.

folio difference between this and Lansdowne, although Ebesham's bill for the "Grete Boke" indicates the text would run for 43 leaves.²⁰⁴ If the Lansdowne manuscript is the "Grete Boke," then the addition of the *Epistle of Othea* would bring the total number of fifteenth-century folios to 242, indicating that the Ebesham and Paston were at one point seeking to replicate Astley's manuscript in terms of both texts and size. However, the key difference between the two manuscripts is in the quality of their production. Lansdowne is produced on paper, Pierpont Morgan on vellum. Ebesham's work is neat, as is the work of scribe B, both of whom "rubricated and decorated their work," but "in a very rudimentary fashion."²⁰⁵ By contrast, John Astley's manuscript contains a number of half-page and full-page illuminations. On ff. 276, 278 and 279 of Pierpont Morgan we find challenges and combats of Pierre de Mass and Phillip Boyle against Astley that took place in 1438 and 1441-2, respectively.²⁰⁶ The texts are preceded and interrupted by two full-page illustrations of the events. These are rich in colour and detail but do not contain any gold. The texts appear on ff. 15-16r, in the hand of William Ebesham, in Lansdowne, and are not surrounded by pictures (in fact there are no illuminations in this manuscript), but appear amongst a selection of similar texts depicting glorious acts of chivalric prowess.²⁰⁷ This choice of material, the absence of illuminations in the Lansdowne manuscript and Ebesham's neat but limited "rubrissheyng" (which amounts to some scroll work around the first letter of the texts in blue and red, and some underlining of names in blue and red) hint at the tighter financial constraints around the production of Lansdowne but they also hint at the different functions of these manuscripts. In Pierpont Morgan these texts appear as a celebration of some of the highlights in the career of Sir John Astley himself. The physical artefact of his manuscript denotes the wealth that came from such a career: it is written on vellum and contains numerous illuminations, not only of the pinnacle moments of his career in the jousting field but also throughout his copy of Stephen Scrope's translation of the *Epistles of Othea*. It is the

²⁰⁴ *PLII*, p.392.

²⁰⁵ *SJPG*, p.18.

²⁰⁶ Dillion, "Ordinances of Chivalry," p.2.

²⁰⁷ *SJPG*, the contents of the manuscript are described on pp.9-12, identification of scribal hands, p.16.

luxurious repository of a wealthy knight of high, and long-established social status. Lansdowne mimics this function, in part, but also appears to have a more pragmatic purpose: it is both a courtesy book and a celebration of some key events in John Paston II's service to the court of Edward IV.

The collection of jousting texts in Lansdowne depicts a world that impressed both John Pastons, II and III, and one that John Paston II managed successfully to enter in 1467 when he entered into a tourney at Eltham with Edward IV and Anthony Woodville against the Lord Chamberlain and John Woodville (amongst others):

My hand was hurte at the Tourney at Eltham upon Wednesday last, I would that you had been there and seen it, for it was the goodliest sight that was sene in Inghland this Forty yeares of so fewe men. There was upon the one side within, the Kinge, My Lord Scalles, My selfe, and Sellenger, and without, my Lord Chamberlyn, Sir John Woodville, Sir Thomas Mountgomery and John Appare &c.²⁰⁸

They would witness the eight days of jousting organised by the Bastard of Burgundy, the events recorded in item 14 in Lansdowne, the following year. The brothers were part of the retinue for Margaret of York, accompanying her to her wedding in Bruges. John Paston III describes the incredible feats of arms undertaken by "my lord the Bastard" in celebration of this union, going on to equate the events and the wider court with the mythical prowess of the Knights of the Round Table:

And asfor the Dwkys coort, as of lordys [deleted in MS], ladys, and gentyllwomen, knytrys, sqwyrys, and gentyllmen, i herd neuer of non lyek to it saue Kyng Artourys cort. By my trowthe, i haue no wyt nor remembrans to wryte to yow halfe the worchep that is her; but þat lakyth, as it comyth to mynd i shall tell yow when i come home, [...]²⁰⁹

²⁰⁸ *PLI*, p. 396. The original letter is now lost but this account of the joust at Eltham survives in Sandford's *Genealogy*, p.20 and is provided in the note preceding letter 236 in Davis's edition of the letters.

²⁰⁹ *Id.* p.539, although the letter, which runs from pp.538-540, gives a long account of the jousts and other festivities that accompanied the marriage of Margaret of York to the Duke of Burgundy.

That Ebesham's bill for the "Grete Boke" arrives in 1469 indicates that other accounts of these events were circulating soon after the wedding, but it also implies that, like Astley, the manuscript was recording a moment of triumph, the acceptance of the Pastons within the court of Edward IV. John Paston II had joined the court of Edward IV in 1461 but had failed to make much of an impact. His uncle, Clement Paston II wrote to John Paston I (the father of John Paston II) to explain the situation:

I fele by W.Pekok þat my newew is not zet verily aqweyntyd in þe Kyngys howse, nore wyth þe officerys of þe Kyngys howse. He is not takyn as non of þat howse, fore þe cokys be not charged to serue hym nore þe sewere to gyue hym no dyche, fore þe sewere wyll not tak no men no dischys till þey be comawndyd by þe cownterrollere.²¹⁰ Also, he is not aqueyntyd wyth no body but wyth Wekys, and Wekys ad told hym þat he wold bryng hym to þe Kyng; but he hathe not zet do soo.²¹¹

According to Clement, then, John II's failure to be officially recognised within the court (to the extent that even the server would not provide him with meals) was due to John Paston I's poor selection of patron: Wekys had not introduced John II to the king and, thus, Paston was unable to be officially recognised by anyone within the king's household. This would have clear ramifications on John II's opportunities to address the powerful families of the court and from whom he (and his father) hoped to gain patronage and support in their various legal matters. Unfortunately, things had not improved by 1465 when John Paston I's frustration with the progress at court of his eldest son led him famously to "exclaim" that John Paston II was "as a drane amonges bees which labour for gaderyng hony in the felde and the drane doth nought but takyth his part of it."²¹² However, within two years of this attack and brief estrangement

²¹⁰ The *MED* defines "Seuer(e) n.(3)" as "an attendant who tasted, carved or served his lord's food". *MED*, "Seuer(e) n.(3)": https://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/middle-english-dictionary/dictionary/MED39665/track?counter=4&search_id=940438 – accessed 30th April 2019. "Countrollour" is defined as "1. (a) The office in charge of accounts in the king's household; [...] (c) any officer of the king having charge of receipts and/or disbursements." *MED*, "Countrollour n.": https://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/middle-english-dictionary/dictionary/MED10021/track?counter=1&search_id=940438 – accessed 30th April 2019.

²¹¹ *PLI*, p.396

²¹² *Id.* p.128.

from his father, John Paston II had made enough of an impression on the court of Edward IV to joust with the king and accompany his sister to Bruges. A text that records the jousts with which that wedding was celebrated thus also celebrates a moment of social affirmation for the Paston family.

Both of these manuscripts are a clear investment of time and effort, and, thus, money, but Lansdowne is not a visual showpiece. It is more perfunctory in its appearance, which may reflect both the social status and wealth of its owner but may also suggest a privileging of the significance of the texts themselves to its owner, indicating a focus on the importance of collating texts for a particular purpose. The manuscript is not the source of the “strange intoxication” imagined by Woolf in *The Common Reader*, nor is it a means by which John Paston II would waste “his time, dreaming”; it is, instead, a thoughtfully cultivated courtesy book.²¹³ The collation of the texts in the manuscript indicates a meticulous planning underpinning the kind of knightly guide John Paston II wanted to own.

Here, therefore, the significance of the difference between these accounts of Astley’s victories in the jousting field is not that the illuminations are absent from Lansdowne but that the texts are copied into a section that celebrates a selection of similar episodes by the great jousters of the era: Anthony Woodville, Lord Scales (items 11 and 15); Richard Beauchamp, Earl of Warwick (item 10); Philip the Good, Duke of Burgundy (the accounts of jousts that took place in front of his judgement are in items 14, 22 and 23); and Antoine, the Grand Bastard of Burgundy (items 11, 14, and 15). These, in turn, appear within a wider section of the manuscript that addresses the regulations, etiquette and equipment necessary for various styles of jousts, the whole section spanning items 5-24. As a collection these texts appear to inform, entertain, recount and celebrate various elements of the knightly identity. The miscellaneous organisation of Astley’s manuscript causes those texts celebrating his jousting prowess to stand out but in its movement into Lansdowne these events become

²¹³ Virginia Woolf, “The Pastons and Chaucer,” in *The Common Reader. First Series*, (London: Hogarth Press, 1925, repr. 1962), p.23.

subsumed within the volume of similar accounts, becoming two moments within a number of exemplars of social success at the Burgundian, French and English courts. Such a movement encourages the impression that John Paston II's manuscript was a courtesy book, but it also, through the inclusion of the jousts at the wedding of Margaret of York amongst these impressive feats of arms, writes the Pastons themselves into this culture.

The jousting texts of Lansdowne may reflect a moment of social success for John Paston II and the writing of the bill for the "Grete Boke" indicates that it was likely to have been commissioned in 1468 at some point after Margaret of York's marriage in July of that year. However, if this section of the manuscript had an anthologising principle of recording impressive or inspirational jousts then the organisation of the wider codex continues to denote the ways in which it was viewed by John Paston II and William Ebesham as a courtesy book. The "Grete Boke" of Ebesham's bills is mentioned once more within the letters of the Paston family. In his inventory of English books John Paston II's penultimate entry is

my boke off knyghthod and ther-in <...> off makyng off knyghtys, off justys, off torn<...> fyghtyng in lystys, paces holden by sou<...> and chalegnys, statutys off weer and de Regimi<...> valet²¹⁴

It should be noted that by the time of writing this inventory (at some point between 1475 and 1479) the *Epistle of Othea* had disappeared from the manuscript, a point to which we will shortly return.²¹⁵ This description of the manuscript as "my boke off knyghthod" emphasises the courtly performance of being a knight. There is sense of the manuscript as a record of the various types of joust, indicating the different kinds of etiquette, armour and technique they would each entail. Some of these texts may even be prompts guiding, or

²¹⁴ *PLI*, p. 518. The right side of this document is damaged. Davis suggests that there is roughly an inch of paper missing but Paston did set out his inventory with a left-hand margin of 1.5cm, which, if repeated on the right-hand side, suggests that whilst parts of the titles for these texts are missing it is unlikely that entire texts have been lost from sight due to this damage.

²¹⁵ *Id.*, p.517. The inventory of books includes Caxton's *The Game and Playe of the Chesse*, which was first printed in 1475. The last possible date for the creation of the inventory is before the death of John Paston II in 1479.

reminding, one of the intricate performances of social hierarchy in elevated ceremonies such as the coronation of a king or queen or the making of a Knight of the Bath. This interpretation is supported by some of the “rubricshyng” seemingly done by Ebesham. The second item in Lansdowne, “The maner and fourme of the kyngis and quenes coronacion in Englonde”, is a detailed description of not only who was in attendance at these ceremonies but also where they stood and their responsibilities within this act of crowning. These actions denote numerous things about the status of the individual, their ancestral role in the kingdom and their personal relationship with the monarch; to read such a work is to understand something of the power structure of the court and at the heart of the kingdom. The decoration of this text in Lansdowne, however, highlights a more specific interest in this hierarchy: the only name underlined in this account is that of the Earl of Oxford.

It is unclear when or how the Pastons first became acquainted with the Earls of Oxford. The earliest extant letter documenting this relationship is written by John De Vere, twelfth Earl of Oxford to John Paston I in August 1450.²¹⁶ The tone and content of the letter, in which John Paston I is requested to join Thomas Brews and Sir Miles Stapleton in attending the Duke of Norfolk at Framlingham, is both instructive but also conversational, indicating a well-established relationship. At some point between 1450 and 1453 the twelfth Earl even wrote to John Paston I requesting him to act as match-maker for the Earl’s servant Thomas Deny: “the love and effeccion he hath to a gentilwoman not ferre from yow [John Paston I], [...] causith hym alwey to desire toward your cuntré rather than toward suych ocupasion as is behovefull to vs.”²¹⁷ This, alongside the handful of surviving letters in which the Earl of Oxford communicates to John Paston I information about national politics and developments within the court, indicates an established and strong relationship between the Paston family and this influential patron.²¹⁸ A prominent Lancastrian loyalist, the twelfth Earl and his eldest son, Aubrey de Vere, were

²¹⁶ *PLII*, pp.42-43.

²¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p.84

²¹⁸ *PLII*, letters 456, 456A, 465, 468, 476, 490, 622, 630, 642,

executed for treason in 1462.²¹⁹ The second-eldest son, also named John de Vere, was attainted but had his lands and title restored to him in 1464.²²⁰ His loyalty to Edward IV remained under suspicion and he was imprisoned in the Tower of London in 1468, subsequently joining forces with the Earl of Warwick in the restoration of Henry VI in 1470.²²¹ At this moment in his career he appears in the Paston letters and it is clear the patronage of the Pastons by the Earls of Oxford has been sustained through to this next generation. Again, we cannot be sure when this personal connection between the twelfth Earl and the Pastons began but John Paston III's account of John de Vere's efforts on his behalf regarding the Duke of Norfolk's taking of Caister Castle indicates a long-running and strong bond:

[M]y lady of Norffolk hathe promysyd to be rewlyd by my lord of Oxynforthe in all syche maters as belonge to my brodyr and to me. And as for my lord of Oxynforth, he is bettyr lord to me, by my trowthe, then I can wyshe hym in many maters, for he sent to my lady of Norffolk by John Bernard only for my mater and for non othyr cawse, myn onwetyng or wythowt eny preyer of me, for when he sent to hyr I was at London and he at Colchestyr, and þat is a lyeklyod he remembyrthe me. The Dwk and the Dwchess swe to hym as humbylly as euyr I dyd to them, in so myche that my lord of Oxynforth shall haue the rwyll of them and thers by ther owne desyirs and gret meanys.²²²

John Paston III was clearly touched by the consideration being shown to his family by such a powerful man. This relationship would develop into one of mutual respect with the Earl addressing John Paston III as his "right welbelouyed counsellour" in 1487 and appointing Paston as his deputy when Oxford became Lord High Admiral around 1490.²²³ Whilst the relationship between the thirteenth Earl of Oxford and the Paston family thus becomes more clear after 1470, the focus of item one in Lansdowne on the position and actions

²¹⁹ Helen Castor, "Vere, John de, twelfth earl of Oxford," *ODNB*: <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/28213> - accessed 15th August 2018

²²⁰ *Ibid.*

²²¹ *Ibid.*

²²² *PLI*, p.564.

²²³ *PLII*, p.448. For John Paston III's promotions after the accession of Henry VII see Davis, "Introduction," in *PLI*, p. lx.

of the Earl of Oxford in the coronation of the kings and queens of England and, perhaps, the focus of item two on the coronation of Henry VI, is part of the collection of evidence from which we can infer a strong bond of patronage prior to the restoration of Henry VI.²²⁴ The decoration of the text in the codex displays a personalisation of the text as it is copied over from its exemplar.

If the decoration of Lansdowne indicates an element of personalising popular, widely circulating texts, then the reordering of this collection of “best-selling” material in that manuscript is also, as we are about to see, a significant expression of the individuality of John Paston II. The key to unlocking this insight is the absence of the *Epistle of Othea*. Lester argues that Astley’s codex “is probably the very book from which the first parts of Lansdowne were copied”.²²⁵ He explains the differences between the two extant manuscripts as a scribal discernment: “Ebesham’s work went beyond mere transcription, for he selected and reordered material, probably under the supervision of his employer.”²²⁶ Establishing who controlled the ordering of texts in Lansdowne, patron or scribe, would be almost impossible if not for John Paston’s inventory of English books. This document does not provide a definitive answer to the questions surrounding the creation of Lansdowne but it does highlight certain organising principles elsewhere in John Paston’s collection that may be at play in this particular manuscript and which may also indicate why the *Epistle of Othea* is absent from this codex.

²²⁴ Lester, in his study of the manuscript, does not out rightly state who he believes underlined these instances in the text but does state that Ebesham’s rubrication of the manuscript included underlining in red and blue ink. *SJPGGB*, pp.18-19.

²²⁵ *Id.*, p.7.

²²⁶ *Ibid.*

1.3: The anthologising principles in books of John Paston II

The Inventory of English Books will form the particular focus of Chapters 2 and 3 of this thesis; however, in order to consider why Lansdowne is structured as it is, we also need here to familiarise ourselves with this document.²²⁷

- 1 A boke had off myn ostesse at þe George <...> off þe Dethe off Arthur begynyng at Cassab <...> Warwyk, Kyng Richard Cure delyon, a croni <...> to Edwarde þe iij, pric-
 - 2 Item, a boke of Troylus whyche William Bra <...> hathe hadde neer x yer and lent it to Da <...> Wyngfelde, et jbi ego vidi; valet
 - 3 Item, a blak boke wyth The Legende off Lad <...> saunce Mercye, þe Parlement off Byr <...> Glasse, Palatyse and Scitacus, The Med<...>, the Greene Knyght, valet
 - 4 Item, a boke jn preente off þe Pleye of þe <...>.
 - 5 Item, a boke lent Midelton, and therin is Bele Da <...> Mercy, þe Parlement off Byrdys, Balade <...> off Guy and Colbronde, Off the Goos, þe <...> þe Dysput[i]son bytwyen Hope and Dyspeyre<...> Marchauntys, þe Lyffe off Seint Cry <...>
 - 6 A reede boke þat Percyvall Robsart gaff m <...> off the Medis off þe Mass, þe Lamentacion <...> off Chylde Ypotis, A Preyer to the Vernycle <...> callyd The Abbeye off þe Holy Gooste <...>
 - 7 Item, in quayerys Tully de Senectute in d <...> wheroff ther is no more cleere wretyn <...>
 - 8 Item, in quayerys Tully or Cypio de Ami <...> leffte wyth William Worcester, valet
 - 9 Item, in quayerys a boke off þe Polecye off In <...>
 - 10 Item, in qwayerys a boke de Sapiencia <...> wherin þe ij parson is liknyd to Sapi <...>
 - 11 Item, a boke de Othea, text and glose, valet <...> in quayerys
- Memorandum, myn olde boke off blasonyngys off a <...>
 Item, the nywe boke portrayed and blasonyd <...>
 Item, a copy off blasonyngys off armys and t <...> names to be fownde by letter
 Item, a boke wyth armys portrayed in paper

Memorandum, my boke of knyghthod and ther-in <...> off making off knyghtys, off justys, off torn <...> fyghtyng in lystys, paces holden by sou <...> and chalengys, statutys off weer and de Regimi <...> valet –

Item, a boke off nyw statutys from Edward <...> the iijj -

The organisation of John Paston II's inventory reflects the anthologising process imposed on the texts of Astley's manuscript as they were copied into Lansdowne. Whilst most of the manuscripts included in Paston's inventory are no longer extant and we cannot know if Ebesham was involved with the production of any more of the works in this collection, the Inventory and *Grete*

²²⁷ The list of works in this table is from Davis's transcription of British Library, MS Additional 34391, f. 26. "<...>" refers to where writing has been lost due to the damage of the right-hand side of the paper. See *PLI*, pp.516-518.

Boke suggest that John Paston II preferred collating works around organising principles (such as authors, genre, or theme), rather than reading works within a more miscellaneous collection. These anthologising principles go some way towards explaining the discrepancies between the bill and the manuscript. Most of the contents of the manuscripts in the inventory seem to be collated around subject matters or genres. Item one, for instance, is a collection focused on bold, heroic kings, warriors and leaders. Item five collates some works of Chaucer, Lydgate and texts mistakenly ascribed to these writers in the fifteenth century.²²⁸ Item Three is ordered by a similar principle of authorship but might more loosely be described as a compilation of romance literature. As discussed above, Lansdowne also seems to have been collated around a central theme: a practical guide to what a knight does when at court or on the battlefield. Even within this manuscript there is a sense of discrete but complementary subdivisions: the coronation and court ceremony texts (ff.2r-9r); the accounts, instructions, and rules for jousts (ff. 9r-83v); a guide to warfare, along with ordinances of war (ff.84r-138r and ff.144r-154v); and a book of governance for kings and princes (ff.155r-199v).²²⁹ The only slight anomaly in this sense of anthology is the rutter (ff. 138r-142r).²³⁰ However, the practical nature of this guide does not appear completely out of place after the final book of *De Re Militari*, which focuses on warfare at sea, or “schippewerre”.²³¹ The turn to ordinances of war after the rutter continues this focus on military combat

²²⁸ Dana M. Symons, “*La Belle Dame sans Mercy*: Introduction,” in *Chaucerian Dream Visions and Complaints*, edited by Dana M. Symons (Kalamazoo, Michigan: Medieval Institute Publications, 2004): <http://www.lib.rochester.edu/camelot/teams/sym4int.htm> - accessed 9th April 2018. Here Symons states that *La Belle Dame sans Mercy* “was frequently attributed to Chaucer until Thomas Tyrwhitt’s 1775-78 edition of *The Canterbury Tales of Chaucer* excluded it from the Chaucer canon, along with other spurious material.” Symons acknowledges the work of Eleanor Prescott Hammond in identifying that “the poem was left out of John Leland’s list of Chaucer’s works, which appeared in his *Life of Chaucer in Commentarii de Scriptoribus Britannicis*, posthumously published in 1709 (Leland died in 1552; Hammond, pp.1,7).” See Hammond, *Chaucer: A Bibliographical Manual*, (New York: Peter Smith, 1908; repr. 1933).

²²⁹ See Appendix, Table I and *SJPGGB*, pp.9-12.

²³⁰ *SJPGGB*, pp.9-12.

²³¹ Book Four, Chapters 31-46 of *De Re Militari* provides the laws of “schippewerre”. See G. A. Lester (ed.), *The Earliest English Translation of Vegetius’ “De Re Militari”*, edited from Oxford MS Bodl. Douce 291, (Heidelberg: Carl Winter, Universitätsverlag, 1988), pp.178-189.

whilst the final text, Lydgate and Burgh's *Secrees of Old Philisoffres*, is more wide-ranging in its advice, perhaps mirroring the wider ethos of the manuscript: a guide to all things that fifteenth-century gentry and aristocracy would consider "Knightly" whilst also mirroring the direct and pragmatic didacticism of *De Re Militari*. Robert Steele describes Lydgate's difficulty in translating his source material, *Secreta Secretorum*, thus:

Considered as literature, the work before us is empty of interest. It would in any case have been difficult to make poetry out of the *Secreta Secretorum*, [...]. [Lydgate's] work is scrappy, ill-ordered, and tedious to a remarkable degree even for him.²³²

The work does, however, provide guidance on how to govern, to gain and maintain a good reputation, on entertaining and maintaining a splendid court, the relationship between secular and clerical power, health, governance in battles, and vanity. Whilst the text itself is a little more miscellaneous in subject matter than the manuscript in which it appears, there are some clear thematic links that sustains the integrity of the anthologising principles at work in Lansdowne.

Not all of these texts are in Ebesham's hand: his work includes items 1-15, 21 and 22, 24 and 25, and 31. This covers the works on the coronation and court ceremonies, many of the jousting texts, *De Re Militari* and *Secrees of Old Philisoffres*. Whilst his bill claims for his work "for the rubrisshyng of all the booke", his hand does not appear outside of those sections for which he was responsible for copying. Nor do the other scribes, especially Scribe D whose work Lester describes as "cramped and ill-planned," appear to follow Ebesham's meticulously neat page layout.²³³ This indicates that the organisation of this manuscript prior to binding was the result of an overseer with a particular vision for this final product, which may have been Ebesham: his bills for the *Grete Boke*, as discussed at the beginning of this chapter, certainly indicate an awareness of the scope of the project perhaps even beyond his own

²³² Robert Steele, ed. *Lydgate and Burgh's Secrees of Old Philisoffres*, EETS es 66 (1894, repr. 1973), xviii.

²³³ *SJPG*, p.19.

work as copyist. The evidence provided by the inventory of books, though, points to John Paston II as the more likely organiser behind the collation of his manuscripts. Items Seven to Eleven are a selection of texts that Paston describes as “in quayerys”.²³⁴ These works are versions of ancient texts of self-governance and include Cicero’s *On Old Age* and “On Friendship” (Items Seven and Eight, respectively).²³⁵ These works might resonate with some of the ancient texts included in the *Grete Boke* (such as *De Re Militari* and Lydgate and Burgh’s translation *Secrees of Old Philisoffres*), but the evident interest in anthologies that appears over the course of the inventory creates an impression that these texts belong in a separate manuscript, one that might be organised around the principle of humanist texts. This overlaps with another potential organising principle in that it engages with some of the literary interests and writings of the household of Sir John Fastolf, so may also denote another route by which Paston got some of his texts. This section of the inventory and the position of the *Epistle* within it is discussed in detail in the following chapter but, for the purposes of understanding the considerations that went into the making of Lansdowne and John Paston II’s preferences as a reader, it would seem that the *Epistle* was intentionally withheld from the *Grete Boke* prior to binding in order to be placed within an anthology of humanistic works. To consider the relationship between the *Epistle* and Lansdowne, to track its movement and how it might *belong* elsewhere in John Paston II’s library is to highlight certain aspects of John Paston II’s reception of the text but it also illuminates the social connections behind this text, its translator, Ebesham, Paston and Astley.

1.4: John Paston II, John Astley, and their East Anglian connections to Stephen Scrope’s *Epistle of Othea*

One of the key questions raised by the similarities between Lansdowne and Pierpont Morgan is how John Paston II and William Ebesham came to have Astley’s manuscript as one of their exemplars. The text that provides the richest

²³⁴ *PLI*, pp.517-518.

²³⁵ *Id.*, p.517.

insight to this question is one that was finally not included in Lansdowne, Stephen Scrope's translation of the *Epistle of Othea*. The circulation of the *Epistle of Othea* in fifteenth-century East Anglia is a dense line of enquiry that raises questions about networks of gentry readers, the kinds of literary activity being undertaken by Stephen Scrope and other members of the Fastolf household, and the reading of French texts within these networks. These questions are explored in the following chapter but, here, this text and its translation by Stephen Scrope highlights possible, hitherto unexplored, connections between Scrope, Astley, and Paston that suggests a possible East Anglian context for the transmission of the texts both into Pierpont Morgan and from that manuscript to Lansdowne.

Stephen Scrope translated Christine de Pisan's text in the 1450s apparently with the intention of presenting it to his step-father, Sir John Fastolf.²³⁶ His translation survives in three manuscripts, none of which are the original copy. Whilst these manuscripts will be discussed in greater detail in the following chapter, my focus, in this instance, is on the inclusion of this text in Astley's manuscript. Bühler noted that the armorial bearings in Pierpont Morgan are missing the Garter, for which Astley was nominated in 1461 or 1462, suggesting that the manuscript must have been copied at some point within the first decade after Scrope finished his translation of Christine de Pisan's work.²³⁷ This indicates an early access to a copy of the translation, which could suggest either a geographical or personal proximity to the original copy. However, in considering the circulation of Scrope's translation between translator, Astley and Paston, it must be noted that the other two extant manuscripts, Bath, Longleat House, MS 253 and Cambridge, St. John's College H. 5 were also copied

²³⁶ Curt F. Bühler, (ed.), *The Epistle of Othea, translated from the French Text of Christine de Pisan by Stephen Scrope*, EETS os 264, (1970), xi. See also George Warner (ed.), *The Epistle of Othea to Hector or the Boke of Knyghthode. Translated from the French of Christine de Pisan, with a Dedication to Sir John Fastolf, K. G. by Stephen Scrope, Esquire*, (London: Nichols, 1904), xxv-xxxiii.

²³⁷ Bühler, *Othea*, xv. For the dates of Astley's nomination to the Garter, see George E. Cokayne, *The Complete Peerage of England, Scotland, Ireland, Great Britain and the United Kingdom* [ed. Vicary Gibbs] (London, 1910-), ii. p.543 (*in* Appendix B. The Order of the Garter, pp. 527-96), quoted in *Ibid*.

in the mid-fifteenth century and the only known owner of these manuscripts, the Bramshott family, who owned St. John's H.5 were not an East Anglian family.²³⁸ Furthermore, the surviving dedications in these manuscripts point towards a courtly circulation of this text. Longleat 253 has a copy of the original dedication to Fastolf; St. John's H. 5 is dedicated to Humphrey Stafford, Duke of Buckingham (d. 1460); and in Pierpont Morgan the text is dedicated to an unidentified "hye princesse".²³⁹ These dedications, which do not relate to either the known owners or the likely owners of these manuscripts (none of which are luxurious enough to have been presentations copies to those people identified in their dedications) indicate that the extant manuscripts are at, the very least, two generations removed from Scrope's original translation for Fastolf. Although, they may each be the immediate descendants of three distinct copies made by Scrope with his tailoring of the dedication to speak to a different patron. Whilst I am about to explore the possibility that Paston acquired his exemplar for the *Grete Boke* through an East Anglian textual network (and highlight some hitherto unexplored connections between Sir John Astley and the Paston family), there remains the very distinct possibility that the exemplar was obtained through courtly connection situated in London and I will go on to look at John Paston II and William Ebesham's engagement with the London manuscript trade in the next section of this chapter.

The arms of Sir John Astley appear throughout Pierpont Morgan and his career at court is summarised in the catalogue description of his manuscript:

²³⁸ Bühler, *Othea*, xiv-xviii.

²³⁹ *Id.*, xiv-xvii. Douglas Gray, "A Fulle Wyse Gentyll-Woman of Fraunce': *The Epistle of Othea* and Later Medieval English Literary Culture,' in Jocelyn Wogan-Browne, et al. (eds), *Medieval Women – Texts and Contexts in Late Medieval Britain: Essays for Felicity Riddy* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2000), p.237. For the identification of St. John's H. 5 with the Bramshotts family see, J. Hughes, "Stephen Scrope and the Circle of Sir John Fastolf: Moral and Intellectual Outlooks," in Christopher Harper Bill and Ruth Harvey (eds), *Medieval Knighthood IV: Papers from the fifth Strawberry Hill Conference*, (Woodbridge: Boydell, 1990), p.134.

He was elected a Knight of the Garter in 1461; Victualer for Edward IVth's castle of Alnwick, 1463. Present at the funeral of Edward IV in 1483. Died between Michaelmas and 8 Nov. 1486.²⁴⁰

Harold Arthur Dillon adds that Astley was "the son of Sir Thomas Astley, knight, of Nailston, county Leicester."²⁴¹ In 1461, after the restoration of Edward IV to the throne, Astley was given an annual payment of £40 from the king that was paid from the Manor of Heytesbury, Wiltshire, former property of the attained Sir Robert Moleyns, the same Lord Moleyns who had attacked the Paston property of Gresham in 1448.²⁴² In 1483 Astley is recorded as one of the four knights who bore a "riche canapé of clothe imperiall fringed with golde and blewe silke" at the funeral of Edward IV.²⁴³ What evidence we have about the life of Sir John Astley indicates that he held a respected place within the court of Edward IV and that he was financially rewarded for his loyalty to the House of York. Whilst these accounts show something of Astley's role within the court and his loyalties within the Wars of the Roses they present him as a knight whose activities primarily took place in London, Wiltshire and Leicester and who was circulating within the same social networks as the Paston family outside of East Anglia.

The biography of Astley and the documents of the Paston family do not reveal the ways in which Astley and John Paston II were acquainted and without the survival of their manuscripts there would be no evidence to suggest they were acquainted at all. We might presume that John Paston III attended the funeral of Edward IV and that, prior to this, both he and his brother, John Paston II, would have attended many of the same court ceremonies as Astley. However, we may be able to trace a more direct link which seems like to have underwritten the relationship between the two manuscripts.

²⁴⁰ Pierpont Morgan Library, Curatorial Description, "M.775":
<http://corsair.morganlibrary.org/msdescr/BBM0775a.pdf> - accessed 8th May 2018,
 p.1.

²⁴¹ Dillon, "Ordinances of Chivalry," p.1

²⁴² *Ibid.*

²⁴³ *Ibid.*

The Paston Letters mention an “Asteles”, although it is not clear if this is “Sir John Astley” and, given the accounts of his life focussing on his activities in London and Wiltshire, the context of this name makes the identification of this as Sir John unlikely. On 10th November 1465 John Wymondham writes to John Paston I relaying the sad news of the death of two infants at “Asteles” and urging John to send Margaret, who appears to have been living there, to live with the Wymondham’s “on-to soch tyme as ye shuld a be otherwise avised”.²⁴⁴ In November 1465, Margaret’s two eldest sons, John Paston II (23 in 1465) and John Paston III (21) were helping the family to recover from the Duke of Suffolk’s siege of Hellesdon and Drayton. She also had two children aged 17 (Margery) and 15 (Edmund) as well as three children aged 10, 8 and 7 (Anne, Walter, and William III, respectively). The news of the infant deaths would be particularly alarming to someone with a young family, but the letter is, for the purposes of this study, more significant for indicating that Margaret appears to have been living within the household of an Astley following the loss of Hellesdon and Drayton and whilst John Paston I was still in the Fleet prison. The wider extant corpus of letters show that Margaret, with the exception of her visit to see her husband in the Fleet in the summer of 1465, did not leave East Anglia. This, then, appears to discount “Asteles” as being the household of the Sir John Astley who commissioned Pierpont Morgan. However, the afterlife of the Pierpont Morgan manuscript and the work of Francis Blomefield bring to the foreground an East Anglian manor, Melton Constable, owned by a branch of the Astley family.

The curatorial description of Pierpont Morgan records that the manuscript passed from Astley’s heirs to Edward VI, when Prince of Wales [...]. It was returned to the Astley family, possibly by presentation of Queen Elizabeth to Sir John Astley [...] or by James I to Sir John Astley of the next generation [...]. The manuscript remained in the Astley family until

²⁴⁴ *PLII*, p.312.

sold on 20 July 1931 by Sir A. E. D. Astley of Melton-Constable, 11th Bt.
And 21st Lord Hastings.²⁴⁵

This “return” of the manuscript to the Astley family of Melton Constable indicates that it was this branch of the family that gifted it to Edward VI, which presents the possibility that the Sir John Astley who commissioned the copying of this manuscript held a manor in Norfolk, approximately eleven miles southwest of the Pastons’ manor at Gresham. Francis Blomefield, in his description of Melton Constable in his *Topographical History of the County of Norfolk*, presents the fracturing of the different branches of the Astley family with a Sir Thomas Astley, who “appears to be a knight in the 26th of Henry III” marrying “Joan, the daughter of Ernald de Bois, a person of great eminency in Leicestershire [...] and by the said Joan, (as I take it) had Andrew Lord Astley, from whom descended the eldest branch of this family in Warwickshire.”²⁴⁶ Sir Thomas Astley’s second wife was Edith de Meauton, by whom he had “Thomas de Estlee, Stephen, and Ralph.”²⁴⁷ Edith was the daughter of Peter Constable of Mealton and was, with her two sisters, co-heir to the family estates after the death of her brother, Geoffrey.²⁴⁸ Edith appears to have inherited the manor of Melton Constable. She held the property for the duration of her life but, “[i]n the 18th of the said King Edward I[,] Edith de Astley granted to Stephen, her son, all her inheritance in this town” and a number of other properties that had formed her share of the Melton inheritance.²⁴⁹ Thus the two marriages of Sir Thomas Astley show the creation of the two branches of the Astley family and their links with both Leicester and Norfolk. That the Crown returned the manuscript to the

²⁴⁵ Pierpont Morgan Library, Curatorial Description, “M.775”, p.1. In his article of 1847, Albert Way records the manuscript as being in the possession of Lord Hastings at Melton Constable but the focus of his study is a description of the armour and rules used in the different types of combat described in this manuscript and does not consider the biography of Astley or the relationship between Pierpont Morgan and Lansdowne in any detail. See Albert Way, “Illustrations of Medieval Manners and Costume from Original Documents. Jousts of Peace, Tournaments, and Judicial Combats,” in *The Archaeological Journal*, 4 (1847), pp. 226-239.

²⁴⁶ Francis Blomefield, *An Essay towards a Topographical History of the County of Norfolk, containing a description of the Towns, Villages, and Hamlets, with the foundations of Monasteries, Churches, Chapels, Chantries, and other Religious Buildings* (London: W. Bulmer, 1808), p.417.

²⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁸ *Id.*, p.416.

²⁴⁹ *Id.*, p.417.

Astleys of Melton Constable presents a possibility that Sir John Astley was from this Norfolk branch of the family. Furthermore, Blomefield's description of this estate records links between the Astleys and the Pastons that have previously gone unnoticed by scholars of these two manuscripts.

Francis Blomefield records two connections to the Paston family:

In the 18th of *Richard II*. *Thomas de Astley*, son and heir of Sir *Thomas*, granted in trust, this manor, to Sir *Robert Carbonel*, and sealed with the cinquefoil, in a bordure ingrailed; and after, in the 3d of *Henry V*. to Sir *Simon Felbrigg*, Sir *Robert de Berney*, and Sir *Edmund de Oldhall*, this, with other manors, and was living in the year 1422, when he and *Isabel* his wife presented to this church.²⁵⁰

In the 7th year of *Henry VII*. *Thomas Spicer*, &c. at the instance of *Thomas Astley*, Esq. son and heir of *John Astley*, late of *Melton*, confirmed to the said *Thomas* and *Elizabeth* his wife, one of the daughters of *William Clipesby*, late of *Owby*, Esq. deceased, the manors of *Langham* and *Hindringham* aforesaid, dated *May 2*; witnesses, Sir *Henry Heydon*, *Edward Paston*, *John Clipesby*, Esq. &c.²⁵¹

In these two accounts we see a number of names that appear in the letters of the Paston family which would indicate that the Astleys and the Pastons certainly moved within the same social networks. Moreover, we can also see that "in the 3d of *Henry V*" the manor of Melton Constable was granted in trust to three men, one of whom was Robert de Berney, uncle of Margaret Paston, neè Mautby.²⁵² Edward Paston of the "7th year of Henry VII" (c.1492) does not appear to be one of the members of the family associated with the letters or documents and may be a member of another branch of the family. However, a few years prior to this account, "probably in 1480" (according to Davis), Edmond Paston II, brother of John Paston II, married Katherine Spelman, the

²⁵⁰ *Id.*, p.419.

²⁵¹ *Ibid.*

²⁵² Colin Richmond, *The Paston Family in the Fifteenth Century, The First Phase* (Cambridge: CUP, 1990), p.137.

widow of William Clippesby, making the Paston family kin to the Astleys.²⁵³ Of course, this second account is of an event that took place after the creation of Pierpont Morgan and of Lansdowne. A Sir John Astley is described by Blomefield, the son of the Thomas Astley in the account of the “18th of Richard II” and the father of the Thomas Astley of the account of the “7th year of Henry VII”. This Sir John Astley is recorded as dying in 1475, with his will being proved 23rd June of that year.²⁵⁴ This is not, therefore the same Sir John Astley as the commissioner of the Pierpont Morgan manuscript, who was present at the funeral of Edward IV in 1483 and died in 1486.²⁵⁵

The evidence surrounding the connections between the Astleys and the Pastons does not resolve any of the questions regarding the links between Lansdowne and Pierpont Morgan; however, in recovering the links between the Astley family and the manor of Melton Constable we can see that the Paston family acted as trustees and witnesses for the Norfolk branch of the Astley family during the fifteenth century. Given the dates of the Sir John Astley of Melton Constable, he cannot be the Sir John Astley of Pierpont Morgan, and the curatorial description posits that the manuscript was given to Edward VI by way of “Joan, Baroness Astley, first cousin and heiress of Sir John Astley” who was the great-grandmother of Sir Henry Grey who was, in turn, married to Frances Brandon, daughter of the Duke of Suffolk and niece of Henry VIII.²⁵⁶ It was returned to the Astley family, as the curator’s description posits, “possibly by presentation of Queen Elizabeth to Sir John Astley (first cousin, once removed, to Elizabeth through his mother, an aunt of Anne Boleyn).”²⁵⁷ Whatever the route, the manuscript came into the Melton Constable branch of the family during the sixteenth century and remained there until it was sold on 20th July 1931 by Sir A.E.D. Astley of Melton-Constable, 11th Baronet and 21st Lord Hastings. What is known of the fifteenth-century East Anglian connections to the creation and circulation of this manuscript are that Sir John Astley of

²⁵³ *PLI*, p.lix.

²⁵⁴ Blomefield, *Topographical History*, p.419.

²⁵⁵ Pierpont Morgan Library, Curatorial Description, “M.775”, p.1.

²⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

Pierpont Morgan owned a copy of Stephen Scrope's translation of the *Epistle of Othea* and the familial links with Melton Constable and the links of the Paston family with that household provide the glimpse of a possible point of intersection within the manuscript networks of Sir John Astley, John Paston II and Stephen Scrope. The evidence, at the very least, presents a possibility that John Paston II borrowed (or encountered) Pierpont Morgan through his social networks within East Anglia rather than at the court.

Whether Paston obtained his copy of the *Epistle* through an East Anglian social network or not, its movement from the *Grete Boke* to another section of his Inventory of English Books does record part of the network discussed above. The *Epistle*, as previously mentioned, appears in a section of the inventory of English books in which the items are "in quayerys":²⁵⁸

- 7 Item, in quayerys Tully de Senectute in d <...> wheroff ther is no more cleere wretyn <...>
- 8 Item, in quayerys Tully or Cypio de Ami <...> leffte wyth William Worcester, valet
- 9 Item, in quayerys a boke off þe Polecye off In <...>
- 10 Item, in qwayerys a boke de Sapiencia <...> wherin þe ij parson is liknyd to Sapi <...>
- 11 Item, a boke de Othea, text and glose, valet <...> in quayerys

Whilst I have posited that there is a thematic link between the subject matter of these items that, were these works to be bound together than the resulting manuscript would underpin an anthology of advisory works, the mention of William Worcester in this section of the inventory further promotes the literary connections between John Paston II and the Fastolf household. Worcester's annotation, translation and composition of texts within the Fastolf household (and after the death of Sir John Fastolf himself) is a distinctive and illuminating site of activity within the Paston's textual network and will be discussed in detail in the following chapter. Here I wish only momentarily to highlight a point that we will explore properly in the following chapter too: that this section of the inventory reasserts a personal connection with Stephen Scrope, a connection that is perhaps obscured through John Paston II's and William

²⁵⁸ *PLI*, pp.517.

Ebesham's likely use of John Astley's manuscript as the exemplar for their copy of the *Epistle*.

1.5: William Ebesham, the Pastons, and the "Grete Boke"

The letter, bill and extant manuscript associated with John Paston II's patronage of the scribe, William Ebesham acts as a record of the collaborative relationship underpinning the copying of the "Grete Boke". As we have seen, the reordering of the texts from the Pierpont Morgan codex had been conceived prior to Ebesham's letter of 1468, but this sense that we are dealing with anthologised manuscripts is also evident in Paston's inventory of books, and there is no evidence to suggest that Ebesham worked on any of the other items recorded there. The "Grete Boke", and the documents which surround its creation, therefore provide an important, and rare, insight into both the commissioning and reading habits of John Paston II. They also provide an equally rare impression of the scribal activity and habits of William Ebesham. Whilst we are fortunate that other manuscripts survive in which Ebesham's hand has been identified (see Appendix, Table III), the only surviving correspondence of this scribe are the documents addressed to John Paston II. Comparing his work for the Pastons with his other extant manuscripts reveals that his work for this family was different from his normal commissions, both in terms of the kinds of work he copied but also in terms of where he copied this works. The Paston letters provide information of the only known instance of Ebesham appearing to copy works whilst residing outside of London.²⁵⁹

There is little information about William Ebesham's life but what the extant examples of his work and the letters of the Paston family indicate has been summarised by Doyle:

He was of good family and education but for a time at least reduced in circumstances and obliged to resort to the Sanctuary of Westminster, where, after a period of service to the Pastons and one or two visits to Norfolk, he returned as an ordinary resident and pursued the same

²⁵⁹ Doyle, "William Ebesham," p.321.

means of livelihood, amply employed by the abbey itself as well as by inmates of the community and perhaps the neighbourhood too [...].²⁶⁰

Ebesham only appears in the Paston documents on three occasions: in the letter and bill that have already been discussed and as a figure mentioned in a letter from John Paston II to Margaret Paston, written in 1469.²⁶¹ Nonetheless, these few, brief, appearances, when combined with the additional evidence of the extant manuscript he produced for his patron John Paston II, Lansdowne, and in comparison with those other surviving codices in which his hand appears, can give us an impression of the extent of his influence on the literary culture of at least one of the family members and, in turn, of the influence that family had on his career.

In order to understand how his work with the Paston family, and especially John Paston II, differed from his usual commissions we must first establish, as much as the evidence allows, the sorts of manuscripts he was copying during his time in Westminster. To this end, Appendix, Table III is a tabulation of Doyle's survey of the surviving codices in which Ebesham's hand appears (with the exception of Lansdowne, the contents of which is in Table I of the appendix). Doyle's survey of these manuscripts indicates that Ebesham's work was primarily produced within and in part for Westminster Abbey or those within the sanctuary of Westminster. The majority of Ebesham's extant manuscripts contain either devotional works or chronicles. Westminster Abbey, Muniments Book I is a register of title deeds and Longleat House, MS 38 contains objections and arguments regarding the privileges and sanctuary of Westminster Abbey.²⁶² The content of British Library, Lansdowne 285, seems a departure from his usual work and we only find one overlap between the content of the Paston manuscript and another of Ebesham's commissions: "The maner and fourme of the coronacion of kynges and quenes of England" also appears on fols. 21r-30v of British Library, Additional MS 10106.

²⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁶¹ *PLI*, p.409 and *PLII*, pp.386-7, 391-2.

²⁶² Doyle, "William Ebesham," pp.308-320.

Doyle's work on the bindings of these extant manuscripts also indicates that on occasion Ebesham was using a binder employed by Caxton.²⁶³ Doyle identified British Library, Additional 10106, as being bound by Caxton's binder and there is a possibility that Westminster Abbey Library, MS 29 was also bound in Caxton's establishment. This survey establishes Ebesham as a Westminster scribe, producing works for the Abbey itself and involved with London's Westminster-based book industry.

Linne Mooney has characterised Ebesham as one of a number of London scribes who "did not work in commercial scriptoria and who did not only produce literary manuscripts but who appear to have held day jobs as scribes and clerks (whether freelance or employed directly) in London or Westminster."²⁶⁴ Whilst we do not know how John Paston II came to be acquainted with Ebesham, there is a traceable precedent for his use of a London scribe to copy vernacular material. Richard Franceys, a London scribe of the second half of the fifteenth century, produced "English and French vernacular literary texts for various patrons, including Sir John Fastolf and Fastolf's secretary William Worcester."²⁶⁵ Between 1438 and 1454 Fastolf's primary residence was "Fastolf Place" in Southwark and it is, therefore, unsurprising that he employed a London scribe. Whilst we turn to Fastolf and his network of manuscripts, scribes, illuminators, and translators in Chapter Three of this thesis, this brief introduction to his interaction with the London book industry appears to echo Paston's. Fastolf's engagement with this industry illustrates Mooney's view of the varied work undertaken by these scribes. Luket Nantron, a scribe originally from Paris, worked closely with "Fastolf's London-based receiver Christopher Hasson" but also produced the copy of *Basset's Chronicle* in Fastolf's extant

²⁶³ *Id.* pp.315 and 318.

²⁶⁴ Linne R. Mooney, "Vernacular Literary Manuscripts and their Scribes," in *The Production of Books in England, 1350-1500*, eds. Alexandra Gillespie and Daniel Wakelin, (Cambridge: CUP, 2011), p.201.

²⁶⁵ *Id.*, p.206. Catherine Nall, "Ricardus Franciscus writes for William Worcester," in *The Journal of the Early Book Society for the Study of Manuscripts and Printing History*, 11 (2008), p.207.

manuscript, London College of Arms, MS M.9.²⁶⁶ Deborah Thorpe describes this as an “isolated event” in his primarily “practical “clerkly” duties associated with the management of Fastolf’s properties”.²⁶⁷ Much of the Ebesham’s extant work places him quite firmly within this London book industry but his work for the Pastons appears as something a little different, a kind of scribe-patron relationship that, if perhaps only briefly, mirrors some of the relationships between Fastolf and his scribes, and included the copying of commerical, vernacular, and literary work and conducting “clerkly duties”.

Ebesham’s employment by the Pastons included both a figurative and a literal departure from his usual activities as he moved from London to Norfolk to conduct some of his commission from the Paston family. There are two letters within the corpus of Paston documents that demonstrate Ebesham’s works for the family took him away from Westminster, bringing him into their East Anglian households. A letter from John Paston II’s letter to his mother, (written in October 1469) shows Ebesham copying further (unidentified) manuscripts or booklets for Paston,

*Item, iff Ebysham come nat hom wyth myn oncle W. þat than ye sende me þe ij Frenshe bookys þat he scholde haue wretyn, þat he may wright them here.*²⁶⁸

The postscript to this letter indicates that John Paston II was in London whilst his mother was in Norfolk: it would seem that Ebesham was in the Paston’s home county rather than in London. Furthermore, a letter from William Paston II to Margaret Paston places William Ebesham “at Norwich the vijth day of Aprill” in 1469 as Davis has identified that letter as being in Ebesham’s hand.²⁶⁹ From these letters we can see that Ebesham’s work for the Pastons saw him

²⁶⁶ Deborah Thorpe, “Documents and Books: A Case Study of Luket Nantron and Geoffrey Spirleng as Fifteenth-Century Administrators and Textwriters,” in *Journal of the Early Book Society for the Study of Manuscript and Printing History*, 14 (2011), pp.196 and 206.

²⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p.205.

²⁶⁸ *PLI*, p.409.

²⁶⁹ *Id.*, p.170. Whilst the letter includes the day and month in which it was written the year is dated by Davis based on the evidence of John Paston II’s letter written in October 1469.

working as a scribe for other members of the family and that such duties went beyond the copying of legal documents and literary works to include more day-to-day scribal activities, such as writing letters for the family. However, whilst this limited evidence indicates that his primary connection with the family whilst in Norfolk was William Paston II, being in his company in both April and October of 1469, he may have also been working on the *Grete Boke* for John Paston II. Both Doyle and Lester suggest the possibility that these “ij Frenshe bookys” were either part of what would become Lansdowne or might have been the source material for parts of that manuscript.²⁷⁰ Whilst Doyle does state that John Paston II may be referring to work undertaken by Ebesham that was separate from the *Grete Boke*, the bill and letter do refer to a range of other tasks completed by the scribe for his patron, and Doyle highlights that ff.25-46 and 143-54 are partly in French, with ff.47-58 and 59-82 entirely in French.²⁷¹ These sections, though, are not solely in Ebesham’s hand: f.43r has an addition to Ebesham’s work in the hand of Scribe D; ff.43v-47v and 144r-153v are in the hand of Scribe C; ff.59-82v are in the hand of Scribe B.²⁷² Lester suggests that whilst the “ij Frenshe bookys” may refer to quire e of Lansdowne, which contains items 21 and 22, the challenge between John Chalons and Louis de Beul and the *pas d’armes*, the letter might equally refer to works on which this section of the *Grete Boke* would be based.

Alternatively, the two French books might have contained the source material for the three items L21-3, for, although the last of these is in a different hand, the uniformity of the paper suggest that the work was deputed by Ebesham. In that case, one of the books would presumably have supplied L21-2, and the other L23.²⁷³

These theories seem plausible and, given that the communication between Ebesham and John Paston II over the course of 1468 and 1469 focuses on legal documents and the *Grete Boke*, it does seem unlikely that these were items destined for a separate manuscript. However, here we do encounter the

²⁷⁰ Doyle, “William Ebesham,” p.304 and *SJPGB*, p.40.

²⁷¹ Doyle, “William Ebesham,” p.304.

²⁷² *SJPGB*, p.16.

²⁷³ *Id.*, p.40.

limitations of “short-hand” references in the Pastons’ letters and in John Paston II’s inventory. In October 1465 Margaret Paston had an inventory written of the goods stolen from Hellesdon and Drayton following the attacks lead by the Duke of Suffolk.²⁷⁴ In this document she lists amongst “Ser John Pastounys gere hadde owt of þe Chaumbre” “a boke of Freynsh”.²⁷⁵ We do not know which texts were included in this manuscript and John Paston II’s inventory does not provide further illumination, either because it is his “Inventory off Englysshe bokis” or because, much like in the bill, letter and inventory, he does not provide a full account of the contents of his manuscripts.²⁷⁶ We may infer from the title of his inventory that John Paston II had created similar records for his collection of French and Latin books and such a hypothesis means that, as plausible as Doyle and Lester’s suggestions are, the argument that the “ij Frenshe bookys” were intended for Lansdowne can only be accepted with considerable caution.

Given the extant manuscripts of Ebesham’s hand one might feasibly assume that most of his work was copied from the other manuscripts within the library of Westminster Abbey. In the production of more “literary” works for John Paston II the means by which Ebesham came into possession of exemplars is unclear. As mentioned previously, it would appear that either Ebesham or Paston came into contact with Sir John Astley and his manuscript (Pierpont Morgan) from which was copied most of the content for the “Grete Boke”. One would assume that the contents of the two French books also came via the borrowing of a manuscript from an acquaintance or third party (possibly from the library of Sir John Fastolf, whose library of French books will be discussed in the following chapter). His time with the Paston family shows the diversity to be found in work as a freelance scribe, but it also shows the influence London had on the content of John Paston II’s library. We cannot talk of Paston as a “Norfolk reader”: he was influenced by his familiarity with the London book trade; picking up texts from Caxton’s workshop, possibly even finding Ebesham

²⁷⁴ *PLI*, p.324-332.

²⁷⁵ *Id.*, p.328.

²⁷⁶ *Id.*, p.516.

through the scribe's connection with that establishment. Of course, we cannot, conversely, talk of Paston as a "London reader" either: so many of the works owned by Paston come from Norfolk writers or are circulated amongst the members of his Norfolk network of kinsmen and friends. Rather, in the movement of Ebesham and Paston between Norfolk and London we find the circulation of a literary culture not bound by geography but by personal connections.

1.6: Conclusion

The debate surrounding the links between Lansdowne and Pierpont Morgan has been settled but reappraising key points in these arguments, in light of the full extent of the combination of the evidence that surrounds these manuscripts, their commissioners and the scribe, William Ebesham, presents further insights in John Paston II interests and concerns as a commissioner of manuscripts.²⁷⁷ Doyle's assessment of Lansdowne and its relationship to the manuscript described in Ebesham's bill highlights the process of creating Paston's manuscript:

Item, for vij quairs of the grete boke wherein is conteyned the iij^d parte
of the seide boke, I wote wele, for the remenaunt will be in fyve
xiiijs.²⁷⁸

[Ebesham's] forecast that the "remanent" would be in five [parts], albeit approximate, must mean not only that the work was still incomplete but also that at least as much again is unaccounted for. This is borne out by the greater detail of the bill, in which charges for twice as many quires appear, yet not all.²⁷⁹

We begin to infer from the bill that the *Grete Boke* was the product of a collaborative effort between scribe and commissioner, with the suggestion that John Paston II was closely overseeing the project. Similarly, the movement of the *Epistle of Othea* over the course of the writing of the bill, the copying of the manuscript, and the binding of Lansdowne supports this growing impression

²⁷⁷ Doyle, "William Ebesham," pp.299-307. *SJPGB*.

²⁷⁸ *PLII*, p.387.

²⁷⁹ Doyle, "William Ebesham," p.301.

that the “Grete Boke” was a flexible work-in-progress for John Paston II. The absence of this text from Lansdowne gave scholars such as Gairdner and Bühler understandable pause in accepting this manuscript as the “Grete Boke” but, when the text and the “Grete Boke” are viewed within the wider context of Paston’s inventory of English books, we can see some of the possibilities as to why this text may have been moved. In mapping the journey of the *Epistle* out of the “Grete Boke” and into the section of the inventory marked out as being “in quayerys” we are presented with an impression of the anthologising principles at work in John Paston II’s manuscripts. By the time Paston writes his inventory, the “Grete Boke” has become his “boke off knyghthode”, a courtesy book, whilst the *Epistle of Othea* seems destined for a manuscript containing generically similar texts of slightly more rhetorical sophistication that appeared to demonstrate cultural links with those who were once members of the Fastolf household.

Section Two: John Paston II's Inventory of English Books

Norman Davis identified BL MS Additional 43491 f.26 as being “unquestionably” in the hand of John Paston II.²⁸⁰ The document is headed with the following title:

The Inventory off Englysshe bokis off Joh[...]
made þe v daye off Novembre A^o r.r. E. iiij^{ti} [...]²⁸¹

Unfortunately, the document has been burnt and a thin strip on the right-hand side is missing, resulting in the loss of some words and in others being obscured by the scorch-marks. Davis suggested that about an inch of original document is missing from its width, with it now measuring 125 (irregular) x 175 mm.²⁸²

This damage has meant that whilst, for the most part, this document offers a wealth of information about the English texts owned by John Paston II, some information has been lost: the names of the borrowers of John II's copy of *Troilus and Criseyde* are only partially represented (see Item Two in the table below); titles of texts are missing key words by which we might otherwise be able more confidently to identify them (for example, the elided “The Med [...]” of Item Three); and the year in which the document was created is also now lost. Evidently it must have been written prior to John Paston II's death in November 1479,²⁸³ while the earliest possible date for the creation of the inventory of English books is determined by Item Four, “a boke jn preente off þe Pleye of þe [...],” which is almost certainly Caxton's *The Game and Playe of the Chesse*.²⁸⁴ Davis dates Caxton's first edition of this work to 1475, although, in his epilogue to the first edition, Caxton states that it was “fynysshid the last day of marche

²⁸⁰ *PLI*, pp.516-518, with Davis' identification of John Paston II's on p.516.

²⁸¹ *Id.*, p.516.

²⁸² *Ibid.*

²⁸³ On 29th October 1479 John Paston II wrote to Margaret Paston, in which he states that he had been in London a fortnight “wheroff the first iiij days I was in suche feere off the syknesse”. *Id.*, p.515. In his note to letter 383, Davis states that “[t]he writ to the escheator requiring an inquisition to be held is dated 30 November; the record of the inquisition itself is lost – *Inq.p.m*, 20 Edward IV, no 15. Fenn gives the date of death as 15 November, but cites no authority.” *Id.*, p.617.

²⁸⁴ This identification is suggested by Davis, *id.*, p.517.

the yer of our lord god a. thousand four hundred and lxxiiii.”²⁸⁵ This, as William Blades suggested, may well refer to the completion of the translation rather than the print, and William Axon, pointing to Caxton’s own account of the translation of the work whilst he “was resident in brudgys in the counte of Flaunders”, notes that “in the Low Countries at that time the year commenced on Easter-day; this in 1474 fell on April 10th, thus giving, as the day of the conclusion of the translation, 31 March 1475.”²⁸⁶ Such evidence suggests that John Paston II wrote his inventory of English books on the 5th November in one of the years between 1475 and 1479.

The document records the contents of twelve books (eleven manuscripts and one “jn preent”) as well as five texts that are “in quayerys”.²⁸⁷ It also includes (or now acts as a partial record for) the names of people to whom Paston lent his manuscripts or from whom he borrowed them. The density and significance of this document is such that I here present Norman Davis’ transcription of the Inventory of English Books:²⁸⁸

- 1 A boke had off myn ostesse at þe George <...> off þe Dethe off Arthur begynyng at Cassab <...> Warwyk, Kyng Richard Cure delyon, a croni <...> to Edwarde þe iij, pric-
- 2 Item, a boke of Troylus whyche William Bra <...> hathe hadde neer x yer and lent it to Da <...> Wyngfelde, et jbi ego vidi; valet
- 3 Item, a blak boke wyth The Legende off Lad <...> saunce Mercye, þe Parlement off Byr <...> Glasse, Palatyse and Scitacus, The Med<...>, the Greene Knyght, valet
- 4 Item, a boke jn preente off þe Pleye of þe <...>.
- 5 Item, a boke lent Midelton, and therin is Bele Da <...> Mercy, þe Parlement off Byrdys, Balade <...> off Guy and Colbronde, Off the Goos,

²⁸⁵ William Caxton, “The eight chaptire and the last of the fourth book of the epilogacion and recapitulation of this book,” in William E. A. Axon (ed.), *Game and Playe of the Chesse. 1474. A verbatim reprint of the first edition.* (London: Elliot Stock, 1883).

²⁸⁶ William Blades, *The Life and Typography of William Caxton, England’s First Printer* (London: Joseph Lilly, 1861), p.48. For the quotation from the prologue to Caxton’s second edition of the *Game and Playe of the Chesse* see Axon, ed. *Game and Playe of the Chesse.* p.3. George Painter repeated this theory in George Painter, *William Caxton. A Quincentenary Biography of England’s First Printer,* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1976), pp.59-71. It should be noted that whilst Blades, Axon, Painter and Davis take the date of 1475, Jenny Adams, in the most recent edition of this text, refers to the text’s being printed in 1474: Jenny Adams, “Introduction”, *The Game and Playe of the Chesse* (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 2009).

²⁸⁷ *PLI*, pp.517-8.

²⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

- þe <...> þe Dysput[i]son bytwyen Hope and Dyspeyre<...> Marchauntys,
þe Lyffe off Seint Cry <...>
- 6 A reede boke þat Percyvall Robsart gaff m <...> off the Medis off þe Mass,
þe Lamentacion <...> off Chylde Ypotis, A Preyer to the Vernycle <...>
callyd The Abbeye off þe Holy Gooste <...>
- 7 Item, in quayerys Tully de Senectute in d <...> wheroff ther is no more
cleere wretyn <...>
- 8 Item, in quayerys Tully or Cypio de Ami <...> leffte wyth William
Worcester, valet
- 9 Item, in quayerys a boke off þe Polecye off In <...>
- 10 Item, in qwayerys a boke de Sapiencia <...> wherin þe ij parson is liknyd
to Sapi <...>
- 11 Item, a boke de Othea, text and glose, valet <...> in quayerys
Memorandum, myn olde boke off blasonyngys off a <...>
Item, the nywe boke portrayed and blasonyd <...>
Item, a copy off blasonyngys off armys and t <...> names to be fownde by
letter
Item, a boke wyth armys portrayed in paper

Memorandum, my boke of knyghthod and ther-in <...> off making off
knyghtys, off justys, off torn <...> fyghtyng in lystys, paces holden by sou <...>
and chalengys, statutys off weer and de Regimi <...> valet -

Item, a boke off nyw statutys from Edward <...> the iiij -

The inventory offers a remarkably rich and detailed window onto John Paston II as an owner of manuscripts. This compact document contains a variety and complexity of materials that can be brought together in numerous ways to explore such things as the content and organisation of his library, leading to an understanding of what *kind* of library had been created by John Paston II. We can also place this document in comparison to similar extant inventories of Paston's contemporaries to survey the circulation of these works amongst the gentry of East Anglia and to gauge how the composition of both Paston's individual manuscripts and their inclusion within this collection can illuminate specific details and peculiarities. As both an illustration of the richness contained by this document as a context for investigations carried out in this section of the thesis I here present a brief description of the texts within these manuscripts (or of the texts that seem most likely to be indicated where the title or iteration is unclear).

Identifications of the texts listed in John Paston II's Inventory of English Books

Item 1:

i) "þe Dethe off Arthur begynyng at Cassab <...>"

Lester, in his own attempt to suggest the identity of this partially obscured and allusive title, wrote that this was

probably an extract from (or fragment of) a chronicle with the British king Cassivellaunus (or Cassibellaunus, i.e. Bellinus, alias Cymbeline) and ending at the death of Arthur. Possible candidates are the *Chronicle* of Robert of Gloucester (which uses the form *Cassibel*), that of Robert Manning of Brunne (which uses *Cassibolon*), and the prose *Brut* (which uses *Cassibalam*).²⁸⁹

As will be discussed in the final section of Chapter Two of this thesis, it has also been suggested that this may have been one of Malory's Arthurian works.

ii) "Warwyk"

This is most likely to be a version of the story of Guy of Warwick, which circulated in various forms. Of the extant forms there is the Stanzaic Guy and Couplet Guy which both survive in National Library of Scotland, Advocates' MS 19.2.1 (the Auchinleck manuscript). Tales of Guy of Warwick also survive in CUL MS Ff.2.38 and Cambridge, Caius College MS 107.²⁹⁰ It is unclear whether the Pastons read any of these particular versions of the tale. There is evidence that the Caius manuscript came to Norfolk and was in the possession of the Knyvett family, who were known by the Pastons.²⁹¹ The TEAMS introduction to

²⁸⁹ G. A. Lester, "The Books of a Fifteenth-Century English Gentleman, Sir John Paston," in *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen*, 88.2 (1987), p.203.

²⁹⁰ Julius Zupitza (ed.), *The Romance of Guy of Warwick: The Second or 15th-century Version, edited from the paper MS. Ff. 2. 38 in the University Library, Cambridge*, EETS es 25 & 26 (1875-6). Julius Zupitza (ed.), *The Romance of Guy of Warwick: edited from the Auchinleck MS. in the Advocates' Library, Edinburgh and from MS. 107 in Caius College, Cambridge*, EETS es 42 (1883), 49 (1887) and 59 (1891). Reprinted as one volume in 1966.

²⁹¹ On the final folio the following names are inscribed: "Ja. Calthorpe, Jaqñs de apibus, Jackanapes, Knyvett, T. Coniers, W^m Wightman. Bolenbrock, Henricus Bolenbrookus." See M. R. James, *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Manuscripts in the Library of Gonville and Caius College*, 1 (Cambridge: CUP, 1907), pp.107-108.

the Stanzaic Guy states that the text is in an East Midlands dialect.²⁹² Either of these manuscripts could have circulated within Norfolk. Michael Johnston has shown CUL MS Ff.2.38 to have been written in Leicestershire and whilst a little further away from Norfolk than the other two it is not unfeasible that this manuscript could also have circulated in that county.²⁹³ That Caius was owned by the Knyvett family seems to make that version of the text a more likely edition for the Pastons to have owned; at the very least the Caius manuscript has a readership very similar to that version read by the Pastons.

iii) “Kyng Richard Cure delyon”

This text is extant in seven manuscripts and survives in two forms, the A-version, a romance (which is in two manuscripts) and the B-version, a metrical chronicle, (which is in five manuscripts).²⁹⁴ Both the A version and the B version appear in manuscripts of the fifteenth century and appear contemporaneously. The B-version survives in the Auchinleck Manuscript, which, as noted above, also contains the tale of Guy of Warwick, indicating that there is at least one known extant example of these two works circulating together. The Auchinleck Manuscript was, of course, made long before John Paston II compiled his inventory of books, but this extant manuscript and the manuscript recorded in Paston’s inventory hint at a possible fashion for *Richard* and *Guy* circulating together.

iv) “a croni <...> to Edwarde þe iij”

Lester suggests that this might be

a complete chronicle ending, like Thomas Castelford’s with Edward III’s accession in 1327, or like the Auchinleck version of the *Short Metrical Chronicle*, with the death of Edward II; perhaps more likely [...] is the

²⁹² Alison Wiggins (ed.), “Introduction,” in *Stanzaic Guy of Warwick*, (Kalamazoo, Michigan: Medieval Institute Publications, 2004): <http://d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/text/wiggins-stanzaic-guy-of-warwick-introduction> - accessed 18th August 2018.

²⁹³ Michael Johnston, “Two Leicestershire Romance Codices: Cambridge, University Library MS Ff.2.38 and Bodleian MS Ashmole 61,” *Journal of the Early Book Society*, 15 (2012), pp.85-100.

²⁹⁴ Leila K. Norako, “Richard Coer de Lion,” *The Crusades Project: A Robbins Library Digital Project*: <http://d.lib.rochester.edu/crusades/text/richard-coer-de-lion> - accessed 14th January 2014.

anonymous prose *Brut*, of which the first part (the so-called ‘common *Brut*’) extends to 1333 in the reign of Edward III.²⁹⁵

Item 2 (this item is discussed in Chapter Three of this thesis):

i) “a boke of Troylus”

Chaucer, *Troilus and Criseyde*

Item 3 (this item is discussed in Chapter Three of this thesis):

i) “The Legende off Lad <...>

Chaucer, *Legend of Good Women*

ii) “saunce Mercye”

La Belle Dame Sans Mercy. A work seemingly ascribed to Chaucer until Thomas Tyrwhitt’s late eighteenth-century edition of *The Canterbury Tales of Chaucer*, it is a mid-fifteenth-century translation made by Richard Roos of Alain Chartier’s poem, also called *La Belle Dame Sans Mercy*.²⁹⁶ However, it should be noted that Richard Roos was distantly related to Elizabeth Woodville who received, thorough her cousin-in-law, Alyanor Haute (who was, herself, niece to Richard Roos), Roos’ manuscript of the vulgate *Queste and Mort Artu*.²⁹⁷ Alyanor Haute was also, in turn, aunt-in-law to Anne Haute, John Paston II’s fiancé to whom he apparently intended to read or lend his copy of Lydgate’s *Temple of Glass*.²⁹⁸

iii) “þe Parlement off Byr <...>”

Chaucer, *Parliament of Fowls*

iv) “<...> Glass”

²⁹⁵ Lester, “English Gentleman,” p.203.

²⁹⁶ Dana M. Symons, “*La Belle Dame sans Mercy*: Introduction,” in Symons (ed.), *Chaucerian Dream Visions and Complaints* (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 2004): <http://d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/text/symons-chaucerian-dream-visions-and-complaints-la-belle-dame-sans-mercy-introduction> - accessed 18th August 2018.

²⁹⁷ Carol M. Meale, “‘alle the bokes that I haue of latyn, englich, and frensch’: laywomen and their books in late medieval England,” in Carol Meale (ed.), *Women and Literature in Britain, 1150-1500* 2nd ed. (Cambridge: CUP, 1996), p.140.

²⁹⁸ P.W. Fleming, “The Hautes and their ‘Circle’: Culture and the English Gentry,” in *England in the Fifteenth Century, Proceedings of the 1986 Harlaxton Symposium*, (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 1987), p.87. The relationship between Anne Haute and John Paston II is discussed in Chapter Four, II.ii of this thesis.

Lydgate, *Temple of Glass*

v) “Palatyse and Scitacus”

Unidentified

vi) “The Med<...>”

Lester writes that this is

[p]robably a secular work (in keeping with the other contents of this volume), therefore probably not *The Meeds of the Mass* (as in item 5) or *The Meditations of ...* (as suggested by Fenn and followed by Gairdner).²⁹⁹

vii) “the Greene Knyght”

The most obvious, or most famous, text to consider when attempting to identify this text is *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. However, it is highly unlikely that John Paston II owned this text as it survives in a single manuscript from the latter half of the fourteenth century, BL MS Cotton Nero A.x., Art. 3, which is written in, arguably, a Staffordshire or Cheshire dialect.³⁰⁰ It does not seem to have circulated outside of this region (or perhaps even the household of its owner) and, so, is unlikely to have become an exemplar for a London or East Anglian scribe.

Another iteration of the Gawain and the Green Knight legend survives as *The Green Knight* but Thomas Hahn, in his survey of the numerous extant iterations of tales about Gawain, posits that the version of the tale of the Green Knight recorded in Paston’s inventory was a kind of intermediary version: somewhere between *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* and *The Green Knight*.³⁰¹ The character of a green knight does not appear in any of the other Gawain texts included in Hahn’s study.

²⁹⁹ Lester, “English Gentleman,” p.204. Lester refers to James Gairdner (ed.), *The Paston Letters* vol. 6 (Chatto & Windus: London, 1904), p.66, citing Fenn.

³⁰⁰ Ad Putter and Myra Stokes, “The “Linguistic Atlas” and the Dialect of the “Gawain” Poems,” in *JEGP* 106.4 (2007), p.471.

³⁰¹ Thomas Hahn, “The Green Knight: Introduction,” in *Sir Gawain: Eleven Romances and Tales* (ed.) Hahn (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 1995): <http://d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/text/hahn-sir-gawain-greene-knight-introduction> - accessed 18th August 2018.

The extant manuscripts of Gawain tales surveyed by Hahn show this to have been a popular legend although, rather than a few key versions circulating widely, the evidence shows a number of iterations of the Gawain story surviving in individual or very small groups of manuscripts (unfortunately, none of which have been identified, as yet, as having an East Anglian provenance).³⁰²

Item 4 (this item is discussed in Chapter Two of this thesis):

i) “a boke jn preente off þe Pleye of þe <...>”

Caxton, *The Game and Playe of the Chesse* (hereafter referred to as *Game*).

Item 5 (this item is discussed alongside Item Three in Chapter Three of this thesis):

i) “Bele Da <...> Mercy”

As described in Item Three

ii) “þe Parlement off Byrdys”

As described in Item Three

iii) “Balade <...> off Guy and Colbronde”

Lydgate, *Guy of Warwick*

iv) “Off the Goos, þe <...>”

Lydgate, *The Debate of the Horse, Goose and Sheep*

v) “þe <...> þe Dysput[i]son bytwyen Hope and Dyspeyre

Lester suggests that this might be *The Complaint Against Hope*, which is “a short poem extant in three manuscripts of which the earliest dates from about 1450” or it may be “the fifteenth-century translation of Alain Chartier’s *Treatise of Hope*.”³⁰³

vi) “<...> Marchauntys”

³⁰² For the tales and their manuscripts see the introductory chapters for each tale included in Hahn, *Sir Gawain*.

³⁰³ Lester, “English Gentleman,” p.204.

Lester suggests that this is probably Lydgate's *Fabula Duorum Mercatorum*, an exemplary narrative.³⁰⁴

vii) "þe Lyffe off Seint Cry <...>"

The life of St. Christopher, St. Christina, or "even possibly Chrysogonus or Christian of Maine".³⁰⁵ The Paston letters do not record any particular devotion to any of the saints that might possibly be identified with this text, although it should be noted that John Paston III had a son named Christopher who was born in 1478 but who had died before 1482.³⁰⁶ This presents a rather tenuous reason to think the text in the inventory may be the life of St. Christopher: that it may feasibly commemorate John Paston II's lost nephew. It should also be noted that St. Christopher is a fairly ubiquitous saint in the medieval wall-paintings of East Anglia and there is a rather impressive example at St. Margaret's Church, Paston.³⁰⁷

Item 6:

i) "<...> off the Medis off þe Mass"

As Lester states, this is a title that "would fit a number of Middle English poems on the virtues of the sacrament, as well as the prose work *Vertewis of the Mess*."³⁰⁸ It may also be Lydgate's *The Virtues of the Mass*.³⁰⁹

ii) "þe Lamentacion <...>"

Lester writes, "probably of a religious subject such as Mary Magdalene or Mary the mother of Christ, the latter being the subject of a poem by Lydgate."³¹⁰

³⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁰⁶ *PLI*, lxiv.

³⁰⁷ For a survey of depictions of St. Christopher in wall painting see Eleanor Elizabeth Pridgeon, *Saint Christopher Wall Paintings in English and Welsh Churches c.1250-c.1500*, PhD thesis, (Leicester: University of Leicester, 2008). Pridgeon argues that East Anglia has a higher concentration of St. Christopher wall paintings than elsewhere in England or in Wales.

³⁰⁸ Lester, "English Gentleman," pp.204-5.

³⁰⁹ *MPJLI*, pp.87-115.

³¹⁰ *Id.*, pp.324-9. Here MacCracken gives the title as *Quis Dabit Meo Capiti Fontem Lacrimarum?*, with the incipit, as presented in the extant manuscript of the text (Bodleian, MS Bodley Laud Misc. 683, ff.78-81) "Here begynneth a lamentacioun of our Lady Maria."

iii) “off Chylde Ypotis”

Ypotis

iv) “A Preyer to the Vernycle <...>”

Lester suggests that this might possibly be “*How þe vernycle was broght to Rome*, but, more likely, *The Arms of Christ*, which begins ‘O vernacule I honoure him and the / þat þe made’.”³¹¹

v) “The Abbeye off þe Holy Gooste <...>”

The Abbey of the Holy Ghost

Item 7 (this item is discussed in Chapter Two of this thesis):

“Tully de Senectute”

Cicero, *On Old Age*, an English translation

Item 8 (this item is discussed in Chapter Two of this thesis):

“Tully or Cypio de Ami <...>”

Cicero, *On Friendship*, an English translation

Item 9:

“a boke off þe Polecye off In <...>”

Probably *Libel of English Policy*

Item 10:

“a boke de Sapiencia <...> wherin þe ij parson is liknyd to Sapi <...>”

Lester suggests some possible works that might have been referred to in this way:

The “ij parson” is probably Christ, the second person of the Trinity. This might be *The Court of Sapience*, once thought to be by Lydgate, though the description does not seem particularly apt; alternatively it could be the

³¹¹ Lester, “English Gentleman,” p.205. For the quotation given in Lester see R. Morris (ed.), *Legends of the Holy Rood; Symbols of the Passion and Cross Poems* EETS os 46 (1871), pp.170-93.

prose version of *Horologium Sapienciae*, otherwise known as *The Seven Poyntes of Trewe Wisdom*.³¹²

Item 11 (this item is discussed in Chapters One and Two of this thesis):

“a boke de Othea, text and glose”

Stephen Scrope’s translation of the *Epistle of Othea* by Christine de Pisan (hereafter referred to as *Epistle*).

Items 12-15:

“myn olde boke off blasonyngys”

“nywe boke portrayed and blasonyd”

“a copy off blasonyngys off armys and t <...> names to be fownde by letter”

“a boke wyth armys portrayed in paper”

Books of blazonings. None of the extant fifteenth-century books of blazonings have been identified with those listed here, but there is an extant manuscript, Norwich Record Office, Walter Rye MS 38, which is a book of arms that belonged to William Paston II, John Paston II’s uncle.³¹³ Whether this was given by William to his nephew is unknown, but Rye MS 38 is an extant copy of the kinds of manuscript being listed in this section of John Paston II’s inventory.

Item 16 (an item discussed throughout this thesis but which is most specifically addressed in Chapter One):

“my boke of knyghthod and ther-in <...> off making off knyghtys, off justys, off torn <...> fyghtyng in lystys, paces holden by sou <...> and chalengys, statutys off weer and de Regimi <...>”

The *Grete Boke* of Ebesham’s letter and bill. Extant as BL MS Lansdowne 285 (hereafter referred to as Lansdowne).

Item 17:

“a boke off nyw statutys from Edward <...> the iiij –“

Lester writes that

³¹² Lester, “English Gentleman,” p.205.

³¹³ Norman Davis, “MS Walter Rye 38 and its French Grammar,” in *Medium Aevum*, 38.2 (1962), pp.110-124.

The 'Statuta Nova', as opposed to the 'Statuta Antiqua', ran from 1 Edward III. Therefore the Edward whose name appears here is presumably Edward III, the numeral 'iiij' referring either to Henry IV or, more probably, to Edward IV.³¹⁴

Aside from the “boke of knyghthod”, which was discussed in Chapter One, and to which we return below, none of the extant manuscripts which contain the works in this inventory can be securely associated with the Paston family. We cannot, therefore, recover specific information on such things as the production of the manuscripts or, in most instances, the ways in which these manuscripts came to be in John Paston II’s library. However, the survival of the *Grete Boke*, the bill and letter from William Ebesham, and the inventory indicate some of the organising principles at work in this inventory, as well as certain decisions that Paston may have made in the recording of his manuscripts in this inventory. The inventory also records the movement of Paston’s manuscripts which highlights a link between his library and that of John Fastolf (for whom an inventory of books also survives).³¹⁵ The combination of the extant exemplar for the *Grete Boke*, Pierpont Morgan MS 775 (hereafter referred to as Pierpont Morgan), and John Paston II’s inventory of books indicates that the version of the *Epistle* most likely to have been owned by Paston was that translated by Fastolf’s step-son, Stephen Scrope. The inventory records another direct textual link with the Fastolf household in the leaving of Paston’s copy of Cicero’s *On Friendship* with William Worcester (arguably, Fastolf’s most loyal servant). Further to these direct and explicitly recorded connections with the Fastolf household, the survival of Fastolf’s own inventory of French books provides another complex layer to an exploration of the texts circulating between these two households. It brings to the foreground something that is actually obscured by the title of John Paston II’s document, the reading and circulation of French texts and how Paston’s inventory of *English* books still presents an engagement with such works. Through this combination of evidence we can map the

³¹⁴ Lester, “English Gentleman,” p.206.

³¹⁵ Fastolf’s inventory of French books is included in Richard Beadle, “Sir John Fastolf’s French Books,” in *Medieval Texts in Context*, eds. Graham D. Caie and Denis Renevey, (Oxford: Routledge, 2008), p.99-100.

influence of the Fastolf household on John Paston II's collection and collation of texts.

In the second part of this section on the Inventory of English Books we turn to the Chaucerian manuscripts (Items Two, Three and Five). Again, the entries in the inventory show lending and borrowing of manuscripts and we can, to a more limited extent, trace the circulation of these particular works amongst the immediate Paston circle. However, extant manuscripts and contemporaneous inventories allow us to see how the composition of these particular Paston manuscripts was typical and atypical. Both sections consider the different ways in which John Paston II might have acquired the works listed in his inventory. The bespoke nature of the *Grete Boke* and the close personal ties surrounding the texts within the "in quayers" section of the inventory are complemented by techniques of (relatively) "mass production" in both the scribal and early print traditions.

Chapter Two: The *Epistle of Othea* and the Advisory Literature of the Fastolf Household

2.1: *The Epistle of Othea*

The *Epistle* appears twice in the documents associated with the Paston family. It is mentioned by Ebesham in his bill of 1469 and in John Paston II's inventory of English Books.³¹⁶ It also appears in Sir John Astley's manuscript, Pierpont Morgan. In Chapter One, I related how the *Epistle* formed the crux of the debates surrounding the relationship between the manuscript discussed in Ebesham's bill, Lansdowne, and Pierpont Morgan. On the basis of the work of A. I. Doyle and G. A. Lester which has convincingly established the provenance of Lansdowne and critical acceptance that it is the Grete Boke of Ebesham's bill, and argued compellingly for the very strong likelihood that Astley's manuscript was the exemplar from which Ebesham copied these texts, we can now turn to a number of other insights this complex of materials affords into John Paston II's role as a commissioner of manuscripts, his reading, and how his reading may have been shaped by one particular textual hub, the Fastolf household.

The inventory of English books suggests that John Paston II organised his materials within anthologised collections. We can see that each manuscript, for the most part, appears to centre on a particular genre, or set of writers: Item One is a collection of Romances; Item Two is a single text, Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*; Items Three and Five are collections of courtly verses, primarily by Chaucer and Lydgate; Item Four is another single text, Caxton's *Game*; Item Six is a collection of devotional texts; and the final, unnumbered, list of books groups together a collection of manuscripts on Blazonings, the Grete Boke, and "a boke of nyw statutys from Edward <...> the iiij."³¹⁷ The Grete Boke is presented as sitting generically or thematically amongst works on heraldry and history and, as we have seen in Chapter One, this seems appropriate to the works gathered in Lansdowne. Generically and thematically, the *Epistle*, should have looked rather anomalous among this group of manuscripts. The exclusion

³¹⁶ *PLII*, p.392.

³¹⁷ *PLI*, p.517.

of the *Epistle* from the Grete Boke illustrates in its own way the anthologising instincts of John Paston II. By not including this work in the Grete Boke, Lansdowne maintains the thematic unity around its core of acting as a courtesy book. De Pisan's work was copied but kept from being bound in the Grete Boke, seemingly with the design of being incorporated into its own anthologised manuscript.

The *Epistle* appears within a section of items "in quayers", where the texts are listed as Cicero's *On Old Age* (Item Seven) and *On Friendship* (Item Eight), a text most likely to be *The Policy of England* (Item Nine), "a boke de Sapiencia" (Item Ten) and, finally, "a boke de Othea".³¹⁸ Given the anthologising organisation of the other manuscripts in this inventory, it may well be that Items Seven through Eleven were going to be bound together as a collection of advisory texts; and even if they were not destined for the same manuscript, they do constitute a collection of such a sort. Moreover, the works included in this putative manuscript and their movements into (and out of) the possession of John Paston II, raise further, more specific questions about the kind of collection he seems to have been gathering. The kinds of work recorded in this section of the inventory reflects certain ideals also on display in the library of Sir John Fastolf.

The particular translation of the *Epistle* as it appears in Pierpont Morgan, (and, thus, the version almost certainly owned by John Paston II) is that made by Stephen Scrope, the step-son of Sir John Fastolf, the knight from whom the Pastons inherited numerous properties, the most famous of which were the manors of Hellesdon and Drayton (attacked by the Duke of Suffolk in 1465) and Caister (attacked by the Duke of Norfolk in 1469).³¹⁹ The extant evidence

³¹⁸ *Id.*, pp.517-518.

³¹⁹ The Duke of Suffolk's attack on Hellesdon is record in the following Paston Letters: *PLI*, pp.132-3, 135, 292, 293, 299, 304, 313, 322-4, 325-9, 330, 337, 445, 509, 510, 544; *PLII*, pp.310, 373, 576. Much of Suffolk's attack on Drayton is covered in the letters that discuss Hellesdon, for additional mentions of the conflict over Drayton see the following: *PLII*, pp.311, 381, 561. The siege of Caister castle by the Duke of Norfolk is mentioned in the following letters: *PLI*, pp. 335, 339-40, 344-7, 396, 406, 540-6, 550, 559-60; *PLII*, pp. 403-5, 431-2, 577-80, 587. The Drayton and Hellesdon conflicts are also discussed in Richmond, *The Paston Family in the Fifteenth Century, the First Phase*

surrounding the writing and transmission of this translations is partially presented through its survival in three extant manuscripts dating from the mid-fifteenth century. From these manuscripts we can consider the circulation of this work amongst the contemporaries of John Paston II.

Further to this textual connection with the household of Sir John Fastolf, John Paston II's inventory records that his copy of Cicero's *De Amicitia* was "leffte wyth William Worcester", who was a servant of William Worcester, loyal to Fastolf even after his master's death in 1459. Worcester, as will be discussed below, composed and translated a number of works, amongst which was the translation of the other Ciceronian text in Paston's inventory, *On Old Age*. Both Worcester and Scrope engaged with the translation of French texts (with the works by Cicero likely to have been French translations), which hints at an interesting anglicizing process as part of the circulation of these texts out of Fastolf's library and into Paston's. It also highlights a fundamental issue with the extant evidence surrounding John Paston II's collection of books. Although these works are recorded in what is fairly emphatically marked as a list of *English* books, many of these titles were circulating in *French* translations and a comparison to the inventories and extant manuscripts of other members of the East Anglian gentry and, above all, of Sir John Fastolf, highlights the ways in which the texts of the French court influenced English readers. These comparisons may also allow us to reconstruct tentatively the lost contents of John Paston II's "boke of Freynsh".³²⁰

There is a further, especially interesting point to be found in the relation between the Fastolf circle of writers, translators, and readers (of which John Paston II can be seen to be a part), the textual culture of the Burgundian court

(Cambridge: CUP, 1990) pp.239-40; *The Paston Family in the Fifteenth Century, Endings* (Manchester: MUP, 2000) pp.92, 99, 112, 119, 176, 178, 190, 191, 197-200, 205. In these two volumes of Richmond's history of the Paston family Caister is discussed at the following points: *Paston Family, the First Phase*, pp.174-6, 248, 256-8; *Paston Family, Endings*, pp.90, 109, 128, 134, 139, 143, 147, 148, 155, 173. The second volume of Richmond's three-part history is *The Paston Family in the Fifteenth Century, Fastolf's Will* (Cambridge: CUP, 1996) which discusses these events and their ramifications at length.

³²⁰ *PLI*, pp.516-518, with Davis' identification of John Paston II's on p.328.

and Margaret of Burgundy's early championing of William Caxton. This relationship is most straight-forwardly evident (if, as we will see, not entirely recoverable) in John Paston II's ownership of Caxton's *Game* (Item Four in his inventory) which he makes the point of stating is "jn preente".³²¹ This shows John Paston II's engagement with the very early stages of English printing culture but this engagement with Caxton is also, and in more a complex manner, connected with the works of Stephen Scrope and William Worcestre. The translations made by Scrope and Worcestre (both those present in John Paston II's inventory and those extant works absent from Paston's library) present an overlapping between the interest of the Fastolf Household in reading and translating advisory works and the influence of the Burgundian court (and its wider network of royal readers and writers) on William Caxton and his early printed English works.

2.1.i: The Fastolf Household and the circulation of the French *Epistle of Othea*.

Christine de Pisan wrote the *L'Epistre Othéa* c.1400.³²² A popular work in its original French, the *Epistle* survives in forty-three manuscripts, the most notable of which for this study are BL Harley MS 4431 and Harley MS 4012, and Bodleian, MS Laud 570. Whilst John Paston II's inventory is clearly that of his English books and indicates that he owned an English translation of de Pisan's work, these three manuscripts containing the French text allow us to map, in part, the route by which an English translation came to be in John Paston II's library whilst also highlighting that which is absent from the surviving evidence of the Pastons' reading, the circulation of French texts amongst the East Anglian gentry during the fifteenth century. In order to consider the translation of the *Epistle* and its subsequent circulation, we must first consider how this text came to East Anglia.

³²¹ *Id.*, p.417

³²² Curt F. Bühler (ed.), *The Epistle of Othea, translated from the French Text of Christine de Pisan by Stephen Scrope*, EETS os 264, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970), xi.

Harley MS 4431 is, in part, an autograph manuscript of the *Epistle*, made by de Pisan c.1410-1415 for Isabella of Bavaria.³²³ It came into the possession of John, Duke of Bedford, regent of France, as part of his purchase of the library of Charles V.³²⁴ From this library, and its purchase by the Duke of Bedford, we can follow the text through two branches of the social network of the Paston family. First, we see the movement of this manuscript into the possession of the Woodville family. Bedford's second wife was Jacquetta of Luxemburg, whose second husband was Richard Woodville, Earl Rivers. It is at this point in the provenance of Harley MS 4431 that the manuscript comes to be associated with Anthony Woodville, son of Jacquetta of Luxemburg and Richard Woodville, whose name and motto is inscribed on f.1.³²⁵ We will return to Anthony Woodville as translator of advisory texts in the final section of this chapter but here I draw attention to John Paston II's owning the same text (if in translation) as one of the other jousts celebrated in his Grete Boke (and on whose side he jousts at the Tourney at Eltham in 1467).³²⁶

The courtliness of the text, most evident in the circumstances surrounding the composition of Harley MS 4431 for Isabella of Bavaria, is also illustrated by BL MS Royal 14 E.ii. This manuscript was made for Edward IV, c.1479-1480.³²⁷ A

³²³ George Warner (ed.), *The Epistle of Othea to Hector or the Boke of Knyghthode. Translated from the French of Christine de Pisan, with a Dedication to Sir John Fastolf, K. G. by Stephen Scrope, Esquire*, (London: Nichols, 1904), xxxv. Warner states that it was "made by" Christine de Pisan, whilst the British Library catalogue states that "some passages may be autograph," see "Detailed Record of Harley 4431," *Catalogue of Illuminated Manuscripts*: https://www.bl.uk/catalogues/illuminatedmanuscripts/record.asp?MSID=8361&CollID=8&NStart=4431&gclid=Cj0KCQjwnNvaBRCmARIsAOfZq-1L2DadAfd6vD9IC1E6AR9Q7HYeOoTwwEwQOWlfSYclXgajBPUUM3UaAr3_EALw_wcB - accessed 24th July 2018.

³²⁴ Warner, *Othea*, xxxv and "Detailed Record of Harley 4431," *Catalogue of Illuminated Manuscripts*.

³²⁵ *Ibid.* It should be noted that Jacquetta's motto and name also appear throughout the manuscript: "'Jaquete/Jaquette' (ff.1, 51v, 52v, and in the miniature on f.115v); and with her motto 'sur tous autres' (ff.1 and 387)", see "Detailed Record of Harley 4431," *Catalogue of Illuminated Manuscripts* - accessed 24th July 2018.

³²⁶ *PLI*, p.396. See Davis's note to letter 236.

³²⁷ British Library *Catalogue of Illuminated Manuscripts* states that there was a "record of payment to the foreign merchant Philip Maisertuell for books and the record of books in the Great Wardrobe Accounts of 1480". See "Detailed Record of Royal 14 E II," *Catalogue of Illuminated Manuscripts*:

sumptuous presentation manuscript, it contains fourteen completed miniatures, with some gilding, made by the Master of the White Inscriptions (and with spaces left for further miniatures or initials on ff.287, 332, 335v).³²⁸ A manuscript of 354 folios, the *Epistle* runs from ff.295-331v. The majority of the codex contains Jean de Courcy's *Le Chemin de Vailla*, with the rest of the book containing Alain Chartier's *Le Breviaire de Nobles* (ff.332-335v), *Le Complaintes de IX Malheureux et des IX Malheureuses* (ff.335v-337), and an anonymous French translation of Ramón Lull's *Libre de Orde de Cavayleria*.³²⁹ The longest text of this collection, de Courcy's *Le Chemin de Vailla*, is, as Marco Nievergelt describes, a three-part narrative in which de Courcy is instructed in courtly manners, followed by a "deviation into an anti-courtly world of sensuality that introduces the confrontation with the sins and vices, and his return to the courtly precepts that eventually culminate in a mystical apotheosis."³³⁰ The manuscript appears as a typical item within the library of Edward IV. Margaret Kekewich described Edward IV's collection of books as "traditional" in that it consisted of "religious, devotional, moral, and didactic books."³³¹ However, as Kekewich continues,

[t]he only departure he [Edward IV] made was to show a liking of the romantic and chivalrous works that were so popular in Burgundy. They were usually in French, often the translations from Latin originals that were widely read on the Continent in the later fifteenth century.³³²

Christine Weightman noted that Edward also "seems to have preferred histories and chronicles".³³³

<http://www.bl.uk/catalogues/illuminatedmanuscripts/record.asp?MSID=7794&CollID=16&NStart=140502> - accessed 27th July 2018.

³²⁸ "Detailed record of Royal 14 E II," *Catalogue of Illuminated Manuscripts*.

³²⁹ *Ibid.*

³³⁰ Marco Nievergelt, *Allegorical Quests from Deguileville to Spencer*, (Woodbridge: Brewer, 2012), p.48.

³³¹ Margaret Kekewich, "Edward IV, William Caxton, and the Literary Patronage in Yorkist England," *MLR*, 66.3 (1971), p.481.

³³² *Ibid.*

³³³ Christine Weightman, *Margaret of York, Duchess of Burgundy, 1446-1503* (Gloucester: Alan Sutton, 1989), p.208.

The generic makeup of Edward IV's library is echoed, at a rather different social level, in John Paston II's, in which we also find "a liking of [...] romantic and chivalrous works" together with celebrations of the chivalric activities at the Burgundian court. This is not necessarily to imply that the influence of the Burgundian court was filtering down to the English gentry by way of the English royal library directly, but that the texts owned by Edward IV and John Paston II reflect similar interests and demonstrate parallel influences from the Burgundian court. For Edward IV this influence of the royal and aristocratic libraries of Burgundy can be seen in the fact that almost half of his library also appears in that of Louis de Bruges, Seigneur de Gruthuyse, a Burgundian nobleman, who hosted Edward IV in 1470, during his exile from England.³³⁴ We will return to the influence of the Burgundian court, and Edward IV's sister, Margaret of York, in the final section of this chapter where we consider the circulation of printed translated texts through the libraries of the English gentry but, here, we see one of the contexts in which the *Epistle* was circulating: that this was one of a number of French works that appeared particularly popular in the courts of Europe.

The influences of the French court can be found in the libraries and writings of the English gentry. We have already seen in the introduction to this thesis how Charles d'Orléans and William de la Pole, Duke of Suffolk both appear to have engaged in writing similar kinds of work sparking a debate amongst critics as to whether and how d'Orléans may have influenced his one-time gaoler.³³⁵ With regards to the specific instance of the *Epistle* and the circulation of the works of de Pisan amongst the gentry of East Anglia, there is a more direct connection through William de la Pole's wife, Alice Chaucer. Chaucer's first husband,

³³⁴ Kekewich, "Literary Patronage," p.482. Weightman, *Margaret of York*, p.208.

³³⁵ As stated, this is discussed in the introduction to this thesis along with a survey of the critics who have addressed this matter. By way of a reminder, the key works on this are Henry Noble MacCracken, "An English Friend of Charles of Orléans," *PMLA*, vol. 26, No. 1 (1911), pp.142-180; Derek Pearsall, "The Literary Milieu of Charles of Orléans and the Duke of Suffolk, and the authorship of the Fairfax Sequence," *Charles d'Orléans in England, 1415-1440* (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2000), pp.145-156. For more on de la Pole as Orléans' gaoler see, John Watts, 'Pole, William de la, first Duke of Suffolk (1396-1450),' *ODNB*: <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/2246> - accessed 3rd January 2017. It is also mentioned in Meale, "Laywomen and their books," pp.148-9.

Thomas Montacute, fourth Earl of Salisbury, is described by Jonathan Hughes as “a friend” of de Pisan’s.³³⁶ The record of those books owned by Alice Chaucer includes ‘a frensh boke of le Citee de dames’, along with ‘a frensh boke of quaterfitz Emond’, ‘a frensh boke of temps pastoure’, ‘a frensh boke of pe tales of philisphers’ and ‘a boke of English in papir of pe pilgrimage translated by daune John lydgate out of frensh’.³³⁷ This last text, as has been discussed in the introduction, was possibly a translation commissioned by Alice herself. Carol Meale identifies the “quaterfitz Emond” as a French prose redaction of the *chanson de geste*, *Renaud de Montaubon*; “pe tales of philisphers” was a copy of the popular *Dicts and Sayings of the Philosopher* (which is discussed in the third part of this chapter). Chaucer certainly owned at least one text by de Pisan and Meale raises the possibility that “temps pastoure” was de Pisan’s *Le Dit de la Pastoure*, pointing to Westminster Abbey, MS 21 as proof of the circulation of this text amongst the gentry of Norfolk.³³⁸ Whilst this manuscript was produced in France, “it contains the names of Englishmen associated with Thomas, Lord Scales of Middleton in Norfolk, a commander, along with Alice’s second and third husbands, of the English forces in France.”³³⁹

The Household Book of John Howard (c.1425-1485), Duke of Norfolk, records a similar interest in French works. The manuscripts, which are to be found in the Society of Antiquaries, London, cover the running of the household from c.1481-1490, but the list of titles appears on the final page of the codex relating to the ‘Rekenyngis for the goying into Skotlande’, which presumably refers to his naval expedition against the Scots in 1481.³⁴⁰ The editor of Howard’s Household

³³⁶ J. Hughes, “Stephen Scrope and the Circle of Sir John Fastolf: Moral and Intellectual Outlooks,” in Christopher Harper Bill and Ruth Harvey (eds.), *Medieval Knighthood IV: Papers from the fifth Strawberry Hill Conference* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 1990), p.130.

³³⁷ Bodleian, Ewelme Muniments VII. A. 28 [1], as quoted in Carol M. Meale, “Reading Women’s Culture in Fifteenth Century England: The Case of Alice Chaucer,” in Piero Torti Boitani and J.A.W. Bennett (eds), *Mediaevalitas: Reading the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Brewer, 1996), p.86.

³³⁸ Meale, “Alice Chaucer,” pp.88-89.

³³⁹ *Id.*, p.89.

³⁴⁰ *Ibid.* For a transcription of the Duke of Norfolk’s Household Books see: J. Payne Collier, esq. F. S. A. (ed.), *Household Books of John Duke of Norfolk and Thomas Earl of Surrey; Temp. 1481-1490. From the original manuscripts in the Library of the Society of Antiquaries, London*, printed for the Roxburgh Club (London: William Nicol, Shakspeare Press, 1844).

Book, J. Payne Collier, notes that the list is not in the same hand throughout, stating that “[a]ll the titles, excepting the two last, were written by a person named Dalamar: “Les d’essages” and “Paris et Vienne” are in another, if not rather later hand.”³⁴¹ The document lists fourteen titles (including these later additions):

La Destruction de Troy
 Le Recueil des Histoires Trojanes
 L’Arbre des Batailles
 Ponthus et la belle Sidoyne
 Sir Baudin, Conte de Flandres
 La belle Dame sans Merci
 Les Accusations de la Dame
 Les Mirioir de la Mort
 Le Jeu des Echecs
 Le Jes des Dés
 Le Debat de la Demoiselle et bons Freres
 L’Amant rendu Cordelier
 Les Dits des Sages
 Paris et Vienne.³⁴²

The list does not include works by de Pisan, but it does contain two French texts that appear in English translations in John Paston II’s inventory: *La belle Dame sans Mercy* and *La Jeu des Echecs*. The latter of these may well be a copy of the French original of Caxton’s *Game* (if not a copy of Caxton’s text).³⁴³ The list also includes *Les Dits des Sages*, which Collier identifies as the French original for Anthony Woodville, Earl Rivers’s translation of *The Dicts and Sayings of the Philosophers*.³⁴⁴ The connection with the library of the Burgundian court is also visible in *Le Recueil des Histoires Trojanes*, the text translated by William Caxton for Margaret of Burgundy in 1473-4. This list of books also introduces an aspect

³⁴¹ Collier, *Household Books*, p.277.

³⁴² *Ibid.* For a transcription of the original entry in the Household Book see p.277. Payne describes the titles, as given in the manuscripts, as “corrupted or abridged” so Payne provides an edited list of these works on xxvii-xxviii, which I have reproduced above.

³⁴³ *Id.*, xxix.

³⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

of the circulation of these texts to which we will return in the final section of this chapter: as with John Paston II's inventory, the titles listed in relation to John Howard, would seem to be a combination of manuscripts and printed works, with some works "having been issued from continental presses before 1480".³⁴⁵

It is against this broader context of the circulation of French works, and especially those of de Pisan, in England, and East Anglia, that we return to Harley MS 4431, the Duke of Bedford, and Fastolf's own French version of the *Epistle*. Hughes posits that "[a]n important stimulus to the broadening of the intellectual horizons of Fastolf and his servants was the French war which brought exposure to the culture of the court of Charles VI [...]." ³⁴⁶ A more directly bookish connection came through Fastolf's service to John, Duke of Bedford, who bought the French royal library in 1425.³⁴⁷ Fastolf was steward to Bedford, and Hughes suggests that he would have "been party to the purchase"; moreover, Fastolf was also captain of Rouen, where the library was situated after its purchase.³⁴⁸ That Fastolf would thus own or commission his own copy of a work by de Pisan is unsurprising and further links between the French library and his own are numerous and direct. Bodleian MS Laud misc. 570 contains de Pisan's *Epistle* and a *Livre des Quatre Vertus Cardinaulx*. Richard Beadle states that the manuscript was made in London in 1450 and describes it as "one of the finest illuminated vernacular manuscripts of the mid-fifteenth century."³⁴⁹ The association of this manuscript with Fastolf is made clear through the incorporation of his motto, *Me fault faire*, which Beadle counts as appearing "in upward of twenty places, on one occasion entwined with that of the Order of the Garter".³⁵⁰ The manuscript was made approximately ten years after the English translation of de Pisan's work made by Fastolf's step-son, Stephen Scrope (discussed below) and Beadle posits that Scrope and the scribe

³⁴⁵ *Id.*, xxvii.

³⁴⁶ Hughes, "Stephen Scrope," p.129.

³⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁴⁹ Beadle, "Fastolf's French Books," p.97.

³⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

and artist of MS Laud 570 used the same exemplar.³⁵¹ Beadle believes that this now lost exemplar must have been one of the few copies to have contained de Pisan's dedication to Jean, Duc de Berry and the dedicatory miniature in which she is depicted presenting the work to her patron.³⁵² Beadle notes that "[t]he original is known to have been in among the Berry manuscripts in the French royal library acquired by Bedford" and points to Rosamund Tuve's work on the iconography of the illuminations in the *Epistle* which "left her in no doubt" that these scribes, artists and translators of de Pisan's work had access to a "Berry-Royal library copy of the French *Othéa*."³⁵³

Whether or not the Duc de Berry's manuscript was that used in the production of Fastolf's manuscripts, we do see examples of both him and the Duke of Bedford directly engaging with the same scribes and illuminators within Rouen to produce their manuscripts. MS Laud 570 was copied by Ricardus Franciscus and the manuscript includes ten illuminations which were done by the anonymous artist now known as the Fastolf Master.³⁵⁴ Both of these men provide direct links to the library of John, Duke of Bedford. BL MS Harley 1251 is a Sarum Hours made for Bedford c. 1430. This manuscript is, as Martha Driver states, "one of the earliest [manuscripts] illustrated by the Fastolf Master

³⁵¹ *Id.* p.98.

³⁵² *Ibid.*

³⁵³ *Ibid.* Beadle quotes Rosamund Tuve, 'Notes on the Vices and Virtues', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 26, (1963), pp.264–303.

³⁵⁴ Kathleen Scott, *Later Gothic Manuscripts 1390-1490*, 6.II (London: Harvey Miller, 1996), pp.318, 297-299. For more on Richard Franciscus see Richard Hamer, 'Spellings of the Fifteenth-Century Scribe Ricardus Franciscus,' in E. G. Stanley and Douglas Gray (eds), *Five Hundred Years of Words and Sounds: A Festschrift for Eric Dobson*, (Cambridge: Brewer, 1983), pp.63-73; Lisa Jefferson, 'Two Fifteenth-Century Manuscripts of the Statutes of the Order of the Garter,' *English Manuscript Studies 1100-1700*, 5 (1995), pp.18-35; Martha Driver, "'Me fault faire": French Makers of Manuscripts for English Patrons,' in Jocelyn Wogan-Browne et al. (eds), *Language and Culture in Medieval Britain: The French of England, c.1100 - c.1500*

(Woodbridge: York Medieval Press, 2009), pp.420-443; Catherine Nall, 'Ricardus Franciscus writes for William Worcester,' in *Journal of the Early Book Society* 11 (2008), pp.207-212; and Thorpe in *Writing and Reading in the Circle of Sir John Fastolf (d.1459)*, PhD Thesis, (York: University of York, 2011).

for an English patron.”³⁵⁵ And while none of the extant manuscripts to contain the hand of Ricardus Franciscus can be directly linked to Bedford, Thorpe, using the work of Catherine Nall, notes that BL MS Harley 2915, a manuscript in the hand of Franciscus, contains a prayer for the Bedford, which “led Cath Nall to suppose that it was written for someone in his service.”³⁵⁶ Thorpe goes on to characterise Franciscus’s patrons as a “circle centred upon the literate military leaders who had served the duke of Bedford in France.”³⁵⁷ Both Franciscus and the Fastolf Master had worked in Rouen but extant manuscripts of their work show that they also worked in England. Kathleen Scott identified these artists as part of “the trend c.1450 to have Continental illuminators cross the Channel and work on books with native craftsmen.”³⁵⁸ Ricardus seems to have settled in London, collaborating with the artist William Abell on works for a network of patrons that included an English translation of the *Epistle*, Cambridge, St. John’s College, H. 5 (which will be discussed below), and a Sarum Hours, seemingly made for John de Vere, twelfth Earl of Oxford, Los Angeles, Getty MS 5.³⁵⁹ The library at Rouen and the artists and scribes of that city had a significant impact on the textual culture and the production of texts for the English gentry during the mid-fifteenth century. Moreover, whilst this influence appears to be centred on London, there is one particularly noteworthy example of Franciscus’s and Abell’s work that turns us towards an East Anglian context.

BL MS Harley 4012 is a compendium of devotional works copied by Ricardus Franciscus for Anne Harling, niece and one-time ward of John Fastolf.³⁶⁰ This work was probably undertaken some time after the death of Fastolf, with Anne Dutton suggesting that it was copied in 1470.³⁶¹ Franciscus’s copying of

³⁵⁵ Driver, “Me fault faire,” p.423.

³⁵⁶ Thorpe, *Circle of Sir John Fastolf*, p.304. Driver, ‘Me fault faire,’ p.438.

³⁵⁷ Thorpe, *Circle of Sir John Fastolf*, p.304.

³⁵⁸ Kathleen Scott, *Later Gothic Manuscripts*, 6.II, pp.296-9 (p.297), item 108, quoted in Driver, ‘Me fault faire,’ p.427.

³⁵⁹ Driver, ‘Me fault faire,’ pp.429-435.

³⁶⁰ Anne Harling’s manuscripts and her borrowing and lending of books will be discussed in the following chapter.

³⁶¹ A. M. Dutton, ‘Piety, Politics and Persona: BL MS Harley 4012 and Anne Harling’, in (ed.) F. Riddy, *Prestige, Authority and Power in Late Medieval Manuscripts and Texts*, (Cambridge: York Medieval Press, 2000), pp.133–46 (p.135).

Fastolf's French *Epistle* took place during the 1440s, whilst Anne was a ward of Fastolf's between the death of her father, Robert Harling, in 1435, and her marriage to Sir William Chamberlain in 1438.³⁶² The scribe seems to have continued to have worked in close relation to members of the Fastolf household long after Fastolf's own death, also, as Thorpe notes, producing a copy of *Des Quatre Vertus Cardinalx* for William Worcester (CUL MS Additional 7870).³⁶³ In 1450, he even appears to have been working on two copies of *Des Quatre Vertus Cardinalx* for patrons within the same household. One copy would end up alongside the *Epistle* in Laud MS 570 for Fastolf; the other would appear in CUL, MS Additional 7870 in which there is marginalia of Worcester's dated July 1450.³⁶⁴ Franciscus, as we have seen, also copied the *Epistle* twice, once for Laud MS 570 and then, in Scrope's translation, for St. John's College, MS H. 5. Given this apparent practice of reproducing texts for different members within the Fastolf household, both before and after Fastolf's death, there is the strong likelihood that there are lost works of his undertaken for other members of this circle. For example, in the will of Anne Harling, she bequests to "my lord of Surrey a Frenche booke called the Pistill of Othis," with another "Frenche boke" left to "my newew Sir Edward".³⁶⁵ There is at least the possibility that Franciscus produced a copy of the *Epistle* for Harling or that the exemplar for her copy came from the Fastolf Household.

The extant manuscripts of Ricardus Franciscus show a quite intertwined network of patrons, many of whom were familiar to the Paston family. The surviving evidence speaks to a fashion for French works and to the movement of French scribes and artists into the textual culture of England. Against these networks of patrons and hubs of production, John Paston II's ownership of two French books seems entirely typical; some of his books may even have been copied by Franciscus (although such information is lost to us). Certainly, John

³⁶² Dutton, "Piety, Politics and Persona," p.134.

³⁶³ Thorpe, *Circle of Sir John Fastolf*, p.304.

³⁶⁴ Daniel Wakelin, *Humanism, Reading and English Literature 1430-1530*, (Oxford: OUP, 2007), p.103.

³⁶⁵ James Raine (ed.), *Testamenta Eboracensia or Wills Registered at York* vol. 4, (London: Nichols, 1869), p.152

Paston II's copy of the *Epistle* highlights that Fastolf's household was not only a place in which manuscripts were commissioned but also one where works were translated from French into English.

2.1.ii: The Fastolf Household and the circulation of the English *Epistle of Othea*.

The *Epistle* does not appear to have been translated into English during the first half of the fifteenth century but, c.1450, two writers, independently from one another, translated this popular work into English: Anthony Babington, writer of the Helmingham Hall (Stowmarket, Suffolk) manuscript (now known as BL MS Harley 838) and Sir John Fastolf's step-son, Stephen Scrope, with Scrope's version being suggested by Curt F. Bühler to be the earlier of the two.³⁶⁶ Three manuscripts of Scrope's version of the work survive: Bath, Longleat House, MS 253; Cambridge, St. John's College, MS H. 5; and Pierpont Morgan. Each manuscript contains a version of the text dedicated to a different patron, from which emerges an impression of the pattern of circulation of this work.

The dedications of the surviving fifteenth-century copies of Scrope's translation are as follows: Longleat, MS 253 is dedicated to Fastolf; St. John's, MS H. 5 is dedicated to Humphrey Stafford, Duke of Buckingham (d. 1460) but owned by the Bramshotts family, a gentry family of the late fifteenth century; and in Pierpont Morgan the text is dedicated to an unnamed 'hye princesse'.³⁶⁷ The mysterious 'hye princesse' was not the first owner of this manuscript as we have seen that this codex was created for Sir John Astley. It would also seem

³⁶⁶ Bühler, *Othea*, xii.

³⁶⁷ *Id.*, pp.xiv-xvii. Douglas Gray, 'A Fulle Wyse Gentyll-Woman of Fraunce': *The Epistle of Othea* and Later Medieval English Literary Culture,' in Jocelyn Wogan-Browne et al. (eds), *Medieval Women – Texts and Contexts in Late Medieval Britain: Essays for Felicity Riddy* (Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 2000), p.237. For the association of St. John's, MS H. 5 with the Bramshotts family, see Hughes, "Stephen Scrope," p.134. It is unclear as to whether the Bramshotts were the original owners of Cambridge, St. John's College, H. 5. The manuscript is dated to the early fifteenth century but the Bramshotts do not start inscribing in the manuscript the births of their family members until the early years of Henry VII's reign. See "Epistle of Othea, MRJ Number 208, College Classmark H.5" *St. John's College, University of Cambridge*: https://www.joh.cam.ac.uk/library/special_collections/manuscripts/medieval_manuscripts/medman/H_5.htm - accessed 16th August 2018

that, as with Astley's copy, neither Longleat, MS 253 nor St. John's, MS H. 5 were the copies presented to the dedicatees of the text. As Bühler wrote in the introduction to his edition of the text,

[i]t seems likely that other manuscripts of Scrope's translation must once have existed, namely: Scrope's working copy [...], the actual presentation copy to Fastolf (the 'unfinished' Longleat one could hardly have served for this purpose); the similar presentation copy to Buckingham (unless this was the St. John's manuscript, for which there is no evidence); and probably the copy destined for the 'High Princess' [...].³⁶⁸

The dedications of these three manuscripts may, then, record the ghosts of at least three more, now lost, manuscripts, with John Paston II's own copy of Scrope's translation a fourth such lost instance. The record of these dedicatees indicates that whilst the presentation copies were intended for a 'hye princesse,' the Duke of Buckingham, and Sir John Fastolf, the work was very quickly circulating through the libraries of the English gentry, both in East Anglia and further afield. The inscriptions by the Bramshott family on f.61v of St. John's, MS H. 5 record the births and baptisms of various family members between 1486/7 and 1499-1500 at locations such as Chelsey, Merston, and Alton Castle, along with the names of godparents, which include 'my lady of northumyrlond', 'sir Charles somerset' and 'Regina Elyzabet.'³⁶⁹ These inscriptions, much like the inclusion of the dedications in these manuscripts, record an overlapping of aristocratic or royal readers and gentry ones.

These links are further echoed by the illuminations in these extant codices. As we have seen, Scrope's translation seems to have been based on the same exemplar as that used for the French copy of the text commissioned by Fastolf

³⁶⁸ Bühler, *Othea*, xvii.

³⁶⁹ Catherine Nall, *Reading and War in Fifteenth-century England: From Lydgate to Malory* (Cambridge: Brewer, 2012), p.36, fn.132. Given the dates of these inscriptions (the manuscript gives the date of these events in regnal years and are dated to the reign of Henry VII), 'Regina Elyzabet' is most likely to be Elizabeth of York, the niece of Anthony Woodville, the owner of a French copy of the *Epistle*. For a full description of the annotations in this manuscript see "Epistle of Othea, MRJ Number 208, College Classmark H.5" *St. John's College, University of Cambridge*.

about a decade after Scrope's work, which survives in the extant manuscript Bodleian MS Laud 570, and this manuscript contains illuminations by the so-called Fastolf Master.³⁷⁰ Within one of these illuminations, J. Hughes has identified the mark of a very specifically Norfolk context:

depicted on the letter handed by Othea to Hector [is] the cross of St George, the patron saint of the English soldiers in France, thus acknowledging the importance of the Guild of St George to members of Fastolf's circle: Fastolf, Geoffrey Spireling, John Paston I and Stephen Scrope's kinsman, the hermit Richard Scrope/Bradley [...] were all members of the Norwich Guild of St George.³⁷¹

Through the cross of St George, this image includes a representation of Fastolf as a member of two distinct social milieus, one military and one civic. This single image, then, encapsulates a number of different aspects of knightly identity: military service, reader of courtly texts, commissioner of manuscripts (amongst other artistic works), and civic leader. Fastolf's embodiment of these ideals is summarised in Scrope's preface to the translation, in which he describes his stepfather as,

[...] exercisyng the warrys in the Royame of Fraunce and other countrees, ffor the difference and vnyuersal welfare of bothe royames of englond and ffraunce by fourty yeres enduring, the fayte of armes hauntyn, and in admynstryng justice and polytique gouernaunce [...].³⁷²

Fastolf's individual expression of these military and civic ideals is reflected by Scrope and the illuminator of the manuscript but the subsequent circulation of the images from this manuscript (alongside Scrope's translation) presents the connections forged or displayed by the borrowing, lending, and subsequent copying of manuscripts.

The illuminations from Fastolf's French manuscript appear to have been copied over into Scrope's translation. Whilst neither Scrope's working copy nor his

³⁷⁰ Hughes, "Stephen Scrope," p.130.

³⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p.138. See Bodleian MS. Laud 570, f.25v; and N. P. Tanner *The Church in Late Medieval Norwich, 1370-1532* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1984), p.80.

³⁷² Warner, *Othea*, xxx.

presentation copy for Fastolf are extant, two of the three surviving copies of his translation contain images that are also found in MS Laud 570. Both St. John's, MS H. 5 and Pierpont Morgan contain almost identical copies of several of the illuminations from Fastolf's French manuscript, with St. John's, MS H. 5 containing six and Pierpont Morgan containing three. St. John's, MS H.5 also contains an image of Scrope presenting this work to Humphrey Stafford in the place of Othea presenting the work to Hector.³⁷³ Whilst Longleat, MS 253 does not contain the illuminations present in the other two copies, spaces have been left for some miniatures.³⁷⁴ If the dedications in these three manuscripts indicate that they were copied from three exemplars belonging to members of the aristocracy and upper gentry (those with a combination of well-established lineage and wealth), then the illuminations further support the theory that Scrope's translation initially circulated in rather high-status manuscripts, which, perhaps, shared a common exemplar, before both text and image filtered into the manuscripts of the gentry. However, the circulation of the work appears to have spread quickly.

All three of the extant manuscripts date from around the middle of the fifteenth century, and it would seem that the acquisition of this text by the commissioners of these manuscripts was rather "quick-off-the-mark".³⁷⁵ Bühler noted that the armorial bearings in Pierpont Morgan are missing the Garter, for which Astley was nominated in 1461 or 1462, from which we may infer that the manuscript must have been copied at some point within the first decade after Scrope had finished the translation.³⁷⁶ St. John's, MS H.5 appears to have been copied at a similar time, with the St John's College Catalogue dating it to the first half of the fifteenth century, and the manuscript coming into the possession of

³⁷³ Bühler, *Othea*, xiv-xvii. For the identification of Scrope presenting his book to the Duke of Buckingham, see Hughes, "Stephen Scrope," p.134 and M. R. James, *A Descriptive Catalogue of Manuscripts in St. John's College, Cambridge* (Cambridge: CUP, 1913, rpt. 2009) pp.238-40 (as quoted in Hughes, fn.131).

³⁷⁴ Bühler, *Othea*, xvi.

³⁷⁵ *Ibid.* xiv-xviii.

³⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, xv. For the dates of Astley's nomination to the Garter Bühler refers to George E. Cokayne, *The Complete Peerage of England, Scotland, Ireland, Great Britain and the United Kingdom 2* (London: St. Catherine Press, 1910), p.543 (The Order of the Garter, appears in Appendix B, pp. 527-96).

the Bramshott family before the second year of the reign of Henry VII (the year in which the earliest birth noted in the manuscript is recorded).³⁷⁷ Bühler does not provide a specific date for the creation of Longleat, MS 253, but it appears contemporaneous with the other two extant manuscripts.³⁷⁸ The owners of these manuscripts - Sir John Astley, the Bramshotts, John Paston II - and the dedicatees - Sir John Fastolf, Humphrey Stafford, and the unknown princess - indicate that the text quite quickly circulated across social ranks (that is, within gentry, aristocratic and royal circles) and regions.

Whilst John Paston II's copy of Scrope's translation of the *Epistle* is now lost, Ebesham's letter of 1469 indicates that the scribe was in the process of copying a popular translation of a popular text. In owning this text John Paston II was engaging with a work read both in French and English by his peers and social betters. Without the surviving manuscript we cannot know if Ebesham, as part of the copying, like the scribe of Longleat, MS 253, left spaces for the insertion of illuminations. Ebesham used Pierpont Morgan as his exemplar for the *Grete Boke* and, as discussed in the previous chapter, this manuscript contained full-page illuminations of the jousting triumphs of Sir John Astley which were not copied over into Lansdowne. This absence of the illuminations from Astley's manuscript in the *Grete Boke* suggests the possibility that John Paston II's copy of the *Epistle* might have similarly lacked the visual records of the artistic, military, bibliographical, and civic connections of Sir John Fastolf. However, his own connection with Sir John Fastolf and the literary endeavours of his household may, in fact, have been emphasised through the position of the *Epistle* in the Inventory of English Books in another way.

2.2: John Paston II, the *Epistle of Othea* and William Worcester's translation of *On Old Age*

When Fastolf retired in 1439 and returned from France to England, he brought back numerous texts in French. We have explored, above, the possibility that

³⁷⁷ "*Epistle of Othea*, MRJ Number 208, Colloge Classmark H.5" *St. John's Colloge, University of Cambridge* - accessed 25th July 2018.

³⁷⁸ Bühler, *Othea*, xvi.

the exemplar of the two versions of the *Epistle* produced by members of Fastolf's circle came from the French royal library. Further to this, we also have an extant inventory of his French books. Few of the extant manuscripts of the works that appear in this list have been associated with Fastolf or his household so we cannot recover their provenance in quite the same way as that of Fastolf's manuscripts of the *Epistle* but Fastolf's list of French books remains a rich site for enquiry. A comparison of Fastolf's collection of French works with those owned by other members of the East Anglian gentry shows that Fastolf was cultivating a slightly different sort of library to his peers. These differences are further highlighted by the copying, annotating, and translating of some of these works by Stephen Scrope and William Worcester. The curation of the "inquayers" section of John Paston II's own inventory appears to recognise and participate in these different approaches of the Fastolf household.

An inventory of the contents of Caister Castle, drawn up by Geoffrey Spirleng in 1448, includes a list of seventeen French works, kept in the "stewe hous", which, as Deborah Thorpe explains, was the bathroom next to Fastolf's chamber.³⁷⁹ Spirleng records the following items:

In the stewe hous of Frenshe bookes the bible the Cronycles of France the Cronicles of Titus leuius [London] a booke of Jullius Cesar [London] lez propretes dez choses Petrus de Crescencis liber Almagesti liber Geomancie [cum iij aliis astronomie] liber de Roy Artour et Romaunce la Rose Cronicles Danglele Veges de larte de Chevalerie Institutes of Justien Emperer Brute in ryme liber Etiques liber de Sentence Joseph problemata Aristotilis Vice et Vertues liber de Cronykes de grant Bretayn in ryme meditacions saynt Bernard.³⁸⁰

The collection includes a bible, chronicles ('Cronycles of France', 'the Cronicles of Titus leuius', 'Cronykes de grant Bretayn in ryme', and the unidentified 'Cronicles Danglele'), a romance ('liber de Roy Artour', for which the exact

³⁷⁹ Deborah Thorpe, "Documents and Books: A Case Study of Luket Nantron and Geoffrey Spirleng as Fifteenth-Century Administrators and Textwriters," *Journal of the Early Book Society for the Study of Manuscript and Printing History*, 14 (2011), p.197.

³⁸⁰ Beadle, "Fastolf's French Books," p.99. Beadle refers to this as a "diplomatic transcription" of Oxford, Magdalen College, Fastolf Paper 43.

French Arthurian tale is unknown), a dream vision ('Romaunce la Rose'), Jean de Corbechon's translation of *De proprietatibus rerum* ('lezes propretes dez choses'), a treatise on estate management ('Petrus de Crescencis'), works on astronomy ('liber Almagesti' and 'liber Geomancie'), works on the life of Julius Ceasar ('a booke of Jullius Cesar'), Roman law ('Institutes of Justien Emperer') and Roman warfare ('Veges de larte de Chevalerie'), Aristotle's *Nicomachian Ethics* ('liber Etiques') and the pseudo-Aristotelian *Problemata* ('problemata Aristotilis'), Josephus's *de l'Ancienneté des Juifs* ('liber de Sentence Joseph'), *Somme le Roi* ('Vice et Vertues'), and a meditative text ('meditacions saynt Bernard').³⁸¹ The library is miscellaneous in its content and encompasses most of the genres we would expect to find in the library of a rich and successful fifteenth-century gentleman.

Richard Beadle points to the effect of the grand continental libraries on Fastolf's collection:

Surviving copies of the works that are more or less securely identifiable are often found to exist in the sumptuously produced manuscripts collected in the Franco-Burgundian princely and ducal libraries of the time (for example those of Philippe le Bon, Philippe le Hardi, Charles d'Orléans and Antoine, Le Grand Bâtard de Bourgogne), and notably in the French royal library that had been in Fastolf's charge under Bedford.³⁸²

This might initially appear in-keeping with the French influences on Fastolf's library as mapped out in the discussion of the *Epistle*, where we can see that French literary culture and manuscript production, which had widely influenced the English gentry for a very long time, was continuing to do so in the fifteenth century, with a number of extant book inventories recording French works. However, Beadle goes on to note that Fastolf's collection of works records certain interests that are not so evident elsewhere in these

³⁸¹ For identification and brief description of the texts, as well as notes on the circulation of these works in the great royal European libraries, see Beadle, "Fastolf's French Books," pp.102-105.

³⁸² *Id.*, p.101.

inventories of French works in the libraries of English patrons. Beadle observes that a number of the titles in Spirleng's inventory "are rather unusual in a fifteenth-century English context, and in some cases are not paralleled in other insular collections of this period [...]." ³⁸³ Beadle continues, stating that

[...] a number of the titles listed hang together as a group representative of the vernacular humanism prevalent in French courtly circles in the later fourteenth century, an important intellectual movement otherwise not known to have made any particular impression in England at this time [...]. ³⁸⁴

There are, thus, points at which Fastolf's library departs from the more general fashion for French texts in England – and East Anglia. Furthermore, the activities of the writers and translators in Fastolf's household suggest something of Fastolf's interest in these works and the educational nature of at least part of this collection. It is this particular, distinctive aspect of Fastolf's household's literary interests, what Beadle calls "vernacular humanism", that seems to be most excitedly suggested by these particular entries in John Paston II's inventory of English books.

The *Epistle*, as previously mentioned, appears in a section of the inventory of English books in which the items are "in quayerys": ³⁸⁵

- 7 Item, in quayerys Tully de Senectute in d <...> wheroff ther is no more cleere wretyn <...>
- 8 Item, in quayerys Tully or Cypio de Ami <...> leffte wyth William Worcester, valet
- 9 Item, in quayerys a boke off þe Polecye off In <...>
- 10 Item, in qwayerys a boke de Sapiencia <...> wherin þe ij parson is liknyd to Sapi <...>
- 11 Item, a boke de Othea, text and glose, valet <...> in quayerys

Of the four items "in quayerys" in the inventory, two have immediate connections with the household of Sir John Fastolf: "Tully or Cypio de Ami

³⁸³ *Id.*, p.99.

³⁸⁴ *Id.*, p.100.

³⁸⁵ *PLI*, p.517.

[unclear] leffte wyth William Worcester”, and “a boke de Othea”.³⁸⁶ A further connection, not made clear by the inventory, is that between John Paston II’s other text by Cicero, *de Senectute*, which is most likely to be an English translation also known as *On Old Age*. Caxton printed this text in 1481, alongside the other text by Cicero also in John Paston II’s inventory, *On Friendship*. Caxton’s prologue to *On Old Age* states that the work was ‘[...] translated and thystoryes openly declared by the ordenaunce & desyre of the noble Auncyent knyght Syr Johan Fastolf [...]’.³⁸⁷ Caxton also records that this version of the work was translated by John Tiptoft, Earl of Worcester but, in his *Itineraria Symonis Simeonis et Willelmi de Worcestre*, William Worcester states that, in 1472, he gave Bishop Wainfleet “librum Tulli *de Senectute* per me translatum in anglicis.”³⁸⁸ K. B. McFarlane argues that

[t]he terms in which the proem speaks of Fastolf are similar to those used elsewhere by his secretary [Worcester] and would come better from him than from Tiptoft; and there are in places obvious parallels between the wording of the translation and that of Worcester’s known works. *Tullius of Olde Age* seems to be his rather than the earl’s; and that may be true of its companion *Tullius of Friendship* also.³⁸⁹

We will turn to the engagement of John Paston II with emergent print culture in the next section of this chapter; here, though, I wish particularly to draw attention to the fact that three of the five items of the inventory “in quayers” are linked with translations probably being made in the household of Sir John Fastolf. The extant evidence suggests that John Paston II owned Scrope’s translation of the *Epistle* and it is feasible that both of the Ciceronian texts could have been translated by Worcester. Further textual links between the Fastolf household and John Paston II’s inventory can be seen on ff.152v-153v in the Grete Boke. These folios contain ordinances of war issued by Thomas

³⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁸⁷ *PE*, p.41.

³⁸⁸ *Id.*, pp.41-42. William Worcester, *Itineraries*, ed. John H. Harvey (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), pp.252-253.

³⁸⁹ K. B. McFarlane, “William Worcester: A Preliminary Survey,” in McFarlane, *England in the Fifteenth Century*, (London: Hambledon Press, 1981), pp.218-19.

Montague, Earl of Salisbury, and a summons of surrender.³⁹⁰ G. A. Lester suggests that they “are perhaps copies of documents connected with Fastolf, possibly acquired from William Worcester.”³⁹¹ Fastolf’s household appears to have been, perhaps quite unsurprisingly, identified by John Paston II as useful hub of materials for furnishing his own library. As this “in quayers” section does not, then, constitute the only instance of texts shared between the two households it intimates a manuscript that, once bound, would have two basic organising principles: it records the literary influence of a very particular, personal, hub of text and manuscript production but, within the wider context of Paston’s entire collection of works, its most striking feature becomes its thematic and generic unity. This collection of works is a selection of Ciceronian, classicising texts that attests to a set of humanist interests that are being encouraged by Fastolf within his household and with which Paston engages.

The distribution of texts associated with the Fastolf household amongst the manuscripts of John Paston II indicates an awareness of the variety of texts within the Fastolf household and John Paston II seems to anticipate access to translations of similar advisory works. The “in quayers” section reflects a certain kind of work being produced by members of the Fastolf household. The extant evidence associated with Scrope and Worcester shows that they produced a variety of works that both adhere to the humanist works as collected by Paston and which deviate from it into other genres or interests. Scrope translated another advisory text by de Pisan, the *Dicts and Sayings of the Philosophers*, which Worcester states he “corrected” in 1472.³⁹² The Roxburghe Club, in their 1860 edition of *The Boke of Noblesse*, noted that, whilst the text was addressed to Edward IV, the writer appeared connected with “[s]ir John Fastolfe, knight of the Garter, whom the writer in several places mentions as

³⁹⁰ The text, and its connection to the Fastolf household, is summarised by Thorpe in *Circle of Sir John Fastolf*, p.320.

³⁹¹ G. A. Lester identified the text in Lansdowne. See *SJPGGB*, p.47.

³⁹² McFarlane, “William Worcester,” p.218. McFarlane states that Bühler quoted the wrong year in his edited volume of the work, *Dicts and Sayings of the Philosophers translated by Stephen Scrope from the French of Christine de Pisan*, ed. C. F. Bühler, EETS os 211 (Oxford: OUP, 1941), p.292.

“myne autor.””³⁹³ The only extant copy of the work is found in BL MS Royal 18 XXII with the “title, the colophon, and the long marginal additions [...] in the hand of William Worcester.”³⁹⁴ Although this manuscript and Worcester’s revisions date to c.1475, McFarlane stated that his impression of the text is that “of a treatise begun soon after 1451 and twice altered in the 1470’s,” with the “probability of Worcester’s undivided authorship at every stage”.³⁹⁵ In addition to this treatise and these advisory works, Worcester also produced the now lost *Acta Domina Johannis Fastolf*, and two antiquarian works, *Antiquitates Anglie* and *De Agri Norfolcensis*. The evidence points to the period of 1450-59 as being particularly productive for Stephen Scrope and William Worcester, with Worcester becoming more productive again c.1472-3.

This clustering of literary activity in the last nine years of Fastolf’s life, along with statements in the surviving dedications and prologues of these works, present Sir John as an initiating force behind these translations. His most direct involvement was, of course, in his request to have these works translated, but he also cultivated a library that encouraged (and made possible) such productions. This is most obvious in Scrope’s use of Fastolf’s French copy of the *Epistle* which seems to have been the exemplar for both MS Laud 570 and his translation and Fastolf also had a French translation of Cicero’s *De senectute*, which could have been the exemplar for Worcester’s translation.³⁹⁶ Moreover, those scholars who have focused on the literary activities of the Fastolf

³⁹³ John Gough Nichols, ed. *The Boke of Noblesse*, The Roxburghe Club (New York: Burt Franklin, 1860; repr. 1972), i.

³⁹⁴ “*The Boke of Noblesse* compiled to the most high and mighty Kyng Edward the iiiith for the auaucyng and preferring the comyn of the royaumes of England and of Fraunce” *British Library Online Catalogue*: [http://searcharchives.bl.uk/primo_library/libweb/action/display.do?tabs=detailsTab&ct=display&fn=search&doc=IAMS040-002107516&indx=1&recIds=IAMS040-002107516&recIdxs=0&elementId=0&renderMode=poppedOut&displayMode=full&frbrVersion=&dscnt=0&frbg=&scps.scope%3A%28BL%29&tab=local&dstmp=1532553432314&srt=rank&mode=Basic&&dum=true&vl\(freeText0\)=Royal%2018%20B%20xxii&vid=IAMS_VU2](http://searcharchives.bl.uk/primo_library/libweb/action/display.do?tabs=detailsTab&ct=display&fn=search&doc=IAMS040-002107516&indx=1&recIds=IAMS040-002107516&recIdxs=0&elementId=0&renderMode=poppedOut&displayMode=full&frbrVersion=&dscnt=0&frbg=&scps.scope%3A%28BL%29&tab=local&dstmp=1532553432314&srt=rank&mode=Basic&&dum=true&vl(freeText0)=Royal%2018%20B%20xxii&vid=IAMS_VU2) -accessed 25th July 2018.

³⁹⁵ McFarlane, “William Worcester,” p.215. McFarlane supports this impression with reference to three notebooks of William Worcester’s: BL, Cotton MS Julius F.vii, Royal MS 13.C.i, and Sloane MS 4. These manuscripts record Worcester’s reading of texts from which *The Boke of Noblesse* draws.

³⁹⁶ Bodleian, MS 179 FP 43, f.10, as discussed in Hughes, “Stephen Scrope,” p.130.

household (particularly K. B. McFarlane, Jonathan Hughes, Richard Beadle, Deborah Thorpe, and Daniel Wakelin) have identified a more ambitious and harder to trace form of influence: Hughes, for instance, has suggested that Fastolf had a “pedagogic desire to form and influence young minds and to establish his household as an educational institution.”³⁹⁷ It is, though, difficult to establish to what extent this may have been a collaborative effort between patron/master/step-father and scribes/servants/step-son who appear to have shown independent, if complementary, interests in acquiring and copying texts.³⁹⁸

Worcester was educated at Oxford University, having joined Hart Hall by Easter term, 1432.³⁹⁹ Hughes states that this was at Fastolf’s expense, but the earliest definitive record of Worcester’s service to the knight is not until 1438.⁴⁰⁰

McFarlane, though, points to BL MS Additional 28208, a survey of Castle Combe made on 27th October 1436 that appears to be in Worcester’s hand.⁴⁰¹

Worcester was at Oxford University until 1438, compiling his first (extant) notebook in 1437-38.⁴⁰² If Worcester’s initial connection with Oxford may have predated his connection with Sir John Fastolf, his education and literary tastes, as well as his connections to academics and scribes, certainly allowed him to cultivate his own library of works, and to build a collection that clearly complemented those already circulating within the Fastolf household.

In surveying the extant work of William Worcester, Daniel Wakelin records that “six rough notebooks survive to record his reading, [...]. Besides his notebooks

³⁹⁷ *Id.*, p.131.

³⁹⁸ In the following chapter we will discuss the work of Geoffrey Spirleng whose most significant scribal activity was a copy of the *Canterbury Tales* he completed with his son twenty-seven years after the death of his former employer, Sir John Fastolf. See Glasgow University Library, Hunterian MS U.1.1. Thorpe notes that “[t]here is no written evidence that Spirleng read, was read to, owned, or copied, any literary books during his time in the service of Sir John Fastolf,” although Fastolf’s inventory of French books is written in Spirleng’s hand indicating he clearly “knew Fastolf’s book collection well”. See Deborah Thorpe, “Luket Nantron and Geoffrey Spirleng,” p.207.

³⁹⁹ Thorpe, *Circle of Sir John Fastolf*, p.59.

⁴⁰⁰ Hughes, “Stephen Scrope,” p.130.

⁴⁰¹ McFarlane, “William Worcester,” p.202, fn.18.

⁴⁰² Hughes, “Stephen Scrope,” p.132.

twenty-three manuscripts still survive with marginalia or at least an *ex libris* in his distinctive handwriting.”⁴⁰³ Of these, two of the notebooks, BL MS Cotton Julius FVII and BL MS Royal 13 C1, appear particularly pertinent to the texts translated by Worcester and Scrope under the patronage of Sir John Fastolf. These two notebooks contain the rubrics from Chretien de Troyes’ French translation of the *Metamorphoses*, extracts from Seneca’s *De beneficiis*, extracts from Cicero, Seneca and Terence gathered under headings such as virtue and friendship, and extracts from a chronicle on the Carthaginian wars and accounts of campaigns by Julius Caesar and Pompey (copied from Fastolf’s manuscript, BL MS Royal 13 C1).⁴⁰⁴ Some of these items were copied from manuscripts in Fastolf’s library, but, of course, Worcester’s literary endeavours were not solely dependent on the texts owned by the knight. Worcester purchased a Greek manuscript (Bodleian MS Auct. F.3.25) containing three plays by Sophocles, three by Euripides, and extracts from Hesiod, Pindar and Theocritus, though, as McFarlane points out, “for once there is no mark to show that he ever read any of it”.⁴⁰⁵ In 1449, Worcester appears to commission his own manuscript along with texts in separate quires. John Crop writes to Worcester and includes an update on the work of a “Mayster Rauf Hoby”:

I spake with Mayster Hoby as for ij queyers, as that [letter] made mencion, and he seid me his bokes [were] remevid of his chaumbre, for a lady that aly in his chaumbre, like as he told yow. But he sied me that it shuld be redy [lokid vp] in that wike. Also, he graunte me the cople of Wallens *De vita et doctrina filosoforum*, also the queiere of Oved, *De vetula*, *De remedio moris* [sic.], *De arte amande*[sic.], and of the verse vp-on Boicius.⁴⁰⁶

Hoby was, according to Worcester, a professor of theology at Oxford and Thorpe takes this to suggest that the connection between the two men was forged while Worcester studied there. Worcester’s interest in works also read within the Fastolf household seems to originate prior to his service. It could be

⁴⁰³ Wakelin, *Humanism*, p.94.

⁴⁰⁴ *Id.*, p.131.

⁴⁰⁵ McFarlane, “William Worcester,” p.215.

⁴⁰⁶ *PLIII*, p.71. Also discussed in Thorpe, *Circle of Sir John Fastolf*, pp.266-6 and Wakelin, *Humanism*, p.96.

suggested that this pre-existing interest in such works might have made him a more attractive prospective employee to Fastolf. What can be stated with greater certainty is that there is a kind of gathering centre of interest, a sort of intellectual momentum, in Fastolf's household which can be seen in Paston's inventory and which evidently formed an important part of his East Anglian reading culture.

The translations made by Worcester and Scrope lead Wakelin to argue that those writers of the Fastolf circle had a "house style": that there is not only a similarity in the kinds of works being read and translated but that these writers share certain approaches to their chosen texts. Wakelin proposes, for instance, that Scrope and Worcester use the past as an imperfect authority:⁴⁰⁷ that is, that they *contest* the authority of the classical past and mine it for fleeting comparison and allusion by which to glorify the present. This, though, was not an approach peculiar to this pair of scribes and translators: "Worcester's treatise [...], in both its specificities and in its general favour for classical history, echoes the wider trend for giving authority to one's work with classical dressings, the trend found in other fifteenth-century writings."⁴⁰⁸ Douglas Gray characterised Scrope's treatment of ancient myth in the *Epistle* as reflecting "the older 'medieval humanism' [...]. There is much less insistence on the difference between the ancient and the contemporary world. The ancient heroes and places are 'medievalized' [...] and the strange is made familiar."⁴⁰⁹ For Gray, this 'medieval humanism' allowed for an emotional closeness to these ancient stories. These "medievalized" ancient heroes and the emotional closeness brought to the *Epistle* or the Ciceronian works by Scrope and Worcester through their translations may have been processes through which the advice imparted by such works was hoped to resonate with Fastolf. The works were made after Fastolf had retired from his military career and one cannot help but notice the focus of these texts on leading a quieter life of advising powerful men rather than engaging with more active duties of leadership. They appear as

⁴⁰⁷ Wakelin, *Humanism*, pp.110-111.

⁴⁰⁸ *Id.*, p.111.

⁴⁰⁹ Gray, "*Othea*", pp.245-246.

works that might console a knight no longer in active service to his country, using the legendary heroes of the ancient world to argue for Fastolf spending his retirement in the more noble pursuit of assisting in state-craft, to spend his old age in “contemplacion of morall wysdome and exercising gostly werkkyyss [...]”.⁴¹⁰ How such works were received by Fastolf is unknown. Nor can we tell if these works were commissioned by Fastolf as part of an “educational programme for his household”.⁴¹¹ What we can see with the circulation of Scrope’s translation of the *Epistle* (and as we will go on to see in the final part of this chapter with Worcester’s translation of the Ciceronian works) is that these texts had an audience outside of the Fastolf household and that this “house style” held a wider appeal.

After Fastolf’s death in 1459, Worcester continued with his translation and copying of classical texts (alongside numerous other activities including his biography of Fastolf and his antiquarian *Itinerary*). He presented his translation of Cicero’s *On Old Age*, a work he had originally undertaken for Fastolf, to Bishop Wainfleet, in 1472, when the Bishop was heavily involved in the administration of Fastolf’s will. Worcester’s gift appears to have been an attempt to remind the Bishop of both Worcester’s and Fastolf’s interest in education. He was also reciprocating a gift-in-kind of a manuscript of Boccaccio’s *De casibus virorum illustrium* that he had received from Wainfleet in 1461.⁴¹² Daniel Wakelin notes that, in 1472, Worcester was seeking to avoid a legal judgement in relation to Fastolf’s will that went in the Bishop’s favour (and to his own detriment).⁴¹³ To Wakelin, Worcester’s gifts were, “to some extent, an investment in ownership and ‘networking’”.⁴¹⁴ However, the type of works being gifted appear to be notably pointed. Wakelin argues that Worcester presents himself as one humanist seeking commonality with another, Wainfleet, and reminding the Bishop that those interests were shared by Fastolf. Wakelin

⁴¹⁰ Bühler, *Othea*, p.121. The full transcription of Scrope’s dedication to Fastolf, taken from Bath, Longleat, MS 253, can be found in Appendix A in Bühler’s work.

⁴¹¹ Hughes, “Stephen Scrope,” p.135.

⁴¹² Wakelin, *Humanism*, p.97.

⁴¹³ *Ibid.*

⁴¹⁴ *Ibid.*

suggests that the inscription on the flyleaf of *Liber de sacramentis ecclesiae* is a “humanist gesture”:

To his most worshipful master William Waynflete, bishop of the seat of the cathedral church of St Swithin of Winchester, which once before the time of the consecration was called the temple of Dagon in the era of the pagan people.⁴¹⁵

Whether this is quite *humanist*, Worcester’s dedication certainly demonstrates his *antiquarian* interests, showcasing his research and sharing it with Wainflete in what Wakelin calls ‘knowledge transactions.’⁴¹⁶ And the choice of texts itself also seems quite pointed. If the dedication of the *Liber de sacramentis ecclesiae* is intended to showcase Worcester’s antiquarian interests, then the dedication of *On Old Age* may well have suggested the sorts of qualities that Worcester was hoping to encourage in Wainflete.

The works undertaken by Scrope and Worcester either as gifts to or at the request of Sir John Fastolf were completed or, at least, started during the 1450s. Each of the works comments on the qualities a knight should demonstrate in his old age. In Scrope’s dedication of the *Epistle* to Fastolf (extant in Longleat, MS 253), he describes for his step-father how

by reuloucion and successyon of lx yeeres growyn vpon yowe at this tyme of age and feebleness, ys comen abating youre bodly laboures taking away yowre natural streyntht & power from all such labouris as concernyth the exercising off dedis of cheuallrie, by it yowre noble courage and affeccion of such noble & worchipfull actis and desiryys departyth not from yow, yet ryght necessarie [it] now were to occupie the tyme of yowre agys and feblenes of bodie in gostly cheuallrie of dedes of armes spirituall, as in contemplacion of morall wysdome and exercising gostly werkkyys [...].⁴¹⁷

⁴¹⁵ *Ibid.*, Translated from the Latin by Wakelin. Original document, Oxford, Magdalen College, MS lat.26, flyleaf, fii^v.

⁴¹⁶ *Ibid.* Wakelin quotes Lisa Jardine and William Sherman, ‘Pragmatic Readers: Knowledge Transactions and Scholarly Services in Late Elizabethan England,’ in *Religion, Culture and Society in Early Modern Britain: Essays in Honour of Patrick Collinson*, eds. Anthony Fletcher and Peter Roberts, (Cambridge: CUP, 1994), pp.102-3.

⁴¹⁷ Bühler, *Othea*, p.121 and Appendix A.

Scrope emphasises a spiritual chivalry of a kind that is also echoed by another text in John Paston II's inventory of English books, *Guy of Warwick*. This poem focuses on the life of Guy as a pilgrim, but his geographical pilgrimage which occupies the middle section of the tale is eclipsed by the virtue and high moral merit he acquires through his spiritual pilgrimage which he undertakes upon becoming a hermit in his later years.⁴¹⁸ This may, perhaps, be a common trope or attitude in relation to the retirement of a powerful knight. It is certainly an idea with which Caxton engages in the prologue to his 1481 edition of Cicero's *On Old Age* which is most likely to have been the version translated by Worcester. Here Caxton advertises Cicero's advice to "counseilleth olde men to loyeful, and bere pacyently olde age whan it cometh to them," but, also, "the worshippe, recommendacyon, magnyfycence that shold be gyuen to men of olde age, for theyr desertes, experience in wysedom of polytyque gouernaunce".⁴¹⁹ Such messages might feasibly, if rather doubtfully, have been offered to someone both Scrope and Worcester knew well for much is often made of Fastolf's temperament and the ways in which these two men seek to negotiate this difficult personality.⁴²⁰ The gift of *On Old Age* to the seventy-three-year-old Bishop of Winchester, though, together with a dedication that might similarly seek to advise him to embody certain characteristics, appears less well judged. However, the gifting of a work that demonstrated Worcester's learning and reminded Wainflete of Fastolf's interest in and active promotion of education may have constituted a legible appeal to common interests, perhaps made in the hope that Wainflete would honour what seemed the single most important element in Fastolf's will, the founding of a college at Caister.

⁴¹⁸ The Stanzaic *Guy* is extant in Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland, Advocates' MS 19.2.1 (the Auchinleck Manuscript), fols. 146vb-167rb. See, Wiggins, *Stanzaic Guy of Warwick*.

⁴¹⁹ Caxton, "Tullius of Olde Age," in *PE*, p.41.

⁴²⁰ K. B. McFarlane, "The Investment of Sir John Fastolf's Profits of War," and "William Worcester: A Preliminary Survey," both in K. B. McFarlane, *England in the Fifteenth Century: Collected Essays*, (London: The Hambleton Press, 1981), pp.173-197 and pp.199-224, respectively. Richmond, *The Paston Family in the Fifteenth Century*, volumes 1, 2, and 3. Hughes, "Stephen Scrope," pp.109-146. Wakelin, *Humanism*, pp.93-125.

William Wainfleet's interests in education and books were a key feature of his career. In 1430 he became the headmaster of Winchester College and he went on to become the provost of Eton College. He is first referred to as a bachelor of theology in 1443 (although it is not known when he started),⁴²¹ and was consecrated as the bishop of Winchester in 1447 before, in the following year, starting the foundation of Magdalen Hall in Oxford.⁴²² As Virginia Davis explains, "[h]is reasons for establishing Magdalen Hall were set out as the not uncommon ones of wishing to stamp out heresy and provide well-educated and suitable clergy to serve in parishes."⁴²³ The year before Sir John Fastolf's death in 1459, upon which William Wainfleet would become one of the executors of the knight's will, the Hall was "refounded as Magdalen College".⁴²⁴ Much of the money for the project came from property acquired specifically for the endowment of the college, but, with the death of Sir John Fastolf, the conflicting aspirations of two powerful men interested in education came to the foreground. As previously stated, a key feature of the will of Fastolf was his desire to found a college at Caister, a project (according to John Paston I) he feared would not reach completion unless his property was posthumously placed in the sole administration of John Paston I:

Causa festine barganie inter Fastolf et Paston Vltima exitacio domini Johannis Fastolf ad concludendum festinanter cum Johanne Paston fuit quod vicecomes Bemonde, dux Somerset, comes Warwyk, voluerunt emere et quod intendebat quod executores sui desiderabant vendere et non stabilire colegium; quod totaliter fuit contra intencionem sui dicti Johannis Fastolf. Et considerabat quod certum medium pro licencia Regis et dominorum non prouidebatur, et sic tota fundacio colegij pendebat in dubijs. Et idio ad intencionem suam perimplendam desiderauit dictum barganium fieri cum Johanne Paston, sperans ipsum in mera voluntate

⁴²¹ Virginia Davis, "Waynfleet, William (c.1400-1486), bishop of Winchester and founder of Magdalen College, Oxford," *ODNB*: <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/28907> - accessed 12th April 2016.

⁴²² *Ibid.*

⁴²³ *Ibid.*

⁴²⁴ *Ibid.*

perficiendi dictum colegium et ibidem manere ne in manibus
dominorum veniat.⁴²⁵

[...] the final appeal of Sir John Fastolf in concluding hastily with John Paston was that viscount Beaumont, the Duke of Somerset, the Earl of Warwick wished to buy [Caister], and that he considered that his executors desired to sell and not to establish a college, which was completely contrary to the intention of him, the said John Fastolf. And he considered that a sure means for the permission of the King and of the lords had not been provided, and so the whole foundation of the college hung in doubt. And, therefore, for the fulfilment of his intention he wished to make the said bargain with John Paston, hoping that he would have a genuine wish to complete the said college and would remain there so that it should not fall into hands of the Lords.⁴²⁶

Colin Richmond's view of the question marks over the validity of Fastolf's nuncupative will reacts to John Paston I's reports of "the disagreements and differences of opinion among the executors."⁴²⁷ As Richmond explains,

The college was the heart of the matter. [...] John [Paston I] was a relative, he had been trustworthy, he got things done, and one cook might indeed save the broth where many had been known to spoil it. [...] I am more rather than less certain that Sir John Fastolf intended to leave all his lands to John on condition that he brought Caister college into being.⁴²⁸

Whilst a lot of the family's energy, after Fastolf's death on 5th November 1459, is focused on maintaining their hold on his property, the duties Fastolf expected them to undertake were clear.

Unfortunately for Fastolf and the young men of Norfolk who would have benefitted from this establishment, William Wainfleet's role as executor to the

⁴²⁵ *PLI*, p.103. This is by John Paston I and is a draft statement of Fastolf's intention. Written after the knight's death in 1459 but before Paston's death in 1466.

⁴²⁶ Translation made by Mary Harris, printed in Colin Richmond, *The Paston Family, the First Phase*, p.256.

⁴²⁷ *Id.*, p.257.

⁴²⁸ *Id.*, pp.257-8.

will conflicted with his own collegiate ambitions. In 1474, “Waynfleet, disregarding Fastolf’s own stipulations for alternative provision, and aided by a dispensation from Pope Sixtus IV (r. 1471-84), diverted the endowment to his own college of Magdalen, where Fastolf was to be commemorated by the establishment of Fastolf fellows.”⁴²⁹ The desires of these two powerful men to improve the education of their communities were not the only elements of their engagement with literary culture to overlap. And, it would seem, William Worcester was using his own interests in literature and translation to exploit these similarities.

2.3: *The Game and Playe of the Chesse*, the Fastolf Household, and the early printed works of William Caxton

One question that emerges from John Paston’s ownership of the works of Scrope and Worcester is his relation to the earliest English printed materials, and particularly those produced by Caxton in Westminster in the 1470s and 1480s. The clearest connection between Caxton and the works in Paston’s inventory can be seen in *Game*, which is item four in Paston’s list. Paston clearly states that this text is “in preente”. The date range for the possible time at which this document was written is, as previously discussed, determined by the printing of the first edition of this work by Caxton and Paston’s death in 1479. This later date means that Paston owned the first printed edition of Caxton’s work, rather than the 1483 iteration, which, as I will go on to discuss, was actually printed in Bruges. Paston’s ownership of this work shows a very early engagement with printed works that hints at a Burgundian influence on his library, but another line of enquiry raised by the relationship between his inventory and the works printed by Caxton from his Westminster press shows how this influence interacted with the advisory works translated by Scrope and Worcester which were owned, in manuscript form, by John Paston II. This entry in the inventory and the section “in quayers” thus presents a complex and reciprocal relationship between manuscript and print culture.

⁴²⁹ Davis, “Waynfleet, William”.

Game is one of the earliest English translations printed by William Caxton and is not the only item within Paston's inventory to be associated with this printer. George Painter noted that one of the earliest items to come out of Caxton's Westminster press was *The Horse, the Sheep, and the Goose* (c.1476), which also appears in item five in Paston's inventory.⁴³⁰ Another work from John Paston II's inventory to be printed in the early years of Caxton's English press was *The Parliament of Fowls* (c.1477-78). Furthermore, John Paston II may have also owned a manuscript copy of the *Canterbury Tales*, which Caxton would print in 1477. Although the *Canterbury Tales* does not appear within the inventory itself, Bodleian MS Bodley 414 (hereafter referred to as Bodley) contains the work and seems to have belonged to the Paston family at some point; we will return to this in more detail in the following chapter. The dates of Caxton's printing of these works coincide with the possible dates of composition for John Paston II's inventory of books and indicates both men engaging with the circulation of these works both in printed and manuscript form at around the same time, or certainly within Paston's lifetime.

Beyond Paston's lifespan we see that Caxton also printed Worcester's translations of Cicero's *On Old Age* and *On Friendship* (1481), both of which appear in the "in quayers" section of Paston's inventory) and *Troilus and Criseyde* (1483), item two of the inventory. Caxton also printed Malory's *Le Morte Darthur* (1485).⁴³¹ We do not know which version of the death of Arthur is referred to in item one of the inventory. It could not, most obviously, have been the Caxton print, but it could feasibly have been a manuscript form of Malory's work. Malory and John Paston II were certainly contemporaries at the English court, though Richard Barber draws a distinction between the circles of the two men, stating that Sir John Astley, Sir Anthony Woodville and John II were part of one court group, whilst Malory was amongst the "throng of minor

⁴³⁰ Painter, *William Caxton*, p.85.

⁴³¹ The *Canterbury Tales* does not appear in the Inventory of English Books but Bodleian MS Bodley 414 contains this work and is associated with the Paston family. It is discussed in detail in the following chapter.

gentry".⁴³² Raluca Radulescu notes that Malory, Woodville and Astley were all present at Edward IV's campaign at Alnwick in 1462 and presents the possibility that Astley's sister, in marrying Thomas Appleby, married a relation of Malory's servant, John Appleby.⁴³³ Furthermore, Richard Griffith has suggested that Malory had access to the library of Anthony Woodville during the writing of his Arthurian works.⁴³⁴ These connections present the tantalising possibility that John Paston II's "off þe Dethe off Arthur" was Malory's work, but we do find other iterations of Arthurian material circulating both within John Paston II's library (ff.153v-154r of Lansdowne, a letter from Lucius Hiberus to King Arthur, is an extract from Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britanniae*) and within the royal library.⁴³⁵ Elizabeth Woodville received, as a gift from her cousin-in-law, Alyanor Haute, Richard Roos' manuscript of the vulgate *Queste* and *Mort Artu*.⁴³⁶ The circulation of Arthurian texts within the libraries of the Woodvilles, John Paston II and Thomas Malory highlight the popularity of these tales amongst the gentry and aristocracy, a popularity on which Caxton appears to have capitalised in his printing of Malory's work in 1485.⁴³⁷

A consideration of Caxton's early printed works in relation to the lifetime of John Paston II rather obviously imposes an arbitrary focus on the productions of England's first printing press. However, what such a comparison of Paston's inventory and Caxton's bibliography show is the popularity of these works. In

⁴³² Richard Barber, 'Malory's *Le Morte Darthur* and Court Culture under Edward IV,' in *Arthurian Literature XII* (1993), p.135. cf. Raluca Radulescu, *Arthurian Studies IV: The Gentry Context for Malory's Morte Darthur* (Cambridge: Brewer, 2003), p.41; and Karen Cherevatuk "'Gentyl Audiences" and "Grete Bokes": Chivalric Manuals and the *Morte Darthur*, in *Arthurian Literature XV* (1997), pp.205-16.

⁴³³ Radulescu, *Gentry Context for Malory's "Morte Darthur"*, p.41. For the marriage of Sir John Astley's sister Radulescu draws on the work of Edward Hicks, *Sir Thomas Malory: His Turbulent Career* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1928, repr. New York, 1970), p.17.

⁴³⁴ Ralph R. Griffith, "The Authorship Question Reconsidered," in T. Takamiya and D. Brewer (eds), *Arthurian Studies I: Aspects of Malory*, (Cambridge: Brewer, 1981), pp.159-77. Paraphrased by Radulescu, *Gentry Context for Malory's "Morte Darthur"*, p.42.

⁴³⁵ Lester identified the text in Lansdowne. See *SJPG*, p.175.

⁴³⁶ Meale, "Laywomen and their books," p.140.

⁴³⁷ Caxton, "Kyng Arthur", in *PE*, pp.92-95.

being printed by Caxton at the beginning of establishing his press in England these works are shown to be popular enough to be marketable. As we will see when we turn to look at John Paston II's ownership of works by Chaucer and Lydgate, the items of his inventory appear in numerous extant manuscripts, indicating a large audience for these texts. The comparison reiterates something already known and quite obvious about Caxton: that he was influenced by the popular works circulating in the late fifteenth century. What is interesting about Paston's inventory, then, is that it shows a reciprocity in that influence; Paston's library is representative of the kinds of works that would appeal to Caxton whilst also recording the influence of Caxton's early printed works on his collection. We may well find over the course of these next few chapters that Paston owns the sorts of texts one would expect of an East Anglian gentleman, but that is not to suggest (as has already been suggested in this and the preceding chapter) that this was a passive reception of works. We have seen him cultivate and curate his collection and his owning of the second work by Caxton to be printed in English is an exciting hint at his engagement with the emerging new form of textual production. However, and complexly, even as we sense something new or different being recorded by Paston's inventory, *Game* and those very early works printed by Caxton return us to Worcester, Scrope, and the humanistic advisory texts of John Paston II's collection.

Before we consider the interaction between manuscript and print culture in relation to the English translations of these advisory works, it should be noted that such mingling of printed and manuscript materials may also be seen in the French versions of these texts. The list of French works owned by the Duke of Norfolk has been discussed above, and we noted in passing there the possibility raised by Collier that, as in John Paston II's inventory, the list may have recorded a combination of manuscripts and incunables, since a number of the named works had "been issued from continental presses before 1480".⁴³⁸ Of the fourteen titles included in the Duke of Norfolk's list of French titles (copied

⁴³⁸ Collier, *Household Books*, xxvii.

c.1481), the following are contemporaneous editions produced by continental printers:⁴³⁹

“La Destruction de Troye le grant, mise par Personnaiges”	Printed by Jehan Bonhomme	Paris, 1484
“La Recuel des histories troianes” (in French)	Printed by Caxton	Before 1470
“The Recyuell of the Historyes of Troye”	Translated and printed by Caxton	Cologne, 1471
“L’Arbre de Batailles,” Honoré Bonhor	-	Lyons, 1477 and 1481
If “Pontius” is “Ponthus et la belle Sidoyne”	Printed by Caspar Ortuin	Lyons, 1500
“Sir Baudin, cōte de Flandres”	-	Lyons, 1473
“L’Amant rendu Cordelier à l’observance d’amours”	Germain Vincaut	Paris, 1490
“Les Dits de Sages” / “Les dessages”	Unknown	Unknown
“Paris and the Fair Vienne”	Gerard Leeu William Caxton	Antwerp, 1487 [London?], 1485

From this table we can see that at least three of these works may have been owned by Howard in a printed form, given that they were circulating in print prior to the inventory being written circa 1481, with the further possibility that “Les Dits de Sages” was in print by this time. The rest of these works must have been in manuscript form and the inventory thus describes a mix of forms similar to that which appear in John Paston II’s library. Furthermore, John Howard also owned a copy of *La Jeu de Echex*, which Collier suggests may well have been a copy of the French original of Caxton’s *Game* (if not a copy of Caxton’s text). Howard also had the French original of *The Dicts and Sayings of the Philosophers*, which Scrope and Anthony Woodville would both translate, with Caxton printing Woodville’s version in 1477. As Collier observed, all of these works seem to have enjoyed a surge of popularity in the final decades of the fifteenth century. These works appear as popular, pervasive, and display a set of interests that overlap with those recorded by John Paston II’s inventory.

Richard Beadle’s survey of John Fastolf’s French books highlighted both the direct influence of the French royal library on his collection and the ways in

⁴³⁹ The information in the following table is taken from Collier, *Household Books*, xxvii-xxix.

which such a collection was typical of the libraries of the great continental magnates (primarily Philippe le Bon, Philippe le Hardi, Charles d'Orléans, and Antoine, Le Grand Bâtard de Bourgogne).⁴⁴⁰ The works in the library of the Duke of Norfolk, and Collier's survey of their circulation in early print, both reiterates the influence of French manuscript culture on the libraries of the East Anglian gentry, which we have already seen earlier in this chapter, but also suggests that these texts were, towards the end of the fifteenth century, circulating in both manuscript and print. Collier's work suggests the possibility that members of the East Anglian gentry were engaging with this French print culture as well as the circulation of French manuscripts. Whilst we have seen some of the ways this French manuscript culture influenced the library of Fastolf and, in turn, that of John Paston II, the printed texts associated with both of these households lead us not to consider the French court but, rather, to explore the influence of the Burgundian court on the literary culture of East Anglia by way of the court of Edward IV.

Caxton's first work for the royal family of York was produced in 1473 or 1474: his translation into English of the *Recuyell of the historyes of Troye* for Edward IV's sister, Margaret. Margaret of York married Charles the Bold, Duke of Burgundy in 1468. As noted in Chapter One, John Paston II and III were part of the retinue that accompanied Margaret to her wedding, and John III recorded the lavish celebrations of this event partly overseen by Antoine, Le Grand Bâtard de Bourgogne.⁴⁴¹ This marriage created a useful political alliance between England and Burgundy in a period in which Edward IV was at war with France, but it also provided a turning-point in the literary culture of the English royal family. Christine Weightman notes that it was not until Margaret married Charles the Bold that she "had personal access to a really large and comprehensive collection [of books]."⁴⁴² The extant evidence of the Yorkist family's commissioning or reading texts prior to this marriage is limited to a translation of a French hunting manual made by Margaret's great-uncle,

⁴⁴⁰ Beadle, "Fastolf's French Books," pp.102-106.

⁴⁴¹ *PLI*, lxix and p.539.

⁴⁴² Weightman, *Margaret of York*, p.204.

Edward, Duke of York, her father's commission of "at least one translation from the classics", and her mother's "library of religious books."⁴⁴³ Upon her marriage she gained potential access "to one of the greatest [libraries] in Europe, not only in quantity, but also in quality and variety."⁴⁴⁴ Margaret's access to the ducal library does present a problem if we are to attempt to recover a sense of her reading as she could clearly have engaged with many more texts than those recorded in the manuscripts and incunables created either as gifts for her or at her request. Nonetheless, Weightman's survey of the books directly associated with Margaret identifies twenty-five manuscripts as "having been 'visibly' in Margaret's possession", making this "one of the largest collections of this period traced to female ownership."⁴⁴⁵ Of these twenty-five books, only four "were of secular or classical origin": Boethius's *De Consolatione Philosophiae*; *Des Faiz du Grant Alexandre*; Jean Mansel's *La Fleur des Hystoires*; and *Les Chroniques de Flandre*.⁴⁴⁶ The majority of the books associated with Margaret are, perhaps unsurprisingly, on religious subjects but the three histories listed here do show an engagement with one of the primary genres for which the Burgundian court was known: historical writing.⁴⁴⁷ It is perhaps to this interest that Caxton wished to appeal when he undertook his first English translation, *Recuyell of the histories of Troye*.

Caxton was in service to Margaret of Burgundy by 1471, the year in which he completed his translation of the *Recuyell* (which would go on to be printed in 1475).⁴⁴⁸ He had been in Bruges since 1462 as the governor of the Merchant Adventurers but had left this role by March 1471, when he started to receive a yearly fee from Margaret.⁴⁴⁹ Caxton was hardly the only producer of texts to be favoured by the Burgundian court. As Weightman notes, "the rulers of Burgundy and their successor the Archduke Maximilian were distinguished by

⁴⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴⁶ *Id.*, p.205-6.

⁴⁴⁷ *Id.*, p.205.

⁴⁴⁸ *PLI*, lxxi

⁴⁴⁹ Weightman, "Margaret of York," p.209.

their visits to the studios of their book-makers and artists.”⁴⁵⁰ The scribe, David Aubert received such visits from Philip the Good and Charles the Bold and produced manuscripts for both of these men and, on the death of Charles, for Margaret. Aubert was responsible for over a third of the manuscripts associated with Margaret.⁴⁵¹ Aubert’s manuscripts include miniatures of those visits made by his illustrious patrons to his workshop and Caxton continues this tradition, as Alexandra Gillespie writes:

Caxton’s carefully presented *Recyuell* with its detailed account of Margaret of Burgundy’s patronage may have attracted the attention of Elizabeth Woodville, wife of Edward IV, and sometime patron (solicited or real) of Caxton’s press. She was the likely owner of the only surviving copy of the 1473-4 *Recuyell* that includes an engraved presentation scene depicting her kinswoman Margaret.⁴⁵²

It is through this copy of the *Recyuell* (San Marino, CA, Huntington Library, MS 62222) that we can map one of the ways in which Margaret’s patronage of Caxton influenced the English royal library and the way this resonates, in turn, with the volumes owned by John Paston II. Gillespie points to the inscription on the penultimate flyleaf which identifies Elizabeth Woodville as the book’s owner but also records the name of ‘thomas Shukburghe’.⁴⁵³ Gillespie traces the movement of this manuscript from the highest household in England and the circle of Caxton’s royal patrons through “Caxton’s immediate circle of gentlemen ‘frendes’” to the wider gentry and the merchant class.⁴⁵⁴

The *Game* was the second work to be translated by Caxton into English and was completed in Bruges as, as Christine Weightman suspects, a tactical overture towards the Duke of Clarence.⁴⁵⁵ Weightman postulates that the text “was

⁴⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵¹ *Id.*, pp.206-7.

⁴⁵² Alexandra Gillespie, “Caxton and Fifteenth-Century English Books,” in Gillespie, *Print Culture and the Medieval Author: Chaucer, Lydgate, and Their Books, 1473-1557*, (Oxford: OUP, 2006), p.32.

⁴⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵⁴ *Id.*, p.33.

⁴⁵⁵ For the date of this text see, Caxton, “The Game and Playe of Chesse,” in *PE*, p.16.

printed in preparation for Caxton's move to London and it is more likely that Margaret [of Burgundy, the Duke's sister] had encouraged the printer to seek her brother's patronage."⁴⁵⁶ Caxton's epilogue to the text hopes for the "shadow of your [Clarence's] noble protection", whilst the prologue to the 1475 edition stresses that this was an endeavour Caxton took on at his own initiative, rather than at the request of Clarence: "[t]herfore I haue put me in deuour to translate a lytyll book late comen in to myn hands out of frensh in to englisshe."⁴⁵⁷ He hastens to add that, whilst he has selected an advisory work to translate and dedicate to Clarence, he is not "presuming to correcte or enpoigne ony thyng ayenst your noblesse. For god be thankyd your excellent renome shyneth as well in strange regions as with in the royaume of england [...]."⁴⁵⁸ Despite this speculative overture to Clarence, Caxton does not appear to have gained much support for this effort. Weightman goes on to track Caxton's progress in England by way of his patrons, and whilst the printer finds a foundation for his works in his collaboration with Anthony Woodville, it is this work produced for Clarence that finds its way into John Paston II's inventory.

Thirteen copies of Caxton's 1474/5 edition survive, although BL G.10543 and Yale Center for British Art, GV1442.C3 are imperfect.⁴⁵⁹ None of the surviving copies has been identified as belonging to the Paston family. However, BL C.10.b.23 has the Wriothesley arms blazoned on f.3 and Lester, in tracing the later history of the Grete Boke, notes that the Wriothesley crest, and the initials of Sir Thomas Wrythe, appear on f.2 of Landsowne, which is, as A.I. Doyle notes, in the same style and fashion in both instances.⁴⁶⁰ Lester also notes that BL C.10.b.23 contains a list of 'the names of the banerettis made at the batell of

⁴⁵⁶ Weightman, *Margaret of York*, p.212.

⁴⁵⁷ Caxton, "The Game and Playe of Chesse," in *PE*, p.16. and p.10, respectively.

⁴⁵⁸ *Id.*, p.12.

⁴⁵⁹ BL, "ISTC No. ic00413000: Cessolis, Jacobus de:

De ludo scachorum [English] The play of chess. Translated by William Caxton, from the French of Jean de Vignay" *British Library ISTC*: <https://data.cerl.org/istc/ic00413000> - accessed 4th August 2018. "USTC 438841," *USTC*:

<https://ustc.ac.uk/index.php/record/438841> - accessed 4th August 2018.

⁴⁶⁰ *SJPG*, p.58-9. A. I. Doyle, "The Work of a Late Fifteenth-Century English Scribe, William Ebesham," in *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library, Manchester*, vol.39 (1956-7), p.307, nt.1.

stoke'.⁴⁶¹ John Paston III was at the Battle of Stoke and received his knighthood on the field and BL MS Add. 34889, f.135, which Lester suggests is in the hand of John III, also contains a list of those knighted at the battle.⁴⁶² Doyle observes that this coincidence “has occasioned the conjecture that this is the actual copy of the *Game* in the elder Sir John’s inventory, pursuing the same descent as Lansdowne [...],” a theory Lester presents without comment.⁴⁶³ Others in the list of extant copies of the 1474/5 edition include late-fifteenth- or early-sixteenth-century inscriptions. Although none of these names can be linked with the Paston family, the inscription “Ioh[an]n[es] brigges knyghte gent stuard” in CUL Inc. 3.F.3.2 shows someone of a similar social status to John Paston II as a possible owner of this work.⁴⁶⁴

The other particularly noteworthy copy of the 1474/5 edition is Bodleian Arch.G.d.2. Here, the *Game* was formerly bound with the *Recuyell of the historyes of Troye*.⁴⁶⁵ The book would, at one time, have been a small collection of the two texts by Caxton to be translated into English and printed whilst he was in

⁴⁶¹ *SJPG*, p.59.

⁴⁶² *PLI*, lx and *SJPG*, p.59. BL Additional MS. 34889 f.135r.

⁴⁶³ *SJPG*, pp.58-9. Doyle, “William Ebesham,” p.307, fn.1.

⁴⁶⁴ New York, Pierpont Morgan, ChL1692, f.9v includes the names “Nycolas Bardons, George Blanchard, Thomas Wause, Pette Thomas, Thomas Anyngton, George Lodfort” in hands dated to the fifteenth or sixteenth century: http://corsair.themorgan.org/cgi-bin/Pwebrecon.cgi?v1=4&ti=1,4&Search_Arg=caxton%20game%20chess&Search_Code=GKEY%5E&CNT=50&PID=auLjlbwjorKei4qabkGvoSnObSRM&SEQ=20180804062110&SID=1 - accessed 4th August 2018. Huntington Library 82738 contains “faintly illegible contemporary ms annotations”: <http://catalog.huntington.org/search?/Xcaxton+game+chess&SORT=D/Xcaxton+game+chess&SORT=D&SUBKEY=caxton+game+chess/1%2C5%2C5%2CB/frameset&FF=Xcaxton+game+chess&SORT=D&5%2C5%2C> [accessed 4th August 2018]. CUL Inc.3.F.3.2 9v contains the names “Iohannes euryte”, “Briggys Richarde Will[i]am Stuard Ioh[an]n[es] brigges knyghte gent stuard, inscriptions that are dated fifteenth-sixteenth century: https://idiscover.lib.cam.ac.uk/primo-explore/fulldisplay?docid=44CAM_ALMA21484458430003606&context=L&vid=44CAM_PROD&lang=en_US&search_scope=default_scope&adaptor=Local%20Search%20Engine&tab=default_tab&query=any,contains,caxton%20chess&sortby=rank - accessed 4th August 2018.

⁴⁶⁵ “Bodleian Library, Arch. G.d.2,” *Incunables*:

<http://incunables.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/record/C-168> - accessed 4th August 2018.

Bruges. The combination highlights an engagement with the early productions of Caxton, which is echoed in the Inventory of English Books. Caxton made a second edition of *Game* in 1483, indicating the popularity of the work. Jenny Adams has noted the changes in the prologues of the two iterations of the work, with the removal of the dedication to the Duke of Clarence and, instead, a more general address. Caxton relays how he decided that, for the edification of those who could not read French or Latin, he chose to translate this work “in to our maternal tonge” and the success of the initial print of his work was such that he thought to “enprynte it” once more.⁴⁶⁶ Whilst the provenance of the incunable has not been ascertained, it does, at least, present the possibility that John Paston II was amongst a group of readers and bibliophiles that appeared quite eager to own these new, printed, translations coming from Caxton’s Burgundian workshop, since Paston owned a copy within four years of its being printed.⁴⁶⁷ And this eagerness, of course, appears to have prompted Caxton to produce a second edition of the *Game* in 1483.

The final, and perhaps most successful, connection between Caxton and the English court was that forged between him and Anthony Woodville. One of the first books printed in England was Woodville’s translation of Guillaume de Tignonville’s *Dits Moralaux* (itself a translation of a Latin text, *Liber Philosophorum Moralium Antiquorum*, which was, in turn, a translation of an Arabic text *Mokhtâr el-Hikam*). Woodville states that he first read this work on pilgrimage to Compostella. Anne Sutton and Livia Visser-Fuchs take this to be a disingenuous tale of revelation intended to present Woodville as “reading an improving book while on pilgrimage”.⁴⁶⁸ Sutton and Fuchs quip that if “the work was indeed the revelation to him that he claimed he was singularly behind the

⁴⁶⁶ Caxton, “The Game and Playe of Chesse,” in *PE*, p.16. and p.10, respectively.

⁴⁶⁷ John Paston II died in 1479, providing the end date on the time frame for the possible creation of the inventory of English books. See *PLI*, lix (although, here Davis gives the date for the creation of the inventory as 1475, based on the understanding that *The Game and Playe of Chesse* was not actually printed until that year, rather than Caxton’s declared date in 1474).

⁴⁶⁸ Anne F. Sutton and Livia Visser-Fuchs, “Choosing a Book in Late Fifteenth-century England and Burgundy,” in Caroline Barron and Nigel Saul (eds.), *England and the Low Countries in the Late Middle Ages* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1995), p.69.

times.”⁴⁶⁹ In his epilogue to the first edition of the work, Caxton recounts how he had “ofte afore redd” the French version of this work and three (surviving) English translations were made in the latter-half of the fifteenth century: Scrope’s (around 1450), Woodville’s (1477), and an anonymous version. The final of these three translations survives only in a single codex, the Helmingham Hall Manuscript (New York, Pierpont Morgan Library, MS G 66), which was produced c.1450 and is suggested to have been made in Suffolk.⁴⁷⁰ Woodville’s translation thus shows he and Caxton engaging with a well-known text, but the act of translation advertises the literariness of this patron. This is further emphasised by Caxton’s Epilogue to the text where he presents Woodville as a diligent and collaborative scholar who “willed” Caxton to oversee the project and correct the work wherever he “sholde fynde faute”, to which the printer, of course, replies that the work was “right wel connynghly made, translated into right good and fayr englissh [...]”.⁴⁷¹ By way of a comparison, the dedication of *Game* to another member of the English royal family belies the distance between printer and prospective patron. Here Caxton relies on celebrating a general sense of Clarence’s “excellent renome” in courting his potential patron. The prologue to his work with Woodville demonstrates a much closer relationship, with Caxton’s dedication feeling more immediately genuine and warm in its promotion of Anthony Woodville’s scholarship. Furthermore, in presenting Woodville as a scholar Caxton may be mirroring Woodville’s own attempts to promote an image of his piety through his conceit of a revelatory discovery of the French version of the *Dicts and Sayings* whilst on pilgrimage. Patron and printer thus work together to not only produce this printed text but

⁴⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷⁰ Caxton, “The Dictes or Sayengs of the Philosophres, [First Edition, 1477, Epilogue]” in *PE*, p.18. John William Sutton (ed.), “Introduction,” in *The Dicts and Sayings of the Philosophers*, (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 2006): <http://d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/text/sutton-dicts-and-sayings-of-the-philosophers-introduction> - accessed 6th December 2015. “Pierpont Morgan MS G 66” *Corsair*: http://corsair.themorgan.org/cgi-bin/Pwebrecon.cgi?v1=1&ti=1,1&Search_Arg=dicts&Search_Code=GKEY%5E&CNT=50&PID=kMaBNZfgeyY7GyQAnzxLSJ0bh7ri&SEQ=20180801113721&SID=1 - accessed 1st August 2018.

⁴⁷¹ Caxton, “The Dictes or Sayengs,” p.20.

also appear to collaborate on projecting a persona for Woodville as a pious scholar through the textual apparatus surrounding the translation.

Given the interest in Caxton's the *Game* and Paston's connection with Anthony Woodville, it is rather striking that this version of the *Dicts and Sayings* is absent from the Inventory of English Books. This sense of omission is sharpened by the possibility that John Paston III joined Anthony Woodville on his pilgrimage to Compostela. On 5th July 1473, John Paston II wrote to Edmond Paston II saying that he hoped to see John Paston III in Calais (where John Paston II was then serving under Lord Hastings)⁴⁷²

for by lyklyhod to-morowe or ellys the nexte daye he takyth shyppe at Yarmothe and goothe to Seynt James warde, and he hathe wretyn to me þat he wyll come homwarde by Caleys."⁴⁷³

There are no extant letters that indicate that John Paston III actually undertook this pilgrimage, but this letter of 1473 demonstrates an intention to undertake the same journey as Anthony Woodville, perhaps even to join Woodville. This gap in the inventory may suggest that the inventory was drawn up before 1477, when Caxton printed the first edition of the work, or that the inventory was drawn up too shortly after that date for Paston to have had time to obtain a copy of the work.⁴⁷⁴ What makes the omission of an English version even more striking, especially in light of the "in quayers" section of the inventory, is that Stephen Scrope had also produced his own translation, seemingly at the request of Sir John Fastolf, c.1450, with William Worcester revising the work in 1472 or 1473.⁴⁷⁵

Scrope's complete translation is extant in two manuscripts, BL Harley 2266 and Bodleian, Bodley MS 943. Bodley MS 943 is a parchment manuscript dating to the third quarter of the fifteenth century. It contains Scrope's translation of the

⁴⁷² *PLI*, lix.

⁴⁷³ *Id.*, p.465.

⁴⁷⁴ Caxton, "The Dictes or Sayengs," p.18.

⁴⁷⁵ Bühler gives the date as 1472 (*The Dicts and Sayings*, xli-xlii), but McFarlane argues that the phrase "the monyth of Marche yere of Crist m¹iiii^c lxxii ending" should be dated to 1473. See McFarlane, "William Worcester", p.218, ftnt.112. The date of the composition appears in CUL Library Gg.1.34. part 2.

Dicts and Saying of the Philosophers, along with miniatures made in the style of William Abell. The identity of the original owner is unknown, but it is thought to have been owned by Anthony Locksmith, a London mercer, in 1541 (whose name appears on f.98v and 103v).⁴⁷⁶ Another five manuscripts contain either imperfect copies or excerpts from the text. Cambridge, Emmanuel College 31 (1.2.10), which “[b]egins imperfectly in the sayings of Hermes,” (thus missing the first philosopher, Zedechye) contains Scrope’s translation together with Worcester’s revisions.⁴⁷⁷ Bühler showed this manuscript to be Worcester’s copy and it contains further corrections, to both works, in two hands that Thorpe suggests may have been literate men from the circle of Sir John Fastolf.⁴⁷⁸ These annotations point to parts of the text that seem particularly pertinent to Fastolf’s life: on f.52b is “exemplum de villa Jernemuth in comitatu Norff”; on f.72b, “á propos of an injunction not to make great buildings which others will inherit, is ... pro Johanne ffastolff (mili)te ditissimo qui (egi)t contra istud concilium”; and, again, on f.44b, alongside “whi old peple enforceth theym to kepe their Richesse... because that after their dethe thei had leuer leue it to their ennemyes than to be in daunger of their freendes” we find “*Note: pro J.fasstolff.*”⁴⁷⁹ Thorpe notes that Worcester’s hand appears in CUL Gg.I.34. part 2, which also contains Scrope’s translation of the *Dicts and Sayings* and introduces the work as “new correctid and examined by William Wyrcestre.”⁴⁸⁰

With regards to the circulation of this translation amongst the gentry of East Anglia, CUL Dd.9.18 includes “among the scribblings on the wide margins” the

⁴⁷⁶ Summary description by Elizabeth Solopova and Matthew Holford, based on the Summary Catalogue, vol. 5, pp. 342-343: <https://medieval.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/catalog/manuscript1895> - accessed 31st July 2018.

⁴⁷⁷ Bühler, *The Dicts and Sayings of the Philosophers*, xxiv. See xix-c for the full list and brief descriptions of the extant manuscripts. For a description of the manuscript see M.R. James, *The Western Manuscripts in the Library of Emmanuel College. A Descriptive Catalogue*, (Cambridge: CUP, 1904), p.30.

⁴⁷⁸ Bühler, *The Dicts and Sayings of the Philosophers*, xxxiii and Thorpe, *Circle of Sir John Fastolf*, p.284

⁴⁷⁹ M. R. James, *The Western Manuscripts in the Library of Emmanuel*, pp.29-30.

⁴⁸⁰ Thorpe, *Circle of Sir John Fastolf*, p.345. CUL Gg.1.34. part 2.

names ‘Wyllm Crosbye’, ‘Robart Crosbe’, and ‘Edward Kempston’.⁴⁸¹ A letter from John Paston II to John Paston III, written in 1467, records the name “Crosseby” as a potential rival in John Paston III’s attempt to marry the daughter of Lady Boleyn.⁴⁸² Moreover, as previously noted, Alice Chaucer’s inventory records her ownership of the work in French (‘a frensh boke of pe tales of philisphers’) as does the library of the Duke of Norfolk (*Les d’ messages*).⁴⁸³ Such records present the possibility that the absence of the *Dicts and Sayings* from John Paston II’s Inventory of English Books was due to his owning it in French. However, even without this text, John Paston II’s ownership of the *Game* shows him engaging with Caxton’s very early translations, placing this work within a library from which a similarly popular advisory work, the *Dicts and Sayings*, is surprisingly absent but in which there are similar or complementary works, such as Lydgate and Burgh’s *Secreta Secretorum* and de Pisan’s *Epistle*.

2.4: Conclusion

The inclusion in John Paston II’s Inventory of English Books of the *Game*, the *Epistle*, and Cicero’s *On Old Age* and *On Friendship* records the influence of two significant continental libraries, the French Royal Library and the Ducal Library of Burgundy. These influences reach Paston’s library through different routes and show different characteristics in the circulation of their associated texts. The “in quayers” section of Paston’s inventory reflects the reception of French works and French translations of classical works by the Fastolf household. Whether Fastolf’s French books included items from the library of Jean, duc de Berry or not, it is clear that he had cultivated a good collection of works and commissioned at least one presentation manuscript out of this library, Bodleian MS Laud 570. This commission appears indicative of the attitude of Fastolf and

⁴⁸¹ *A Catalogue of the Manuscripts preserved in the Library of the University of Cambridge* 1 (Cambridge: CUP, 1856), pp.382-383.

⁴⁸² *PLI*, p.396. A much earlier letter from William Paston I (dated 1st March 1426) also records a Symond Kempston, *Id.*, p.6. However, neither instance provides anything more than a suggestion of a potential connection between the names in CUL Dd.9.18 and the Paston family.

⁴⁸³ Bodleian, Ewelme Muniments VII. A. 28 [1], as quoted in Meale, “Alice Chaucer,” p.86. Collier, *Household Books*, xxix.

the household that surrounded this collection: these were texts with which one supposed to engage, either through acts of translation or, as seen in the case of William Worcester, through study, annotation, and extraction. The works were digested and processed within the literary hub of the Fastolf household. In this way, those texts shared by Paston and the Fastolf household represent a unique filtering of the classical advisory works of the French court. This may not be peculiarly East Anglian but, rather, peculiar to the Fastolf household. Or, rather, whilst the complexities and idiosyncrasies of the texts commissioned, owned, read, or translated by Paston and members of the Fastolf household do not necessarily reflect the wider trends within the East Anglian gentry for engaging with French texts or humanist works, this hub is a confluence of disparate strands that make the literary culture of this region. The anthologising of the “inquayers” section of Paston’s inventory, and the movement of the *Epistle* from the Grete Boke, hints at a collation that reflects dual organising principles: these are advisory works or “mirror for princes” texts as well as works associated with the Fastolf household.

The *Game* indicates John Paston II’s engagement with one of Caxton’s earliest English works. How Paston obtained this work is not known but it does reflect the influence on the English court of the Burgundian library and Margaret of York’s patronage of Caxton. It also echoes the popularity within manuscript culture of such advisory works. Woodville and Caxton’s *Dicts and Sayings* may be absent from the library of John Paston II, but the French translation from which the English was made can be found in the libraries of at least two members of the East Anglian gentry, those of John Howard and Alice Chaucer. It is a work reminiscent of Lydgate and Burgh’s *Secreta Secretorum*, which is included in the Grete Boke. Given that Caxton would go on to print what are most likely to have been Worcester’s translations of Cicero (indicating something of the popularity of this work) and the seeming immediacy with which Scrope’s translation of the *Epistle* circulated, John Paston II appears to have been cultivating a form of “best-seller” that reacted to a fashion (both within his immediate social network and from the continent), a taste in “mirror

for princes" literature, whilst his owning of the *Game* hints at an engagement or, perhaps, even an interest in the new methods of book production.

Chapter Three: the Pastons, Chaucer and the wider literary networks of East Anglia

As we saw in Chapter One, the comparative studies of Sir John Paston's "Grete Boke" and the manuscript of Sir John Astley have usually considered questions surrounding how two similar manuscripts came to be created, primarily asking (or debating) the questions "which manuscript came first" and were these manuscripts examples of a sort of "mass production".⁴⁸⁴ I have argued that the differences between the ordering of the texts in the two manuscripts are due to a collaborative patron/scribe relationship between John Paston II and William Ebesham, resulting in a more anthologised version of the collection of texts also found in Astley's codex. I also suggested the anthologising principle underpinning the collation of Paston's manuscript was that of a courtesy book guiding its owner in how to be a successful knight. We have also seen that this is not the only instance of an anthologised and curated manuscript within the Inventory of English Books. As discussed in Chapter Two, the movement of the *Epistle of Othea* from its seemingly intended location of the *Grete Boke* to sit amongst a collection of unbound quires of similar works indicates the possibility that there was an intention to have an anthology of humanist works. This prospective manuscript may have also recorded shared literary interests between John Paston II and the household of Sir John Fastolf. Lansdowne 285 and this potential classical manuscript are instances of manuscript production that are quite specific to John Paston II and the most immediate members of his literary network. We can trace the possibilities as to how he came to use Pierpont Morgan 775 as the exemplar for some of these texts, we know that he knew the translators of the works of Cicero and de Pizan, and we can piece together some of the very particular relationships at the heart of his

⁴⁸⁴ British Museum, *A Catalogue of the Lansdowne Manuscripts in the British Museum*, (London: British Museum, 1819), p.99; James Gairdner, *Sailing Directions for the Circumnavigation of England, and for a Voyage to the Straits of Gibraltar (from a 15th Century MS.)* (London: Hakluyt Society, 1889), pp.8-9; James W. Thompson, *The Medieval Library*, (Hafner Publishing Company: New York), p.409; Curt F. Bühler, "Sir John Paston's Grete Booke, a Fifteenth-Century "Best-Seller"," in *Modern Language Notes*, vol.56, no.5, (May 1941), pp.345-351; A.I. Doyle, "The Work of a Late Fifteenth-Century English Scribe, William Ebesham," in *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library, Manchester*, 39 (1956-57), (repr. Liechtenstein: Kraus, 1970), pp.298-307; *SJPGGB*, pp.1-64.

commissioning of these two manuscripts in his Inventory. For most of the items in the inventory similar evidence is either very limited or entirely absent. There are no other extant manuscripts of the texts of this inventory that can be identified as being associated with the Pastons. Nor do the entries for these other items indicate anything about the scribe or hub of manuscript or textual production with which John Paston II might have engaged in order to obtain these texts. We saw in the opening of this section of the thesis that there are even issues with identifying which version of certain texts are signified by John Paston II's partial or idiosyncratic titles. Despite all these factors, the rest of the inventory remains a rich document through which to consider John Paston II as an owner of manuscripts (rather than as a commissioner). In particular, Paston's recording of the Chaucerian works in his library allows us to view his collection within the context of a slightly broader survey of the manuscript culture of the gentry of East Anglia. We can view John Paston II both as part of, and against, the East Anglian networks of Chaucer's fifteenth-century readership.

Three of the items listed within John Paston II's Inventory contain works by Chaucer:

2. Item, a boke off Troylus whyche William Bra <...> hathe hadded neer x yer and lent it to Da<...> Wyngfelde, et jbi ego vidi; valet

3. Item, a blak boke wyth The Legende off Lad<...> saunce Mercye, þe Parlement off Byr<...> Glasse, Palatyse and Scitacus, The Med<...> the Green Knyght, valet –

[...]

5. Item, a boke lent Midelton, and therein is Bele Da <...> Mercy, þe Parlement off Byrdys, Balade <...> off Guy and Colbronde, Off the Goos, þe <...>þe Dysput[i]son bytwyen Hope and Dyspeyre <...> Marchauntys, þe Lyffe off Seint Cry <...>⁴⁸⁵

As stated above, none of the extant manuscripts containing the texts mentioned in this inventory have been identified as belonging to the Paston family.

⁴⁸⁵ *PLI*, p.517.

However, Bodleian Library, Bodley MS 414, a fifteenth-century copy of the *Canterbury Tales* (hereafter referred to as Bodley), does contain the name “Iohan Paston” on ff. 1v and 8v.⁴⁸⁶ Whilst there is some debate surrounding the Bodley manuscript as belonging to the Paston family, which we will discuss in the third section of this chapter, a number of the extant manuscripts of the *Canterbury Tales* are copies made for East Anglian patrons, with one copy, Glasgow University Library, Hunterian MS U.1.1 (hereafter referred to as Hunterian), produced out of the small literary hub that was the household of Sir John Fastolf.⁴⁸⁷ Unlike Lansdowne MS 285 or Scrope’s translation of the *Epistle of Othea*, we have a significant body of other extant manuscripts containing these works by Chaucer to which we can compare these entries in the inventory. Through this comparative work we can see how John Paston II’s literary tastes engaged with the circulation of Chaucerian texts across the wider literary culture of East Anglia.

3.1: John Paston II and the circulation of his manuscript of *Troilus and Criseyde*

The inventory of English books records three instances of the manuscripts of John Paston II leaving his possession and either being lent or “leffte wyth” other members of his literary network. The textual relationship denoted by the entry for Item Eight, in which John Paston II records that his copy of Cicero’s *On Friendship* has been “leffte wyth” William Worcester, has already been discussed in the previous chapter of this thesis.⁴⁸⁸ The other two records of items from the inventory being lent are, as we saw on the previous page, Items Two and Five.⁴⁸⁹ One of the insights into John Paston II’s collection brought by these entries about his Chaucerian works is that they record him lending his “boke of Troylus” and Item Five to members of the East Anglian gentry that appear (if only briefly) in the Paston Letters.⁴⁹⁰ These are not clerks or scribes

⁴⁸⁶ *CCMII*, p.167.

⁴⁸⁷ *Id.*, p.83. This manuscript was written by Geoffrey Spirleng and his son. Geoffrey Spirleng was a clerk to Sir John Fastolf, and his literary endeavours will be discussed in the third section of this chapter.

⁴⁸⁸ *PLI*, pp.516-518.

⁴⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹⁰ Richard Beadle and Colin Richmond, in the index of *PLIII*, suggest that “William Bra [...]” is Sir William Brandon the younger who appears in the following letters: *PLI*,

employed by the Pastons or part of their household or immediate social circles. As such these moments in the inventory indicate an intermediary point in the Pastons' engagement with the literary culture of East Anglia; they record a network of gentlemen and women with whom the Pastons were more informally or socially associated, through which the texts of John Paston II's manuscripts were circulating.⁴⁹¹ Whilst in the latter sections of this chapter we will consider how these manuscripts fit in with the general circulation and readership of these particular Chaucerian texts amongst the East Anglian gentry, these two acts of lending present a particular case study. Whilst there is extant evidence and studies on one of these people to whom Paston lent his "boke off Troylus", "Da... Wyngfelde", all of which is discussed below, the persons mentioned in each of these records of exchange are only mentioned on a few occasions in the letters and, then, not in great detail. These records of the movement of John Paston II's Chaucerian works, thus, in turn, suggest the possibility of closer or more complex relationships between himself and these recipients of his manuscripts than are indicated elsewhere in the extant Paston documents.

Excavating the relationships and the circulation of the manuscripts recorded in the inventory is further complicated by the burnt edge of the paper on which the list of manuscripts is written as this has partially obscured the full names of "William Bra..." and "Da... Wyngfelde". In their index of the Paston Letters, Richard Beadle and Colin Richmond place question marks against the names mentioned in Item Two of the inventory, suggesting that they may be Sir

p.512, 517, 568; *PLII*, pp.577 and 594. Anne Wingfield is mentioned in *PLI*, pp. 517 and 654; *PLIII*, p.183. Beadle and Richmond are unable to identify the Middleton mentioned in this inventory, a Master Christopher Middleton appears in *PLI*, p.195; Mistress Jane Middleton, *PLII*, p.419; Sir John Middleton, *PLI*, p.494, *PLII*, p.419, and letter no.770; a Dr Middleton, *PLI*, p.195.

⁴⁹¹ It should be noted at this point that these, and the lending of *On Friendship* to Worcester are not the only records of John Paston II's manuscripts circulating within the immediate and wider social networks of the Paston family. In the next chapter of this thesis we will look at those instances of lending and borrowing not recorded by the inventory: John Paston II's acquisition of Ovid's *De Arte Amandi* from Thomas Davers (Davis, *Paston Letters II*, p.379) and the lending of Anne's Paston's copy of the *Siege of Thebes* to the Earl of Arran (Davis, *Paston Letters I*, pp.574-5).

William Brandon the younger (c.1448-1485) and Anne Wingfield (d. 1498).⁴⁹² If Item Two does record John Paston II lending a book to William Brandon then this document records a slightly different relationship between the Pastons and the Brandons than that which appears in the rest of the extant letters: in every other document of the Paston corpus in which either William Brandon the elder or William Brandon the younger appear they are in opposition to the family regarding their claim to Caister castle. In July 1471, John Paston III calls William Brandon the younger and his brother William Wingfield “my grettest enmyeys”.⁴⁹³ It may be that things were more cordial between the Pastons and the Brandons prior to this date. We know that “William Bra...” was lent the manuscript some ten years prior to the creation of the inventory, placing the act between 1465-1469. The earliest appearance of the Brandons in the letters of the Paston family is in 1469 when Sir William Brandon, the younger, helped the Duke of Norfolk lay siege to Caister castle.⁴⁹⁴ The family are not mentioned in the Paston document earlier than this and we do not know if theirs was a friendship turned sour. William Brandon the elder had been a retainer of the Duke of Norfolk and it seems likely that both John Paston III and William Brandon the younger would have been in the Duke’s service at the same time. John Paston III joined the Duke’s household in 1462, serving there at Holt Castle, Denbighshire, and Newcastle-upon-Tyne until 1464.⁴⁹⁵ In 1465 the Duke invited John Paston III to attend the Duke of Norfolk’s coming of age celebrations, a document the Duke addressed to his “trusty and enterly beloved sevaunt John Paston, esquire.”⁴⁹⁶ This invitation shows that within the earliest years in which the inventory could have been made, John Paston III was on very good terms with the household of the Duke of Norfolk, of which William Brandon the elder was certainly a member and William Brandon the younger

⁴⁹² *PLIII*, pp.252 and 315. For the death date of William Brandon see: S. J. Gunn, “Brandon, Charles”, *ODNB*: <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/3260?docPos=4> - accessed 6th January 2015. For the death date of Anne Wingfield see Mary L. Robertson, “Sir Robert Wingfield (*b.* in or before 1464, *d.*1539),” *ODNB*: <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/29741?docPos=9> - accessed 6th January 2015.

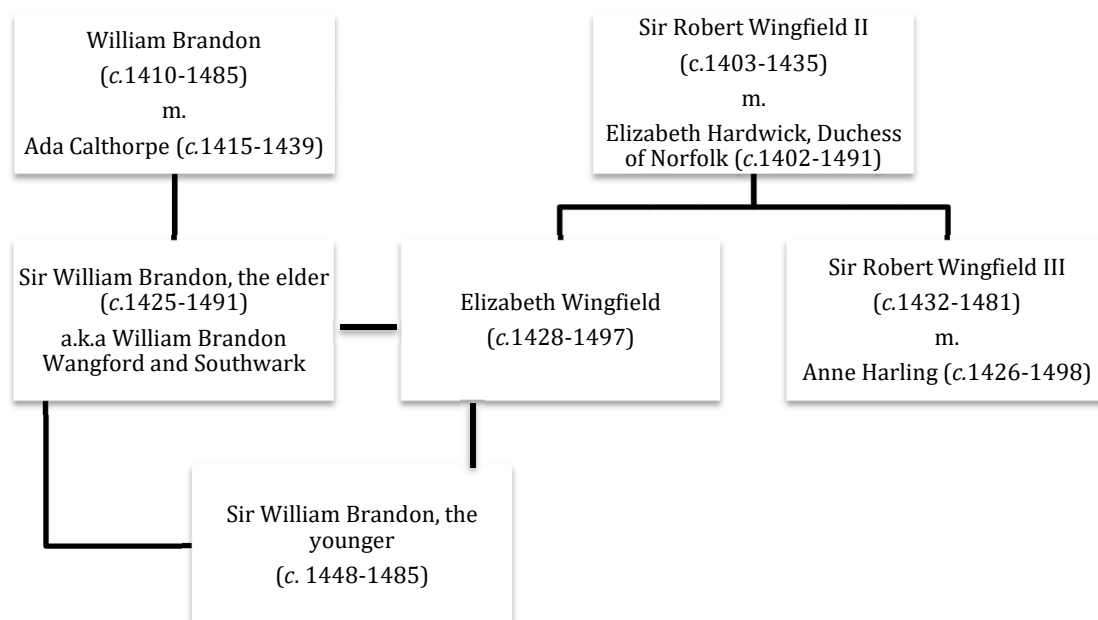
⁴⁹³ *PLI*, p.568.

⁴⁹⁴ *PLII*, p.430.

⁴⁹⁵ *PLI*, lix. See letters 319-320.

⁴⁹⁶ *Id.*, letter 784.

likely to have been a fellow “sevaunt”. The context given by the rest of the Paston letters, in which the Pastons become increasingly and unwillingly estranged from the Duke of Norfolk as the latter’s attempts to take Caister castle become more forceful, justifies the question mark placed by Beadle and Richmond next to the name Sir William Brandon but the subsequent lending of this manuscript to “Da... Wyngfelde” indicates that, whilst the nature of the relationship between the two men remains obscured, William Brandon the younger remains the most likely identity for the “William Bra...” recorded in the inventory.



Sir William Brandon, the elder (c.1425-1491) married Elizabeth Wingfield (d. 1497), sister of Sir Robert Wingfield III (c.1432-1481) who was comptroller of Edward IV’s household.⁴⁹⁷ It is through Sir Robert Wingfield III that we find a link between William Brandon the elder and Anne Harling, both married into the Wingfield family, making them brother and sister-in-law. This kinship goes some way to supporting Beadle and Richmond’s identification of these names in

⁴⁹⁷ For the marriage of Sir William Brandon, the elder, to Elizabeth Wingfield see, S. J. Gunn “Brandon, Sir Thomas (d.1510)”, *ODNB*: <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/3268> - accessed 30th May 2018. For the dates of Sir Robert Wingfield see, Robertson, “Sir Robert Wingfield”, *ODNB*.

John Paston II's inventory but, whilst William Brandon the younger's relationship with John Paston II and any further understanding of his literary interests remain obscured from view, the extant information surrounding the life and manuscripts of Anne Harling is, comparatively, more abundant and certainly richer. This evidence, in conjunction with her appearances in the Paston Letters, illuminates the kinds of social and literary connections and interests that underpin this record of lending and borrowing in the Inventory of English Books.

Anne Harling, was the daughter of Sir Robert Harling of East Harling (*d.*1435) and Jane Gonville, daughter and heiress of Edmund Gonville (founder of Gonville College, Cambridge).⁴⁹⁸ When her father died in 1435 Anne became the heiress for the Gonville and Harling families, inheriting, as Anne Dutton summarises, "at least 15 manors and ten advowsons in Norfolk, as well as four manors and one advowson in Suffolk and four manors in Cambridgeshire," which Gail McMurray Gibson explains, made Anne "a political as well as economic force" within the counties of Norfolk, Suffolk and Essex.⁴⁹⁹ Anne Harling was linked to the Pastons through multiple nodes within their social network. Sir John Fastolf was her father's uncle by marriage, subsequently becoming her guardian following the death of Sir Robert Harling in 1435.⁵⁰⁰

⁴⁹⁸ Anne Dutton, "Piety, Politics and Persona: MS Harley 4012 and Anne Harling," in *Prestige, Authority and Power in Late-Medieval Manuscripts and Texts*, ed. F. Riddy, (Woodbridge: York Medieval Press, 2000), p.133. Gail McMurray Gibson, *The Theatre of Devotion: East Anglian Drama and Society in the Late Middle Ages* (London: The University of Chicago Press, 1989), p.96 (with McMurray Gibson's study of Anne Harling pp.96-106). For the life of Edmund Gonville, Dutton refers to Christopher Brooke, "Chaucer's Parson and Edmund Gonville: Constrasting Roles of Fourteenth Century Incumbents," in *Studies in Clergy and Ministry in Medieval England*, ed. David M Smith, Borthwick Studies in History 1 (1991), pp.1-19. There have been two more, recent, studies on Anne Harling and her engagement with both literary culture and the stained glass at East Harling church: J. Jenkins, "St Katherine and Laywomen's Piety: The Middle English Prose Life in London, BL, Harley MS 4012," in *St Katherine of Alexandria. Texts and Contexts in Western Medieval Europe*, eds. J. Jenkins and K. J. Lewis, (Turnhout: Brepols, 2003), pp.153-70; David J. King, "Anne Harling Reconsidered," in *Recording Medieval Lives*, Harlaxton Medieval Studies Vol. XVII, eds. J. Boffey and V. Davis, (Donington: Shaun Tyas, 2009), pp.204-222.

⁴⁹⁹ Dutton, "Piety, Politics and Persona," p.188.

⁵⁰⁰ Dutton states that Anne's wardship "was sold, by a rather circuitous route, to Sir John Fastolf in 1437." *Ibid.*, p.134.

Margaret Paston was also related to Sir John Fastolf through her Mautby lineage, making Anne Harling a very distant relative. However, much less tenuous, is the link with the Paston family through Anne's second husband, Sir Robert Wingfield, a friend of the Paston family who also petitioned their cause regarding Caister castle, at court.⁵⁰¹ In a letter to John Paston III, dated to 27 January 1476, John Paston II defends his decision to take back Caister castle following the death of the Duke of Norfolk saying that he had "taried by the advyce off Syr Robert Wyngffeld iij days" before coming to Norwich so that John II might "have a goode dyreccion takyn for me in thatt mater."⁵⁰² In a postscript to a letter to Margaret Paston, John Paston III records Sir Robert as one of his "frendys" who might be relied upon to "sey hym naye" to his "vnkynd oncle" (presumably William Paston II) who was seeking to "gadre money".⁵⁰³ Other, male, members of the Wingfield family also appear throughout the letters, but Anne Wingfield only appears three times (one of which is the tentative identification within the Inventory of English Books.⁵⁰⁴ These few mentions in the Paston Letters reflect the social standing of Anne Harling within East Anglian society. A letter from Fastolf to John Paston I records that he "[...] payd v^e [marc] for the warde of Sir Robert Harlyng daughter for my lord [to] Sir John Clyffton [...]."⁵⁰⁵ Anne was clearly a desirable ward as Fastolf was competing with the Duke of Suffolk for the privilege of housing her and running her lands (thereby making a profit from her property for the duration of her wardship). Anne Harling, a wealthy heiress, maintained a strong social standing for herself: in a letter written in 1487, William Paston III outlines to his brother, John Paston III, the various points in East Anglia at which Henry VII will stop in his progression to Walsingham with Anne Harling's manor at East Harling being

⁵⁰¹ Robertson, "Sir Robert Wingfield", *ODNB* and Robertson, "Robert Wingfield, III (c.1432-1481)" *Geni* - <http://www.geni.com/people/Sir-Robert-Wingfield-III/6000000000954059925> - accessed 8th January 2015.

⁵⁰² *PLI*, p.491. Sir Robert Wingfield is also mentioned on pp.553, 577, 597, 618; *PLII*, p.22; *PLIII*, p.183.

⁵⁰³ *PLI*, p.618.

⁵⁰⁴ Sir John Wingfield, *PLI*, pp.324 and 528; *PLII*, pp.161 and 227-8. Robert Wingfield, *PLI*, p.131 and *PLII*, p.103. Sir Thomas Wingfield, *PLI*, pp.414, 543-4, 567, 568; *PLII*, pp. 237, 411, 577-9; letter 908. William Wingfield, *PLI*, p.568 (although, here, he is hostile towards John Paston III). Anne Wingfield, *PLI*, pp. 517(?) and 654; *PLIII*, p. 183.

⁵⁰⁵ *PLII*, p.152.

one of these selected stops.⁵⁰⁶ Whilst the letters present the Pastons as respecting Anne's position within their society, it is only the inventory in which any evidence of a direct relationship is indicated. It is, of course, highly likely that, given their relationships with many members of the Wingfield family that John Pastons II and III interacted with Anne, however, what Dutton, Jenkins and King do not address is that the connection with John Paston II (rather than her loose kinship with the wider Paston family via Sir John Fastolf) may have predated her marriage to Sir Robert Wingfield, occurring during her recent widowhood from William Chamberlain.⁵⁰⁷

By the time the inventory was written Anne Harling was married to her second husband Sir Robert Wingfield, whom she married by 1469.⁵⁰⁸ As we have seen, by the mid-1470s John Paston II was seeking advice from Sir Robert Wingfield III and the inventory suggests that John visited Anne's manor at East Harling. The entry for Item Two not only records the names of two borrowers for John Paston II's "a boke off Troylus" but includes the phrase "jbi ego vidi," or "I saw [it] there". This appears as both a reassurance that he has confirmed the current location of a manuscript that has been outside of his physical possession for a decade but, in recording this, we can also infer that John Paston II knew the second person of this item in the document well enough to have knowledge of their house and their manuscripts. The unknown date of the writing of the inventory raises the possibility that such a visit could have taken place at any point after 1464 and thus prior to Anne's marriage to Sir Robert. Gail McMurray Gibson posits that a personal connection between John Paston II and Anne Harling might pre-date her marriage to Sir Robert by six years when Anne was being sought as a wife to one of the Paston sons, possibly John Paston II.⁵⁰⁹

⁵⁰⁶ *PLI*, p.654.

⁵⁰⁷ Each of these scholars mention this moment within the inventory of books but quickly go on to focus on the extant manuscript in which her name appears, BL MS Harley 4012 or the books mentioned in her will.

⁵⁰⁸ Dutton does suggest that this marriage took place c.1467. Anne's will states that she raised her nephew, Robert Wingfield, from the age of three and this Robert was born c.1464. See Anne Dutton, "Women's Use of Religious Literature in Late Medieval England," PhD Thesis (University of York, Centre for Medieval Studies, 1995), p.193.

⁵⁰⁹ McMurray Gibson, *Theatre of Devotion*, p.96.

McMurray Gibson bases this understanding of the relationship between Anne Harling and John Paston II on the following letter from Robert Cutler to John Paston II, written in 1463, when Anne was the recent widow of Sir William Chamberlain:⁵¹⁰

But, at þe referens of God, for excheuyng of common langage se þathe may worcheffull be set fore, heyder in athe may worcheffull be set fore, heyder in þe Kyngys seruyse or in maryache; for as for towchyng þe Lady Cha[m]berlen þat mater is don, for I spake wyth þe parson þer-of and I hard be hym þat mater wyll not preue.⁵¹¹

By the time John Paston II wrote his inventory Anne was the wife of Sir Robert Wingfield but did Chaucer's tale of courtly romance come to her via her nephew-in-law, Sir William Brandon the younger, ten years earlier when she was the widow, Lady Chamberlain, being pursued by a socially ambitious young man? These few details of the inventory give a tantalising but obscured picture of the relationship between this small cluster of people and what the act of lending a book *might* illuminate about these social connections that other documents within the Paston Letters do not. This connection with Anne Harling, and the connection between John Paston III and William Brandon the younger, hint at a more specific window for the composition for the Inventory of English Books, bringing it closer to 1474 than 1479.⁵¹² However, what is more readily evident from both the inventory and extant manuscripts is that John Paston II and Anne Harling shared a literary culture.

As the scholarship over the past two decades shows, Anne Harling provides a rich case study of female literary patronage in East Anglia.⁵¹³ Aside from her appearance in John Paston II's inventory of books, evidence of Anne Harling's

⁵¹⁰ Dutton, "Piety, Politics and Persona," p.134. Here Dutton states that Sir William Chamberlain of Weston Favell, Northamptonshire married Anne in 1438, when Anne was 12 or 13 and died in March or April 1462.

⁵¹¹ *PLII*, p.294.

⁵¹² The first print of Caxton's *Game* fixes the earliest date for the inventory to 1475 and whilst Robert Cutler's letter dates to May of 1463 there may be an understandable element of summary in John Paston II's record of the manuscript being out of his possession for ten years.

⁵¹³ See footnote 15 for a list of this scholarship.

engagement with literary culture survives in the forms of her will and an extant manuscript, BL MS Harley 4012. MS Harley 4012 is a collection of Middle English religious treatises:⁵¹⁴

1. A Book of the Sacrament of Penance, called "The Clensynge of Man's Sowle"
2. The Charter of our eritage. "Every man that claimeth."
3. "Foure thingis be nedefull to euerie Cristen man and woman to rule them bi to obtayne the blisse of heuen."
4. "The wordis that our Saueoure Jesu spake to his holy spouse and virgen Sent Moll."
5. "A Tretes of mekenes: withoute whiche no man maie com to any other vertu or love of God."
6. "The Artikill of the faith, redy for euery man to rede and se."
7. A Poem. "Jesu the sonne of mare mylde."
8. "Ho sumeuer saith this praier in the worship of the passion shall haue C. zere of pardon. "Wofully araide, My blode man for the ran. Hit may not be naide: My body blo and wane Wofully araide," &c.
9. "The Pardon of the Monastery of Shene, whiche is Syon."
10. "A short Tretes for to declare what merit tribulacion is for manne mekely suffer'd."
11. "The lif of Sent Katryne."
12. "Sent Margaret."
13. "Lif of Sent Anne," in verse; and
14. "Sent Patrick," seemingly unfinished.

The only record of a devotional manuscript in the possession of the Pastons is Item Six,

A reede boke þat Percyvall Robsart gaff m<...> off the Medis off þe Masse, þe Lamentacion <...> off Chylde Ypotis, A Preyer to þe Vernycle <...> callyd The Abbeye off þe Holy Gooste.⁵¹⁵

⁵¹⁴ The following description of the content of MS Harley 4012 is reproduced from *A Catalogue of the Harleian manuscripts in the British Museum. With indexes of persons, places, and matters*. Volume III (London: British Museum, 1808), pp.103-104.

⁵¹⁵ *PLI*, p.517.

Item Five, which is discussed below, also contains “þe Lyffe off Seint Cry<...>,” which is most likely to be a *Life of St Christopher*.⁵¹⁶ The extant evidence for the two libraries, thus, shows a single moment of overlap in their devotional texts, however other texts and extant manuscripts highlight further connections between the libraries of Anne Harling and the Pastons.

Dutton considers the particular significance of two of the texts in MS Harley 4012, *The Life of St Anne* and *Pardon of Syon*, to Anne Harling, first pointing toward Harling’s will, in which her soul is commended to St. Anne and in which she “requests burial in the chapel of St Anne in her parish church of East Harling, a chapel that Anne herself probably founded.”⁵¹⁷ Anne’s will also records a personal connection underpinning the *Pardon of Syon*: “to the hous of Syon, where I am a suster, xl s.,” which Dutton suggests might indicate that Harling “was a member of the confraternity there.”⁵¹⁸ There is, then, a personal significance to some of these texts for the manuscript’s owner and, as with John Paston II and William Ebesham, a sense of patron and scribe collaborating to produce something bespoke. In discussing the manuscripts associated with the hand of the scribe Ricardus Franciscus in Chapter Two of this thesis we saw that he was responsible for copying MS Harley 4012 and may feasibly have been the scribe to have produced Harling’s lost manuscript of “the Pistill of Othis,” which she bequeathed to “my lord of Surrey”.⁵¹⁹ What can be stated with greater certainty is that we find her engaging with the texts and scribes of the Fastolf circle and that, in the case of the *Epistle*, she owns at least one text in common with both this hub of translation and copying and the library of John Paston II. That is to say, that they were, in fact, at one point within their textual networks, part of the same node.

⁵¹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵¹⁷ Dutton, “Piety, Politics and Persona,” p.135.

⁵¹⁸ *Ibid.* McMurray Gibson also mentions this, *Theatre of Devotion*, p.97. For Anne Harling’s will see, James Raine, ed., *Testamenta Eboracensia or Wills Registered at York*, vol.4, (J. B. Nichols and Son, 1869), pp. 149-154.

⁵¹⁹ Raine, *Testamenta Eboracensia* p.152.

Whilst the commissioning of Franciscus, and the mention of Anne in the Inventory of English Books shows her as the patron of manuscripts and borrower of books, MS Harley 4012 also indicates that Harling may have reciprocated acts of lending. On the final folio of this manuscript is the inscription page “Thys ys the boke of dame anne wyngefeld,” which Mary Beth Long interprets as reminding “any borrower of the book that it must be returned, and to whom.”⁵²⁰ Long identifies an anxiety in this statement: that Wingfield feared the loss of such a treasure. We can see from the inventory of John Paston II’s books that the very book she borrowed from him was out of his possession for ten years and his own scrupulous record of the path taken by his manuscript does seem to support Long’s interpretation. The extant Paston manuscripts, Landowne 285 and MS Rye 38, are of an inferior quality to MS Harley 4012, which Long describes as measuring approximately 25 by 16cm and containing “gilt letters [that] shimmer with quill work, and plum, blue and green designs [that] swoop over both top and left margins, sometimes with tiny gilded fruits painted in the foliage.”⁵²¹ This was not the only fine manuscript in Harling’s possession, her will also mentions a fine primer ‘wt silver and gylte’, that she left to her god-daughter, Anne Fitzwater, and a “Premer whiche kyng Edward gauffe me” which was left to “my lorde of Suff, my godson”.⁵²² Anne’s library appears to have contained a few lavish manuscripts, all of which (apart from the *Epistle of Othea*) contained religious or devotional works,⁵²³ supplemented by the borrowing of manuscripts from her friends and neighbours. However, her manuscripts, if we accept Long’s interpretation of the inscription, also appear to have engaged in a reciprocal act of borrowing and lending.

⁵²⁰ Mary Beth Long, “Corpora and Manuscripts, Authors and Audiences,” in Sarah Salih, ed., *A Companion to Middle English Hagiography*, (Woodbridge: Brewer, 2006), p.47.

⁵²¹ *Ibid.*

⁵²² Raine, *Testamenta Eboracensia*, pp.152-153.

⁵²³ Anne Harling’s will also records the following bequests of books: a mass book to the church of St. Peter and St. Paul at East Harling; “to my lady my lorde moder, myn embrowdered sawter”; and, “to dame Jane Blakeney my white booke of Prayers.” *Id.*, pp.149-153.

What we find by closely attending to the movement of *Troilus and Criseyde* from John Paston II's library might, given the biographical details, first appear as an act of courtship. However, by looking at the evidence of the extant manuscripts from both the household of the lender and that of the borrower, we have a more detailed view of the context from which the text was lent, and into which it was received. We have two members of the Norfolk gentry quite active in their engagement with literary culture and whose personal connection through the Fastolf household is reflected in the ownership of texts associated with that household.

3.2: The verses of Geoffrey Chaucer in Items Three and Five in the Inventory of English Books

Items Three and Five of John Paston II's Inventory of English Books have been repeatedly cited within studies of the fifteenth-century circulation of the verses of Chaucer and Lydgate.⁵²⁴ For these studies the Pastons provide illustrative examples of the movement of these texts from the aristocratic circles for which they were composed to the manuscripts of the gentry, with this widening readership of such items acting as an impetus behind Caxton's decision to

⁵²⁴ The Pastons' engagement with the works of John Lydgate extends beyond the manuscripts of John Paston II's inventory and includes other members of the family. Due to these and other differences in the kinds of evidence we have for their engagement with these texts, these works will be discussed in the following chapter. In this current chapter we will consider Lydgate's authorship of these works as an organising principle to the manuscripts discussed. For studies on the fifteenth-century readership of Chaucer's work see Julia Boffey, *Manuscripts of English Courtly Love Lyrics in the Later Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Brewer, 1985); Ralph Hanna III and A. S. G. Edwards, "Rotheley, the De Vere Circle, and the Ellesmere Chaucer," *Huntington Library Quarterly* 58.1 (1995), pp.11-35; Carol M. Meale, "The Tale and the Book: Readings of Chaucer's *Legend of Good Women* in the Fifteenth Century," in *Chaucer in Perspective: Middle English Essays in Honour of Norman Blake*, ed. G. A. Lester, (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), pp.118-138; Jeremy J. Smith, "Chaucer and the Invention of English," *Studies in the Age of Chaucer* 24 (2002), pp.335-346. Simon Horobin, "The Language of the Manuscripts of the *Canterbury Tales*," in Simon Horobin, *The Language of the Chaucer Tradition*, (Cambridge: Brewer, 2003), pp.60-76; M.C. Erlar, "Fifeenth-Century Owners of Chaucer's Work: Cambridge, Magdalene College MS Pepys 2006," *The Chaucer Review* 38.4 (2004), pp.401-414; Roberta Magnani, *Constructing the Father: Fifteenth-Century Manuscripts of Geoffrey Chaucer's Works*, PhD Thesis (Cardiff: Cardiff University, 2010).

publish the *Canterbury Tales*.⁵²⁵ Such studies explore the abundant, rich and varied evidence afforded by the extant manuscripts and documents associated with Chaucer and his texts to explore the fifteenth-century afterlife of his works. The Pastons, and particularly John Paston II's inventory, form an insightful case study within these narratives. Ralph Hanna III and A.S.G. Edwards, in their study of Huntington Library, MS. EL 26.C.9, the Ellesmere Chaucer, argue that the personalization of manuscripts of Chaucer's works enable "certain kinds of provocative historicization of "Chaucer" – not the poet *in se*, but the poet as received, read, and responded to in medieval literary culture."⁵²⁶ In considering the items of John Paston II's inventory against these extant manuscripts we can see how Paston engages with trends in the circulation and reception of these particular works.

⁵²⁵ Whilst Chaucer *may* have composed these longer poems for the aristocratic circles surrounding the English court, the initial audience for such works could also include intellectuals and other poets. For instance, at the end of *Troilus and Criseyde*, Chaucer invokes 'moral Gower' and 'philosophical Strode', with R. F. Yeager arguing that these names appear to "'correct" [the] audience, should its understanding of *Troilus* waver from the Christian vision of the final stanza'. See R. F. Yeager, "'O Moral Gower:" Chaucer's Dedication of *Troilus and Criseyde*," *The Chaucer Review*, 19.2 (1984) pp.87-99, with quote from p.97. Of course, famously, one of Chaucer's shorter works was written to his scribe, Adam. See the following works on the nature of this relationship between poet and scribe: Alexandra Gillespie, "Reading Chaucer's Words to Adam," *The Chaucer Review*, 42.3 (2008), pp.269-283, which builds on the work by Linne R. Mooney, "Chaucer's Scribe," *Speculum*, 81 (2006), pp.97-138. As equally well-known is Thomas Hoccleve's various invocations of Chaucer and his work in *The Regiment of Princes*, see, in particular, lines 4980-4985 and the portrait of Chaucer included in BL, Harley MS 4866, f.88r. For discussion of Hoccleve's role within the initial reception of Chaucer's works see Paul Strohm, "Chaucer's Fifteenth-Century Audience and the Narrowing of the 'Chaucer Tradition'," *Studies in the Age of Chaucer*, 4 (1982), pp.3-32. These works highlight that whilst many of Chaucer's patrons were aristocrats, his work was also circulating amongst (and being read by) other writers, including scribes, poets, and intellectuals, as well as other administrators and officials. For Caxton's response to the further widening of this audience over the course of the fifteenth century, see: H. S. Bennett, "Caxton and his Public," *The Review of English Studies*, 19.74 (1943), pp.113-119; Simon Horobin, "Chaucer in Print," in Horobin, *The Language of the Chaucer Tradition*, pp.77-95; Julia Boffey, "From Manuscript to Print: Continuity and Change," in *A Companion to the Early Printed Book in Britain, 1476-1558*, eds. Vincent Gillespie and Susan Powell (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2014), pp.1-26. In fact, Caxton's prologue to the second edition of his *Canterbury Tales*, indicates that the circulation of these tales was large and riddled with deviations for the version "that was very trewe" (William Caxton, "*Canterbury Tales*" in *PE*, p.91). In the prologue he describes how, by using a new and "very trewe" manuscript exemplar he has "corrected my book" and produced a new printed edition (*Ibid.*).

⁵²⁶ Hanna and Edwards, "The De Vere Circle," pp.11-35.

As we saw in the summary and discussion of the works in each of the items in John Paston II's Inventory of English Books that begins the second part of this thesis, the content of Item Three is as follows:

3. Item, a blak boke wyth The Legende off Lad<...> saunce Mercye, þe Parlement off Byr<...> Glasse, Palatyse and Scitacus, The Med<...> the Green Knyght, valet ⁵²⁷

Whilst the parchment has been burnt along the right-hand edge and certain words are now lost or obscured, these titles most likely refer to Chaucer's *The Legend of Good Women* and *The Parliament of Fowls*, Richard Roos' *La Belle Dame sans Mercy*, and Lydgate's *Temple of Glass*. The remaining titles included in this manuscript do not survive and are not, therefore, identifiable although there is some version of the Sir Gawain and the Green Knight legend denoted here (as discussed in the opening to the second part of this thesis). These four known pieces were popular texts and survive in a number of fifteenth-century manuscripts. However, as a group of texts they survive in a single manuscript: CUL GG. 4. 27.⁵²⁸ Another six manuscripts contain combinations of three of these works, with the Parliament of Fowls being common across the codices:

Bodleian, Bodley 638: *Legend of Good Women*, *Parliament of Fowls*, and *Temple of Glass*.⁵²⁹

Bodleian, Fairfax 16: *Legend of Good Women*, *Parliament of Fowls*, *La Belle Dame sans Mercy*, and *Temple of Glass*.⁵³⁰

Bodleian, Tanner 346: *Legend of Good Women*, *Parliament of Fowls*, and *Temple of Glass*.⁵³¹

Cambridge, Trinity College, R. 3. 19: *Legend of Good Women*, *Parliament of Fowls* and *La Belle Dame sans Mercy*.⁵³²

⁵²⁷ *PLI*, p.517.

⁵²⁸ Charles Hardwich and Henry Richards Luard, *A Catalogue of the Manuscripts Preserved in the Library of the University of Cambridge*, vol. 3. (Cambridge: CUP, 1858) pp. 172-174. For codicological information on the manuscript see *CCMI*, p.19.

⁵²⁹ *CCMI*, pp.88-89.

⁵³⁰ *Id.*, pp.85-87.

⁵³¹ *Id.*, pp.83-85.

⁵³² "Cambridge, Trinity College, R.3.19," *The James Catalogue of Western Manuscripts*: <http://sites.trin.cam.ac.uk/james/show.php?index=1370> - accessed 21st August 2018.

Cambridge, Magdalene College, Pepys 2006: *Legend of Good Women*, *Parliament of Fowls*, and *Temple of Glass*.⁵³³

Longleat House, MS 258: *La Belle Dame sans Mercy*, *Parliament of Fowls*, and *Temple of Glass*.⁵³⁴

Finally, the following codex contains two of the works listed in Item Three of Paston's inventory:

Bodleian, Arch. Selden B. 24: *Legend of Good Women*, and *Parliament of Fowls*.⁵³⁵

The extant manuscripts show the Chaucerian and Lydgatian texts of Items Three and Five to be a common set of works circulating within the latter half of the fifteenth century. Whilst the record of Paston's manuscripts show a clear engagement with these popular works, there is a very striking difference between the manuscripts represented by this inventory and these surviving manuscripts of the works of Chaucer, Lydgate and Roos: Paston's manuscripts are much shorter. Before we turn to consider Paston as a reader of these works we must pause to reflect on this fact and on, then, the nature of the inventory as a *partial* record in order to gain a more detailed understanding of the surviving manuscript contexts for these texts.

Of the fourteen extant fifteenth-century manuscripts to contain the "Parliament of Fowls" only four also have "La Belle Dame sans Mercy" as one of their items: Fairfax MS 16, Longleat MS 258, Trinity MS R.3.19, and the Findern MS. In Longleat MS 258 the two texts are separated by the poem "The Eye and the Heart", whilst the other manuscripts have these two texts separated by quite some distance – either by numerous texts (as in the case with the Findern MS) or by the inclusion of longer works (in Fairfax 16 the two works are separated by Lydgate's *Temple of Glass*, "For thoght constraynt and grievous hevynesse", and the prologue to Chaucer's *Legend of Good Women*). Of the evidence that

⁵³³ *CCMI*, pp.90-92.

⁵³⁴ Eleanor Prescott Hammond, "MS. Longleat 258 - A Chaucerian Codex," in *Modern Language Notes*, 20.3 (March, 1905) pp. 77-79.

⁵³⁵ *CCMI*, p.100.

survives, John Paston II's inventory is the only place that indicates that these two texts might have circulated as a discrete unit. This could imply that the scribes of Items Three and Five were copying from the same exemplar. However, whilst Paston's inventory lists these works within collections of seven texts (Item Three) and (possibly) eight texts (Item Five), those other manuscripts in which these combination of works by Chaucer, Lydgate and Roos survive are often much larger and share texts either not found in Paston's Item Three or Item Five, or which are absent from the inventory and letters all together. Trinity MS R.3.19 is the largest of the codices listed above and contains 42 texts; Fairfax MS 16 has 28; Arch. Selden MS B.24, 25; Pepys MS 2006, 23; CUL MS GG. 4.27, 20; Bodley MS 638, 17; Tanner MS 346, 15; and, Longleat MS 258 is the smallest of this group, with 12 texts. With only seven or eight texts, respectively, Item Three and Item Five are significantly smaller manuscripts than the average size of these other manuscripts (which is 23 texts). The two immediate possible readings of this data are that either John Paston II chose to only list the key texts of each item in his inventory, and that they were therefore larger than indicated by this document, or that Paston could not afford one of these larger manuscripts (or deem it a necessary expense) and therefore may have chosen a selective collection of these few highly popular works. The relationship between the description of the Grete Boke in the inventory and that in Ebesham's bill and MS Lansdowne 285 indicates that Items Three and Five were probably larger than is indicated by the inventory.

In his inventory of English books, John Paston II refers to the Grete Boke of Ebesham's bill as,

my boke off knyghthod and ther-in [unclear] off makyng off knyghtys, off justys, of torn [unclear] fyghtyng in lystys, paces holden by sou[unclear] and chalengys, statutys off weer and de regimi...valet⁵³⁶

⁵³⁶ Charles R. Blyth counts forty-three surviving copies of Hoccleve's *The Regiment of Princes*. See Charles R. Blyth, "Introduction," in Thomas Hoccleve, *The Regiment of Princes*, ed. Charles R. Blyth, (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 1999).

Whilst Paston does not appear to attribute titles to any of these pieces, Ebesham does itemise the contents of the manuscript in the bill for his work:

Item, as to the Grete Booke, first for wrytyng of the Coronacion and othir tretys of knyghthode in that quaire which conteyneth a xiiij levis and more, ij d. a lef

Ij s. ij d.

Item, for the tretys of were in iiiij bookes which conteyneth lx levis aftir ij d. a leeff

x s.

Item, for *Othea Pistill* which conteyneth xliiiij^{ti} leves

vij s. ij d.

Item, for the *Chalenges* and the *Actes of Armes* which is xxviiij^{ti} lefes

iiiij s. viij d.

Item, for *de Regi[min]e P[ri]ncipu[m]* which conteyneth xlv^{ti} leves aftir a peny a leef, which right wele worth

Iij s. ix d.⁵³⁷

John Paston II does not record the full details of the content of this manuscript and, between the writing of the bills and the writing of the inventory the title of the codex has changed from Ebesham's "Grete Booke," to Paston's "boke of knyghthod", with this later title highlighting the unifying principle at the heart of Lansdowne 285. Where this becomes significant to a consideration of whether we only have a partial picture of the contents of these manuscripts of the inventory, is that Paston's language in his description of the contents of the Grete Boke indicates that he is summarising: these are thematic headings for the texts included in the codex. The only text to be referred to by as a singular unit is "de regime[...]," which, as part of the argument by which he proved that Lansdowne 285 was the "Grete Boke," A. I. Doyle identified as referring to Lydgate and Burgh's verse rendering of the pseudo-Aristotelian *Secreta Secretorum* (rather than Hoccleve's *De regimine principum*).⁵³⁸ Given that the rest of the texts are only alluded to by their thematic groupings, the reference to a single text appears as a stark anomaly in the entry but even this remains

⁵³⁷ *PLII*, p.392.

⁵³⁸ Doyle, "William Ebesham," p.302.

generic rather than specific. The advisory nature of *Secreta Secretorum* makes it an understandable part of this “boke of knyghthod” however it is generically distinct from the rest of the texts. Whilst the contents have been collated into further-anthologized subsections, this work of Lydgate and Burgh remains a discrete unit within the design of the manuscript. However, this relationship between thematic summaries and the reference to individual texts of the Grete Boke in the inventory suggests that the manuscripts listed in this document were larger than recorded. For example, the *Secreta Secretorum* is not the only text by Lydgate to appear in Lansdowne 285. The third text of this manuscript is a short work of the ‘sootiltees’ at the coronation banquet of Henry VI.⁵³⁹ However, neither Ebesham nor Paston refer to Lydgate’s smaller work by its title; without the extant manuscript we would not know that Paston owned this text. Lydgate’s shorter work is subsumed within the unit that Ebesham and Paston identify by its subject matter of the Coronation, treatises, challenges and acts of arms. The *Secreta Secretorum*, however, is explicitly referred to by both men, presenting a possibility that the inventory is a record of the key, larger, texts within each item; these larger items may be the core around which the manuscript is organized or the texts by which the collection is most easily identified.

The inventory may be a partial impression of the manuscripts it records but what is clear is at the heart of Items Three and Five are combination of texts deemed important and noteworthy. The popularity of these four texts is not only indicated by the manuscripts listed above but is supported by the duplication of “La Belle Dame sans Mercy” and “Parliament of Fowls” within John Paston II’s inventory. Given the care and attentiveness with which Lansdowne 285 appears to have been compiled the doubling of texts seems odd: it appears an unnecessary expense. The evidence associated with the Pastons sheds very little light on how John II might have come to own these manuscripts. The extant documents and the information provided by the surviving manuscripts that share texts with Items Three and Five do suggest

⁵³⁹ *SJPG*, p.9.

certain routes by which John Paston II gained some of his manuscripts. Whilst nothing conclusive can be drawn about these precise instances in the inventory, an attempt to answer the question of why these works have been duplicated raises an important counterpoint to the first two chapters of this thesis: that not all of Paston's books may have been bespoke, heavily curated collections; some of them, rather, may have been "mass-produced" and some of them may have been purchased second-hand.

The appearance of this pair of texts in other extant manuscripts, as well as this duplication in the inventory, indicates that this was a standard combination of works that scribes copied into manuscript, raising the possibility that, in these instances of Paston's inventory, the scribe had a greater influence than his patron over the content of these codices. Julia Boffey, building on her 1989 survey of the circulation of the shorter works of Chaucer and Lydgate in which she looked at the manuscripts discussed here, suggests that the circulation of clusters of texts may have been produced by scribes for "speculative sale, and/or that those commissioning them based their choice of contents on existing models."⁵⁴⁰ Here we are presented with a possibility that echoes Curt F. Buhler's (subsequently disproved) impression of Lansdowne MS 285, that Items Three and Five may be "mass-produced". Scribes (and, as we will see below, printers) may have anticipated such combinations by producing texts in pamphlets or quires of popular works and they may well have anticipated commissions of these popular works by pre-emptively placing a few of these works together in booklets (hence the repetition of texts within John Paston II's inventory). Alternatively, Simon Horobin, considering the similarities of the texts between Tanner MS 346, Fairfax MS 16 and Bodley MS 638 and having identified that they do not share the same exemplar, concludes that this duplication of texts

⁵⁴⁰ Julia Boffey, 'Manuscript and Print: Books, Readers and Writers,' in *A Companion to Medieval Poetry*, ed. Corinne Saunders, (Chichester: John Wiley, 2010), p.544, with these conclusions drawn from Boffey and John J. Thompson, 'Anthologies and Miscellanies: Production and Choice of Texts,' in *Book Production and Publishing in Britain, 1395-1475*, eds. J. Griffiths and D. Pearsall, (Cambridge: CUP, 1989), pp.279-80.

suggests that these individual works by Chaucer, Hoccleve and Lydgate originally circulated in independent booklets amongst interested readers, who gradually incorporated similar poems [...] ⁵⁴¹

Horobin here places the impetus of this circulation on the readers, lending, sharing, collecting these works, which resulted in the substantial manuscripts discussed above. This is most evident in the Findern Manuscript, which is, according to M.C. Seymour's assessment of the codex, a "home-made household book" consisting of the work of over forty scribes, which were collected and eventually bound together in the early sixteenth century. ⁵⁴² Whilst this was bound after the period of this study, it does reflect a number of other manuscripts in which we find discrete sections or booklets of works have been bound together, hinting at piecemeal production. ⁵⁴³ However, from this duplication of texts within the inventory we may infer that John Paston II had less control over the compilation of this manuscript. If Paston did commission these items to be copied then, from what we can see of the collection as represented by the entries in the inventory they were less curated than Lansdowne MS 285 or the putative manuscript suggested by the "in quayers" section. Furthermore, unlike with the works available in the Fastolf household, Paston may have been less aware of which texts these scribes had to hand, that he may feasibly have unknowingly ordered the same texts twice. Alternatively, in describing Item Five, John Paston II reminds himself that this codex is "a boke lent Midelton". ⁵⁴⁴ The repetition of "La Belle Dame sans Mercy" and "Parliament of Fowls" across the two items may record the eagerness of John Paston II to have these texts within his possession allowing him access even whilst another manuscript is absent from his library. As we have seen above, he makes a point of noting that his copy of *Troilus* has been on loan for ten years, recording a reassurance that he has seen this manuscript at the house of Anne Harling. ⁵⁴⁵

⁵⁴¹ Simon Horobin, "Forms of Circulation," in *A Companion to Fifteenth-Century English Poetry*, eds. Julia Boffey and A. S. G. Edwards, (Cambridge: Brewer, 2013), pp.23-24.

⁵⁴² *CCMI*, pp.19-20.

⁵⁴³ See Cambridge, Magdalene College MS Pepys 2006, part 1; Cambridge, Trinity College MS R.3.19; Cambridge, University Library MS Hh.4.12; BL MS Harley 7333; Longleat House MS 258; Bodleian MS Bodley 638; Bodleian MS Tanner 346.

⁵⁴⁴ *PLI*, p.517

⁵⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

Finally, it may be that one or both of these items were not commissioned by John Paston II but were “second hand”. M. C. Erler, in considering the provenance of MS Pepys 2006, suggests two key possibilities for how the manuscript moved from the ownership of ‘Johannes Kiriell’ (inscribed on f.378) to “Willielmo ffetypace” (also inscribed on f.378).⁵⁴⁶ According to Erler’s identification of these names both had manors in Kent whilst also having strong links with London and Erler goes on to state that “the manuscript might have been sold in the capital’s secondhand book market” but, Erler continues, both the Kiriells and the Fettyplaces held property within a mile from one another in Kent and passing of the manuscript from one to the other could have easily happened there.⁵⁴⁷ John Paston II, like the Kiriells and Fettyplaces, spent a lot of time in London and we have already, through William Ebesham, seen him engage with the London book trade. However, for secondhand books we, like Erler, have reason to turn to his provincial textual networks.

John Paston II’s letters to Margaret Paston regarding the library of James Gloys, as well as his note about seeing his copy of *Troilus* in Anne Harling’s possession, show that he was aware of the contents of the libraries of his acquaintances and, in the case of Gloys, would doggedly pursue the acquisition of their manuscripts when they became available:

Item, as fore the bookys þat weer Syr James, iff it lyke yow þat I maye haue them I ame not able to by them; but som-what wolde I gyffe, and the remenaunt, wyth a goode devowte herte by my trowthe I wyll prey for hys sowle. Wherffor iff it lyke yow by the next messenger ore karyere to send hem, in a daye I shall have them dressyd heer; and iff any off them be claymyd here-afftre in feythe I wyll restore it.⁵⁴⁸

Three weeks later, John wrote to Margaret (who was one of the executors to Gloys’ will) asking which, if any, of the manuscripts from this library had been secured for him: “I here no worde off my vessel nere off my bokys. I

⁵⁴⁶ Erler, “Owners of Chaucer’s Work,” p.402.

⁵⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴⁸ *PLI*, p. 476.

mervayll.”⁵⁴⁹ Finally, on 28th of January 1475, Margaret responded to these enquiries:

As for the bokys that ye desyryd to have of Syr Jamys, the best of alle and the fayrest ys cleymyd, ner yt ys not in hys jnventory. I shall a-say to get yt for yow and I may. The prys of þe todyr [bokys] be-syd that ys xx s. vj d., the wych I send yow a byll of. Yf ye lyk be þe prys of them and ye wol haue them, send me word.⁵⁵⁰

The surviving evidence is such that we do not know which books were in Gloys’ inventory or if John wanted those that were left after the best had been taken. These letters date from November 1474 to January 1475 and the earliest possible date for the writing of the Inventory of English Books is 1474. As such, it is possible that some of the items listed could have come from the library of James Gloys, or through similar scenarios, which may have caused the duplication of “La Belle Dame sans Mercy” and “Parliament of Fowls” between Items Three and Five. Whichever way these manuscripts came to be in John Paston II’s inventory (whether via the libraries of dead men or scribes using pre-emptive booklets) their contents, and the extant manuscripts in which they survive, show him as the owner of a common set of fifteenth-century texts. A comparison of Items Three and Five with these extant manuscripts continues a concern already seen elsewhere in Paston’s inventory, the organisation of the contents of a manuscript around a set of principles.

We have already seen how Items Three and Five of John Paston II’s inventory appear to be unusually small when compared to the contents of other extant manuscripts that also contain *Legend of Good Women*, *La Belle Dame sans Mercy*, *The Parliament of Fowls*, and *The Temple of Glass*. If Paston and Ebesham only explicitly referred to larger texts by their titles then there is a greater possibility that both Item Three and Item Five extended beyond those titles recorded in the inventory. The full list of titles cannot, of course, be recovered but there are

⁵⁴⁹ John Paston II’s original request for these books is dated as 20th November 1474, with this request for further news dated as 11th December 1474. *Id.* pp.476 and 481 (respectively).

⁵⁵⁰ *Id.* p.373.

certain patterns of texts that occur in the extant manuscripts containing these four texts that highlight some of the trends that were occurring in the circulation of these texts in the late fifteenth century. The four extant texts of Item Three survive in a number of other manuscripts (listed above).⁵⁵¹ These codices appear to be organised around the works of two key writers, Chaucer and Lydgate, with Chaucer having the stronger presence (in addition to *Legend of Good Women* and *The Parliament of Fowls*, eleven of his works are repeated across the collected manuscripts with many of his shorter poems appearing on single occasions. Lydgate has five works that appear in two or more manuscripts, in addition to *The Temple of Glass*). Chaucer's *Anelida and Arcite* has the greatest presence, appearing in ten of the manuscripts, which is just under half of the surveyed extant manuscripts.⁵⁵² Hoccleve's *Lepistre de Cupide* and Lydgate's *The Complaint of the Black Knight*, both appear in seven of the codices.⁵⁵³ What quickly becomes clear in surveying these manuscripts is that whilst they primarily focus on the works of two key writers they also have a thematic organising principle, love. Chaucer's works, *The Complaynt unto Pity*, *Complaint of Mars to Venus* and *Complaint of Venus* appear in a handful of the manuscripts, as does Clanvowe's *The Book of Cupid* (or, *The Cuckoo and the Nightingale*). But, whilst the appearance of these shorter works by Chaucer might indicate an anthologising practice, it should also be noted that his *ABC* and 'Balade of Fortune' each appear in five manuscripts; and there are a number of other texts that only appear in single instances across the corpus – works written by Chaucer, Lydgate, Hoccleve, Gower, Burgh, and numerous texts by unspecified writers.⁵⁵⁴ Whilst these manuscripts of the survey might

⁵⁵¹ See Appendix, Table IV for the full lists of contents for these manuscripts discussed in this section.

⁵⁵² Additional MS 16165, Bodley MS 638, Digby MS 181, Fairfax MS 16, Findern MS, Harley MS 372, Harley MS 7333, Longleat MS 258, Pepys MS 2006, and Tanner MS 346.

⁵⁵³ *Lepistre de Cupide* appears in Bodley MS 638, Digby MS 181, Fairfax MS 16, Findern MS, Longleat MS 258, Selden MS B.24, and Tanner MS 346. *The Complaint of the Black Knight* appears in Additional MS 16165, Bodley MS 638, Digby MS 181, Fairfax MS 16, Pepys MS 2006, Selden MS B.24, and Tanner MS 346. See Appendix, Table IV.

⁵⁵⁴ "ABC" appears in CUL MS GG.4.27, Bodley MS 638, Fairfax MS 16, Pepys MS 2006. 'Balade of Fortune' appears in Bodley MS 638, Fairfax MS 16, Findern MS ('A ballad addressed to Fortune'). 'Complaint of a Prisoner against Fortune', Pepys MS 2006. See Appendix, Table IV for a full list of contents for each of the manuscripts that share texts with Item Three of John Paston II's inventory of English books.

contain a similar core of texts to Item Three of John Paston II's inventory of English books, that core tends to be larger and is usually surrounded by numerous smaller pieces, which, in some instances, creates a codex organised around the principles of authorship, and subject matter.

The emerging trend of grouping texts by authors is clear in the manuscripts produced by John Shirley and, thus, in those manuscripts that used his collections as exemplars but we also find such an organising principle in the early English productions of William Caxton. Gillespie recounts Lotte Hellinga's theory "that Caxton's small verse pamphlets (in quarto and half quarto) were designed as the component parts of such bound, vernacular miscellanies [...]."⁵⁵⁵ This not only echoes the speculative copying practices that potentially form the core of the manuscripts surveyed here, but, as Hellinga goes on to note, these pamphlets appear to include Chaucerian and Lydgateian groupings of texts.⁵⁵⁶ Gillespie's study of Caxton's *Book of Curtesye* states that the text was collated with *Stans Puer ad Mensam; Paruus catho; the Debate of the Horse, Goose, and Sheep; The Churl and the Bird; The Temple of Glas; The Parliament of Fowls; and Anelida and Arcite*, dating the printing of this incunable to between 1476 and 1477.⁵⁵⁷ This places the printing in the middle of the possible period in which John Paston II's Inventory of English Books was written (1474-1479) and coincides with wider date range for the copying of the surveyed extant manuscripts (the latter half of the fifteenth century). That this combination of texts appeared in numerous extant manuscripts from the fifteenth century and could also be found in one of Caxton's surviving incunables would indicate the popularity of both the individual items and their collation.

⁵⁵⁵ Lotte Hellinga, "A Note on Caxton's Edition," in *Table Manners for Children: 'Stans Puer Ad Mensam' by John Lydgate*, (ed. and trans.) Nicholas Orme, Wynkyn de Worde Society (1990), pp.17-21. Quoted in Alexandra Gillespie, *Print Culture and the Medieval Author. Chaucer, Lydgate and their Books, 1473-1557*, (Oxford: OUP, 2006), p.45.

⁵⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵⁷ Alexandra Gillespie, "Caxton's Chaucer and Lydgate Quartos: Miscellanies from Manuscript to Print," *Transactions of the Cambridge Bibliographical Society*, vol.12, no.1 (2000), pp.1-2.

Item Three and the comparative survey of these other extant manuscripts maps a circulation pattern of four texts, which tended to be part of a slightly larger grouping of key works by Lydgate and Chaucer, that formed the core of a number of manuscripts in the mid-to-late fifteenth Century. The personalisation of these codices appears in the ordering of the texts and the choice of smaller works. This more speculative or “mass-produced” approach to creating manuscripts is, of course, not only evident in the volume of extant manuscripts which share these same works but within the inventory, with Item Three and Item Five both contain *La Belle Dame sans Mercy* and *Parliament of Fowls*. However, these two core texts appear alongside different titles, creating two manuscripts that have different organising principles and practices of collation. Item Five appears slightly more miscellaneous in its organisation, almost uncharacteristically so in the scheme of Paston’s inventory:

Bele Da<...> Mercy, þe Parlement off Byrdys, Balade <...> off Guy and Colbronde, Off the Goos, þe<...> þe Dysput[i]son bytwyen Hope and Dyspeyre <...> Marchauntys, þe Lyffe off Seint Cry<...>⁵⁵⁸

It begins with the two poems of Item Three, in which the nature of requited love is debated. These are followed by a section of works by Lydgate, but, unlike in Item Three, these works break from the themes of the works by Chaucer and Rolle. Here we have an historical work (Lydgate’s ballad of the life of Guy of Warwick) and a socio-political debate (‘Hors, Goose and Shepe’). The next two texts are lost, and the manuscript concludes with a version of the life of St. Christopher. If we look at CUL MS Hh.4.12, the only other fifteenth-century manuscript of the survey to contain both *The Parliament of Fowls* and Lydgate’s ‘Hors, Goose and Shepe’, we find a mix of Saint’s lives (St. Austin of Compton), moralising works (for example, ‘Horns Away’) and more secular pieces (such as ‘The Lamentacioun of the Duchess of Glossester’).⁵⁵⁹ A number of the manuscripts of the survey also contain at least one historical work, usually in the form of a history of the kings from William the Conqueror to Henry VI.⁵⁶⁰

⁵⁵⁸ *PLI*, p. 517.

⁵⁵⁹ See Appendix, Table IV.

⁵⁶⁰ Fairfax MS 16 (attributed to Lydgate), Harley MS 372 (no attribution), Harley MS 7333 (Lydgate), Rawlinson MS C.86 (thought to be C16th MS). See Appendix, Table IV.

The compilation of Item Five, does not, therefore, seem unusually miscellaneous when compared with the wider corpus of manuscripts with which it shares texts, but within John Paston II's inventory of books its lack of a clear thematic organising principle amongst its core texts is noticeable.

Items Three and Five of John Paston II's inventory provide complexity and nuance in our understanding of Paston as a collector of texts and curator of manuscripts. The evidence provided by the extant manuscripts of the texts of these items shows a textual network in which booklets were produced speculatively for patrons who had a keen interest in reading or owning these works. The resulting manuscripts of these bound booklets were quite substantial and could be generically miscellaneous but seemed to have, at their centre, the organising principle of authorship. If the *Grete Boke* was a heavily curated manuscript, and the putative humanist manuscript reflected an overlapping social connection and intellectual interests with the Fastolf household, then Item Three and Five places John Paston II's reading habits within a much broader context, showing him engaging with widely popular texts amongst the gentry. Furthermore, in making one final turn, as we shall now, in our exploration of the Paston family's owning and reading of Chaucer's work, we can more concretely return this engagement with such popular works to the landscape of the textual culture of the East Anglian gentry.

3.3: The Pastons and the circulation of the *Canterbury Tales* in East Anglia

In Chapter Two I mapped the relationship between the literary activities of the Fastolf household and those texts in John Paston II's Inventory of English Books. There is one further extant manuscript associated with the Paston family and which does not appear in the John Paston II's account of his library, a fifteenth century copy of the *Canterbury Tales*. Bodley is a manuscript written on paper, measuring approximately 305mm x 230mm, containing 440 pages and, according to Estelle Stubbs' appraisal of the manuscript, "copied for the Paston

family of Norfolk between 1450 and 1480”.⁵⁶¹ The name “Iohan Paston” appears on f.1^v, 8^v and again (although M. C. Seymour has reservations about the identification of this inscription) on f.65, 99^v.⁵⁶² This is not the only name to appear in the manuscript. The Bodleian Summary Catalogue states that,

The following names among others were written in the 16th cent. in the margins: ‘Mr Reimes’ (pp. 1, 5, 157), ‘Edmund Remes of Somberby’ (?; pp. 168, 178, 282), ‘Maister Abington’ (p.1), ‘Thomas Johnes’ (pp. 46, 92, 349). ‘Brysson’ is written with a metal stilus on p. 191.⁵⁶³

Whilst these names are added in the century after the manuscript was created – with the Summary Catalogue as well as Stubbs and Seymour all dating it to the second half of the fifteenth century – it cannot be stated with any certainty that this was copied for the Paston family or to which ‘Iohan Paston’ the inscriptions refer. However, what can be stated with some confidence is that this manuscript is associated with the Paston family at some point in the fifteenth century and that the contents of this manuscript highlights some interesting links with one of the scribes of the Fastolf Household, a man who, after Fastolf’s death in 1459, was occasionally in the service of the Paston family, Geoffrey Spirleng.⁵⁶⁴ Looking at the Pastons’ and Spirleng’s ownership of the *Canterbury Tales* brings to the foreground a number of interesting points about the circulation of this work amongst the East Anglian gentry and provides further specific comparisons between the library of the Pastons and those of their friends and acquaintances.

⁵⁶¹ The measurements and material evidence are given in Falconer Madan, *A Summary Catalogue of Western Manuscripts in the Bodleian Library at Oxford, Volume V* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1905), pp. 380-381. Quotation from Estelle Stubbs, “Clare Priory, the London Austin Friars and Manuscripts of Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales*”, in *Middle English Poetry: Texts and Traditions. Essays in Honour of Derek Pearsall*, ed. A.J. Minnis, (Woodbridge: York Medieval Press, 2001), p.23. Seymour dates the hand of Bodley to the third quarter of the fifteenth century (1450-1475) in *CCMII*, p.167.

⁵⁶² Foliation information from Seymour’s survey of the extant manuscripts of the *Canterbury Tales* in, *Ibid.*

⁵⁶³ Madan, *Summary Catalogue V*, p. 381.

⁵⁶⁴ Spirleng’s letters to John Fastolf are transcribed in Richmond and Beadle *PLIII*, letters 961, 964, and 965. He is also mentioned in *PLI*, pp. 273, 448, 521, 555, 559, 574; *PLII*, pp. 117, 155, 163, 167, 169, 170, 171, 172, 186, 189, 191-2, 202-3, 207, 532, 574; *PLIII*, pp. 55-6, 60-65, 90, 101.

At the end of Hunterian, a copy of the *Canterbury Tales*, is a colophon in which the scribe, Geoffrey Spirleng provides some biographical and codicological details. Here he tells the reader that the manuscript was completed in January 1476 by himself and his son, Thomas.⁵⁶⁵ He also states that at this time he was 50 years in age, from which we arrive at the approximate birth date of 1426.⁵⁶⁶ Richard Beadle, in his account of the life and works of Spirleng suggests that he may have been born in Norwich but from the mid-1440s he starts to appear in the papers of Sir John Fastolf.⁵⁶⁷ Deborah Thorpe characterizes Spirleng's initial scribal activity within this household as that of being an "administrative assistant" to Thomas Howes, Fastolf's chaplain but a man who also "managed Fastolf's other servants, directed his non-resident legal advisors, and dispatched goods to Fastolf in London."⁵⁶⁸ In 1448 he wrote an inventory of the contents of Caister castle, "including a list of the French books used by Worcester and others of the community, its cover enigmatically endorsed 'Neuer trust ontryed quod Spirlyng'."⁵⁶⁹ After Fastolf's death in 1459 Spirleng became one of the Paston's strongest allies in the disputes surrounding Fastolf's will. Of the only surviving letter in Spirleng's hand, Beadle writes that "the tone of the letter indicates that Spirleng was of the Pastons' party in the dispute [...] [and] subsequent references to him by the Pastons note that his sympathies continued to lie in their direction."⁵⁷⁰ During the 1470s we find that such sympathies extend to performing services for family. In a letter to John Paston II, dated by Davis to 1st March 1470, John Paston III writes of Geoffrey Spirleng, "he seythe that he had leuer haue your good mastyrshap ther-in then eny othyr manys good lordship [...]"⁵⁷¹ On 25th May 1470, John Paston III writes that Spirleng is still waiting on John Paston II to resolve a matter regarding

⁵⁶⁵ The colophon is transcribed and printed in Richard Beadle, "Geoffrey Spirleng (c.1426-c.1494): a Scribe of the *Canterbury Tales* in his Time," in *Of the Making of Books. Medieval Manuscripts, their Scribes and Readers. Essays presented to M. B. Parkes*, eds. P. R. Robinson and Rivkah Zim, (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1997), p.116.

⁵⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶⁷ *Id.*, pp.120-121.

⁵⁶⁸ Deborah Thorpe, "Documents and Books: A Case Study of Luket Nantron and Geoffrey Spirleng as Fifteenth-Century Administrators and Textwriters," in *Journal of the Early Book Society for the study of Manuscript and Printing History* 14 (2011), p.195.

⁵⁶⁹ Oxford, Magdalen Coll., Archives, FP43, quoted in Beadle, "Geoffrey Spirleng," p.122.

⁵⁷⁰ Beadle, "Geoffrey Spirleng," p.123. Beadle points to *PLI*, letters 339 and 341.

⁵⁷¹ *PLI*, p.555.

Spirleng's "plase in Norwyche" reminding his eldest brother that Spirleng "delyth alwey rught friendly wyth yow."⁵⁷² On 5th June 1472, John Paston III writes to John Paston II indicating that Geoffrey Spirleng is acting on their behalf in recovering owed money from William Barker regarding the Paston estates at Winterton, Bastwick and Runham [...].⁵⁷³ Aside from his direct connections with Sir John Fastolf and the Pastons, Spirleng took on key clerical roles for the city of Norwich. He would go on to become a common clerk, a clerk of the peace and custodian of the city's documents.⁵⁷⁴ Beadle notes that an item of particular note in the Chamberlains' Account Book for 1470-90 (the earlier half of which is primarily in Spirleng's hand) includes an account of "what sounds like a *tableau vivant* arranged by Spirleng" for the reception of Elizabeth Woodville at Norwich in 1469.⁵⁷⁵ The information about Spirleng's life indicates that he was a respected clerk with an interest in literature, neither surprising qualities in a man employed within the Fastolf household. However, given the literary interests shared between the members of the Fastolf and Paston household, which are discussed in Chapter Two, and the seemingly friendly interactions between Spirleng and the John Pastons, the *Canterbury Tales* is a note-worthy point of difference in the circulation of texts within the Pastons' literary network. Where, perhaps, we might have reason to anticipate the sharing of exemplars for this text we find that Spirleng and the 'Iohan Paston' were part of two distinctly different manuscript networks within East Anglia through which the *Canterbury Tales* circulated.

As previously stated, Bodley and Hunterian both contain the *Canterbury Tales* however the versions of Chaucer's work associated with the Pastons differs from Spirleng's manuscript in the collation of the tales. The Pastons' version follows the format of the Ellesmere manuscript "as far as the Summoner's Tale and omitting the prologues and tales of Cook, Merchant, Squire; thereafter, from

⁵⁷² *Id.*, p.559.

⁵⁷³ *Id.*, p.574.

⁵⁷⁴ Beadle, "Geoffrey Spirleng," p.125-126.

⁵⁷⁵ *Id.*, p. 127.

f.89^v Petworth.”⁵⁷⁶ The differences between the Ellesmere, Petworth and Hunterian orders are as follows:

Petworth MS ⁵⁷⁷		Ellesmere MS ⁵⁷⁸		Hunterian ⁵⁷⁹	
A1	General Prologue	A1	General Prologue	A1	General Prologue (starting at line 355)
A2	Knight's Tale	A2	Knight's Tale	A2	Knight's Tale
A3	Miller's Tale	A3	Miller's Tale	A3	Miller's Tale
A4	Reeve's Tale	A4	Reeve's Tale	A4	Reeve's Tale
A5	Cook's Tale	A5	Cook's Tale	A5	Cook's Tale
X	Tale of Gamelyn	B1	Man of Law's Tale	X	Tale of Gamelyn
B2	Shipman's Tale	D1	Wife of Bath's Tale	B2	Shipman's Tale
B3	Prioress's Tale	D2	Friar's Tale	B3	Prioress's Tale
B1	Man of Law's Tale	D3	Summoner's Tale	B6	Monk's Tale
F1	Squire's Tale	E1	Clerk's Tale	B1	Man of Law's Tale
E2	Merchant's Tale	E2	Merchant's Tale	F1	Squire's Tale
D1	Wife of Bath's Tale	F1	Squire's Tale	E2	Merchant's Tale
D2	Friar's Tale	F2	Franklin's Tale	D1	Wife of Bath's Tale
D3	Summoner's Tale	C1	Physician's Tale	D2	Friar's Tale
E1	Clerk's Tale	C2	Pardoner's Tale	D3	Summoner's Tale
F2	Franklin's Tale	B2	Shipman's Tale	G1	Second Nun's Tale
G1	Second Nun's Tale	B3	Prioress's Tale	C2	Pardoner's Tale
G2	Canon's Yeoman's Tale	B4	Sir Thopas	H	Manciple's Tale
C1	Physician's Tale	B5	Tale of Melibee	B4	Sir Thopas
C2	Pardoner's Tale	B6	Monk's Tale	B5	Tale of Melibee
B4	Tale of Sir Thopas	B7	Nun's Priest's Tale	B7	Nun's Priest's Tale
B5	Tale of Melibee	G2	Canon's Yeoman's Tale	C1	Physician's Tale
B6	Monk's Tale	H	Manciple's Tale	B2	Shipman's Tale

⁵⁷⁶ *CCMII*, p.167.

⁵⁷⁷ The following titles and ordering is quoted from Frederick J. Furnivall, ed., *The Petworth MS of Chaucer's "Canterbury Tales," Part I*, published for The Chaucer Society (London: N. Trübner, 1868), pp.v-viii.

⁵⁷⁸ John M. Manly and Edith Rickert, *The Text of the Canterbury Tales, studied on the basis of all known Manuscripts, Volume I*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1940), p.149.

⁵⁷⁹ *Id.*, p.185.

B7	Nun's Priest's Tale	I	Parson's Tale & Retraction	B3	Prioress's Tale
H	Manciple's Tale			F2	Franklin's Tale
I	Parson's Tale & Retraction			I	Parson's Tale & Retraction
B7	Nun's Priest's End-Link			E1	Clerk's Tale
				G2	Canon's Yeoman's Tale

Spirleng's work, at least in the earlier part of the manuscript, follows what the Chaucer Society labeled as the "group d" ordering of the tales (a group to which the Petworth MS also belongs).⁵⁸⁰ M.C. Seymour describes the order of the texts in Hunterian in a little more detail, articulating the relationship of Spirleng's work to his exemplars:

Group d, Petworth (copied from MS. Mm. 2. 5) until f.46, Wife of Bath's Prologue 193, when it changes its copy-text to an affiliate of MS. Rawlinson poet. 223 of Group b. This change is responsible for the duplication (ff. 25-8^v, 77-81) of the Shipman's Tale and the Prioress' Prologue and Tale and for the late inclusion (from MS. Mm. 2. 5) after the Parson's Tale of the previously omitted tales of Clerk and Canon's Yeoman.⁵⁸¹

These key structural differences between Bodley and Hunterian not only indicate that Spirleng and the Pastons had different exemplars for their copies of the work but they also provide an insight into the patterns of circulation of the *Canterbury Tales* within a small group of the East Anglian gentry.⁵⁸²

⁵⁸⁰ The Chaucer Society identified four common orders to the fragments of the tales in extant manuscripts:

- a: A B¹ D E F C B² G H I
- b: A B¹ F¹ E² D E¹ F² G C B² H I
- c: A X B¹ F¹ D E F² G C B² H I
- d: A X B¹ F¹ E² D E¹ F² G C B² H I

Id., p.25.

⁵⁸¹ *CCMII*, p. 83.

⁵⁸² It should be noted that Ralph Hanna III and A.S.G. Edwards, show the Ellesmere Chaucer to have circulated on the Essex/Suffolk border and they (along with A. I. Doyle) argue that, given the connections between the manuscript's owner, Edward de Vere, Earl of Oxford, and the Paston family that the manuscript "was available to the Paston family of Norfolk at some point in the fifteenth century." Hanna and Edwards,

Through a comparison of these manuscripts with other surviving fifteenth-century East Anglian codices of this text we can map manuscript connection between members of both the immediate and wider social circles of the Paston family.

Of the extant manuscripts containing more-or-less complete copies of the *Canterbury Tales*, fifteen of them have links to Norfolk or Suffolk (either through their owner or their scribe):

1	Bodley	Thought to be owned by the Paston family for reasons outlined above. ⁵⁸³
2	Hunterian	Written by Geoffrey Spirleng, and his son. ⁵⁸⁴
3	CUL MS Mm 2. 5	The scribe of the manuscript has links with Bury St. Edmunds, and it is thought that the codex was owned by the Boleyn family. The ownership of this manuscript is discussed below.
4	Cologne, Bibliotheca Bodmeriana MS. 48	Written by a Norfolk scribe. The manuscript is copied from an affiliate of Bodley.
5	Holkham, Norfolk, Earl of Leicester MS 667	It is thought that this might have been the manuscript bequeathed to Sir William Clopton by his priest, Richard Dodyngton, in 1495, and it is thought that this might be that codex but Seymour is “less certain” of this identification of ownership. ⁵⁸⁵
6	BL MS Add. 5140	Copied in the late fifteenth century by a Suffolk scribe. ⁵⁸⁶
7	BL MS Egerton 2726	Copied by a Suffolk scribe. ⁵⁸⁷
8	BL MS Egerton 2864	Copied by an East Anglian scribe (probably from or in Suffolk). ⁵⁸⁸
9	BL MS Harley 7335	Copied by an East Anglian scribe (possibly from or in Suffolk). ⁵⁸⁹
10	BL MS Sloane 1686	Possibly copied at Lynn or Norwich. ⁵⁹⁰
11	Oxford, New College MS. D314	Copied in the Norfolk dialect. ⁵⁹¹

“Rotheley, the De Vere Circle, and the Ellesmere Chaucer,” p.13. Hanna and Edwards here draw on A.I. Doyle, “English Books in and out of Court from Edward III to Henry VII,” in *English Court Culture in the Later Middle Ages*, eds. V.J. Scattergood and J.W. Sherborne, (London: Duckworth, 1983), pp.163-82 at 172 and fn.21.

⁵⁸³ *CCMII*, p.167.

⁵⁸⁴ *Id.*, p.83.

⁵⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸⁶ *Id.*, p.97.

⁵⁸⁷ *Id.*, p.106.

⁵⁸⁸ *Id.*, p.116.

⁵⁸⁹ *Id.*, p.131.

⁵⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹¹ *Id.*, p.208.

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|----|-----------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 12 | National Trust, Petworth MS. 7 | Written by an Essex scribe who was probably working in London. ⁵⁹² |
| 13 | Philadelphia, Rosenbach Library MS. 1084/1 | Copied by a Norfolk scribe. ⁵⁹³ |
| 14 | Princeton, Firestone Library, MS. 100 | Copied by two scribes: Hand 1 was a scribe from Suffolk; Hand 2 a scribe from the North Essex-Suffolk borders. ⁵⁹⁴ |
| 15 | Tokyo, Professor Takamiya of Keio University MS. 24 | Whilst the original owner is unknown, f.274 ^v has the name 'Knyvet' "below a shield containing the arms of Sir Edmund Knyvet (d.1546) and his wife Jane Bouchier (d.1561)." ⁵⁹⁵ Sir Edmund was the son of Sir Thomas Knyvett, of Buckenham, Norfolk (c. 1485-1512), and Muriel Howard (d. 1512), daughter of the Thomas Howard, 2 nd Duke of Norfolk. ⁵⁹⁶ |

Seymour notes that there is codicological evidence for small groups of manuscripts within these 15: Cologny, Bibliotheca Bodmeriana MS 48 seems to have been copied from an affiliate of Bodley; (as discussed below) CUL MS Mm. 2.5 was the copy text for Hunterian and also "shares many omissions and reversals of lines with Rosenbach Library MS 1084/1"; BL MS Additional 5140 is closely affiliated with Egerton MS 2864, Austin MS 143 (which was copied in the South East Midlands) and Rylands MS 113 (which, whilst written in a Central Midland dialect does have an East Anglian underlay); Egerton MS 2726 has close affiliations with CUL MS Dd. 4.24 and Takamiya MS 24; and Harley MS 7335's closest affiliate is BL MS Additional 35286.⁵⁹⁷ For most of these extant manuscripts we do not have enough information about the scribes or owners to recover a sense of the patterns of lending, borrowing, selling, and copying behind these associations, so we cannot ascertain the specific ways in which the

⁵⁹² *Id.*, p.221.

⁵⁹³ *Id.*, p.225.

⁵⁹⁴ *Id.*, p.230.

⁵⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹⁶ S. J. Gunn, "Knyvet, Sir Thomas (c.1485-1512), courtier and sea captain" *ODNB*: <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/15799> - accessed 10th February 2016. Gunn notes that Sir Thomas Knyvett was the eldest son of Sir William Knyvett of Buckenham, Norfolk (c.1448-1515).

⁵⁹⁷ *CCMII*: Cologny, Bibliotheca Bodmeriana MS 48, pp.76-79; Bodley, pp.165-167; CUL MS Mm. 2.5, pp.56-61; Hunterian, pp.79-84; Rosenbach Library MS 1084/1, pp.222-225; BL MS Additional 5140, pp.93-98; Egerton MS 2864, pp.111-116; Austin MS 143, pp.39-43; Rylands MS 113, pp.154-158; Egerton MS 2726, pp.103-107; CUL MS Dd.4.24, pp.43-47; Takamiya 24, pp.237-241; Harley MS 7335, pp.129-131; BL MS Additional 35286, pp.100-103.

Pastons' acquisition of the text may compare with how their peers within East Anglia were engaging with the area's literary culture, and the *Canterbury Tales*. However, there are a few moments of interest where we can recover the owners of these other extant manuscripts (which I shall outline below), such as Holkham, Norfolk, Earl of Leicester MS 667 and Tokyo, Professor Takamiya of Keio University MS. 24, which have associations with the Cloptons and the Knyvetts, respectively. If we group this wider data set accordingly to their textual affiliation with Paston's and Spirleng's manuscripts then we can see that each of these two versions of the *Canterbury Tales* was circulating quite widely within East Anglia.⁵⁹⁸

Manuscript	Ellesmere	Manuscript	Petworth/Lichfield
Bodley (c.1450-1480)	Ellesmere, Group a as far as the Summoner's Tale	Hunterian (c.1476)	Group d, Petworth until the Wife of Bath, where it then uses an affiliate of Rawlinson poet. 223 for Group B.
Cologne, Bibliotheca Bodmeriana MS. 48 (c.1450-1475)	Ellesmere, Group a as far as the Summoner's Tale	CUL MS Mm 2.5 (c.1425-48)	Group d, Petworth
BL MS Add. 5140 (late fifteenth century)	Ellesmere, Group a	BL MS Sloane 1685 (c.1475-1500)	Group d, Lichfield (for the greater part)
BL MS Egerton 2726 (c.1425-1450)	Ellesmere	National Trust, Petworth MS 7 (c.1430)	Group d, Petworth
BL MS Egerton 2864 (late fifteenth century)	Ellesmere, Group a	Philadelphia, Rosenbach Library MS 1084/1 (c.1425-1450)	Group d, Petworth
BL MS Harley 7335 (c.1450-1475)	Ellesmere, Group a (for the greater part)		
Tokyo, Professor Takamiya of Keio University MS 24 (c.1475)	Ellesmere		

⁵⁹⁸ *CCMII*: Bodley, pp.165-167; Cologne, Bibliotheca Bodmeriana MS 48, pp.76-79; BL MS Additional 5140, pp.93-98; Egerton MS 2726, pp.103-107; Egerton MS 2864, pp.111-116; Harley MS 7335, pp.129-131; Takamiya 24, pp.237-241; Hunterian, pp.79-84; CUL MS Mm. 2.5, pp.56-61; BL MS Sloane 1685, pp.143-146; National Trust, Petworth MS 7, pp.217; Rosenbach Library MS 1084/1, pp.222-225.

Holkham, Norfolk, Earl of Leicester MS 667; Princeton, Firestone Library, MS. 100; Oxford, New College MS. D314; and BL MS. Sloane 1686 have severally unique sequences within this selection.⁵⁹⁹ By grouping these manuscripts according to the sequence of the tales contained within, we can see that the Ellesmere Group A is slightly more prevalent and that this grouping tends to appear with a greater frequency amongst those manuscripts dated to after 1450 (six of the seven manuscripts date to after 1450, whilst two of the five manuscripts with the Petworth D sequence date to the second half of the fifteenth century). However, these differences are so slight that it would seem that both the Pastons and Spirleng were participating in the two key patterns of the circulation of the *Canterbury Tales* in fifteenth-century East Anglia. This goes some way towards situating the Pastons' manuscript of the *Canterbury Tales* within their local literary landscape but there are also a couple of unique occasions of manuscript affiliation where the ownership is known and that illuminates some more specific patterns of circulation within this society.

The exemplar for the first section of Geoffrey Spirleng's manuscript was CUL MS Mm.2.5 and, as previously stated, they share "many omission and reversals of lines with Rosenbach 1084/1".⁶⁰⁰ Whilst the Rosenbach manuscript can be dated to the second quarter of the fifteenth century and the two scribal hands identified as East Anglian (with Hand 2 more confidently noted as being of Norfolk), nothing is known of its commissioning or ownership.⁶⁰¹ More, however, is known of Spirleng's exemplar, which was copied at some point between 1425-48 (if Seymour's identification of the inscription of f.119 is correct). Although copied by a scribe using the dialect of North Leicestershire, the link to East Anglia centres on the abbey of Bury St. Edmunds. Seymour believes that the inscription found on f.119 of CUL MS Mm.2.5, 'ele ama homble Brokyssby', was probably made by Bartholome Brokesby (d. 1448) of Frisby, Leicestershire, a steward of the abbey. The manuscript contains another

⁵⁹⁹ *Ibid.*: Holkham, Norfolk, Earl of Leicester MS 667, pp.84-86; Princeton, Firestone Library, MS. 100, pp.225-230; Oxford, New College MS. D314, pp.205-209; BL MS Sloane 1686, pp.146-150.

⁶⁰⁰ *Id.*, p.60.

⁶⁰¹ *Id.*, p.225.

signature, on f.190: 'Wyllyam Boleyn'. Seymour identifies this as the work of Sir William Boleyn (c. 1451-1505) of Blickling and that in 1476 'this ms. was used as a copy-text in Norwich for Hunterian MS. U. 1. 1.'⁶⁰² According to this evidence, about twenty-five to fifty years after it was originally created, this manuscript was in Geoffrey Spirleng's possession long enough for him to copy a great deal of the text, with it briefly passing out of his hands, causing him to seek another exemplar for those tales following the Wife of Bath's prologue (MS. Rawlinson poet. 223).

The link between Spirleng and Boleyn, whilst evident in the affiliations between their manuscripts cannot be traced through any form of documentation such as John Paston II's recording of the borrowing or lending of his books or bills for scribal activities. However, it should be noted that these two men had close links with Sir John Fastolf: Geoffrey Spirleng, of course, was secretary and scribe to the knight, whilst Sir William Boleyn's father, Geoffrey Boleyn, had purchased Blickling Hall from Fastolf in 1450.⁶⁰³ Blomefield, in his account of Blickling states that Geoffrey Boleyn had been "a great favourite with Sir John Fastolf, was by his [Fastolf's] interest much promoted".⁶⁰⁴ Agnes Paston records Fastolf's continued support of Geoffrey Boleyn in 1452 in a letter to John Paston I,

Item, he [John Dam] tolde me as he herd seyn Sere John Fastolf hath sold Heylysdon to Boleyn of London, and if be so it semeth he will selle more; wherfore I preye you, as ye will haue my loue and my blissyng, þat ye will helpe and do youre deuer that sumthyng were purchased for youre ij brethren. I suppose þat Ser John Fastolf, and he were spoke to, wolde be gladere to lete his kensemene han parte than straunge men.⁶⁰⁵

⁶⁰² *Id.*, p.60. For the dates of William Boleyn see Jonathan Hughes, "Boleyn, Thomas, earl of Wiltshire and earl of Ormond (1476/7-1539)," *ODNB*: <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/articleHL/2795?docPos=1&anchor=match> - accessed 30th January 2016.

⁶⁰³ Francis Blomefield, "Hundred of South Erpingham: Blickling," in *An Essay Towards A Topographical History of the County of Norfolk: Volume 6* (London, 1807), pp. 381-409.

⁶⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰⁵ *PLI*, p.38.

Although, in 1454, Thomas Howes records Fastolf's preference for one of John Paston I's daughters to marry his ward, alluded to as "A.B.C" in the letter, over the daughter of Geoffrey Boleyn.⁶⁰⁶ Howes writes that he "wold well to hym [Boleyn] but bettyr to yow."⁶⁰⁷ As previously noted, Geoffrey Spirleng entered into Fastolf's service c.1440 and spent much of the 1440s and 1450s as an assistant to Thomas Howes.⁶⁰⁸ Whilst Davis notes that this letter of 1454 is in the hand of John Russe, this letter brings together the Fastolf's chief clerk, Howes, his legal advisor, John Paston I, as well as one of his "favourites", Geoffrey Boleyn. Spirleng might not be part of this interaction but he is on the edge of it through his service to both Howes and Fastolf.

William Boleyn, son of Geoffrey Boleyn and whose name is inscribed in CUL Mm 2.5., only appears twice in the extant documents of both the Pastons and the Fastolf household. In 1487, in response to Henry VII's commissions of array in anticipation of an invasion from Lambert Simnel and his supporters, Sir Edmond Bedyngfeld writes to John Paston III updating him, as one of the king's commissioners for Norfolk, on the whereabouts of Sir William Boleyn and Sir Harry Heydon.⁶⁰⁹ Two years later William Paston III writes to John Paston III regarding the wages to be paid to the retinue of Earl of Oxford, including John Paston III and William Boleyn.⁶¹⁰ John and William Paston III do not discuss William Boleyn with the same detailed knowledge or familiarity as those letters of John Paston I and Thomas Howes and a connection between Spirleng and Boleyn is not to be found in these documents.

Whilst William Boleyn is not mentioned in the extant letters until 1485, the Pastons' primary connection with the family during the period of Spirleng's copying of the *Canterbury Tales* appears to have been with the women of that household, specifically Lady Boleyn and her daughter Anne. In 1467 John Paston III attempted to negotiate with Lady Boleyn a marriage to her daughter,

⁶⁰⁶ *PLII*, p.106.

⁶⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰⁸ Beadle, "Geoffrey Spirleng" p.121.

⁶⁰⁹ *PLII*, p.452.

⁶¹⁰ *PLI*, p.658.

Anne (d.1509/10), sister to Sir William Boleyn.⁶¹¹ In March of that year John Paston II, wrote to his younger brother apologising for being unable to move Lady Boleyn to agree a marriage between her daughter and John Paston III. He advises his younger brother to speak to Lady Boleyn (presumably the mother of Anne and Sir William Boleyn). The following month John Paston III laments the absence of his eldest brother (and head of the household) as he sees his chance with “Mistress Boleyn” slipping away:

And, syr, wher as it lyekyth yow to desyir to haue knowlage how þat i haue don wyth þe Lady Boleyn, by my feythe i haue don nor spokyn nowght in þat mater, nor not wyll do tyll tyme þat ye com hom, and ye com not thys vij yer. Not wythstandyng, þe Lady Boleyn was in Norwyche in the week aftyr Estern, fro the Saterdag tyll the Wednysday, and Heydons wyfe and Mastras Alys bothe; and i was at Caster and wyst not of it. Hyr men seyde þat she had non othyr erend to the towne but for to sport hyr; bot so God help me i supose þat she wend i wold haue ben in Norwyche for to haue sen hyr dowghtyr. I beseche yow wyth all my hart, hye yow hom, thow ye shold tery but a day; for i promyse yow your folk thynk þat ye haue forgetyn hem, and the most part of them must depart at Whytsontyd at the ferthest, they wyll no lenger abyde.⁶¹²

Without the head of the household present there was no one to approach Lady Boleyn on behalf of John Paston III and negotiate the marriage contract or assure the Boleyns of John Paston III’s means. There is, perhaps, an echo of the connection between Anne Harling and John Paston II and the circulation of Chaucer’s *Troilus and Criseyde*, with some kind of correlation between the circulation of manuscripts and the pursuit of matrimony. There are other instances of such links in the Paston letters which will be discussed in the next chapter, but, in this example, the link is tenuous. Tracing the Boleyns through the letters of the Paston family shows different kinds of familiarity between the two families over the course of the latter half of the fifteenth century. We can

⁶¹¹ For the dates of Anne Boleyn see C.E. Moreton, “Heydon, Sir Henry (d. 1504),” *ODNB*: <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/articleHL/13167?docPos=6&anchor=match> - accessed 30th January 2016.

⁶¹² *PLI*, letter 327, John Paston III to John Paston II, April 1467.

see that the Pastons were quite close to William Boleyn's sister around the time in which Geoffrey Spirleng would have been copying the *Canterbury Tales*. Such connections with both Boleyn and Spirleng might anticipate the Pastons' owning the same version of the *Canterbury Tales* as these two men and yet, as we have seen, Bodley contains a different order of tales to the manuscripts of these other men. Boleyn and Spirleng's manuscripts partially highlight one network of copyists of this version of the *Canterbury Tales*, but the extant manuscripts of this work show the Pastons to be participating in another network circulating manuscripts with a different composition of the tales, the Ellesmere Group a set.

As previously outlined, grouping those extant fifteenth-century manuscripts of the *Canterbury Tales* from East Anglia according to their adherence to the four common orders of fragments, as identified by the Chaucer Society, show that they primarily adhered to either the Ellesmere or Petworth collation. The codicological information for the Petworth group allows us to recover how Rosenbach MS 1084 and CUL MS Mm 2.5 were the exemplars for Hunterian. Little information is given for the other two manuscripts of this group, Petworth MS 7 and MS Sloane 1686, which were copied by an Essex scribe and one from Lynn or Norwich, respectively.⁶¹³ For those manuscripts, like Bodley (for the most part), containing the Ellesmere order, little information about the circulation of the manuscripts can be recovered. Seymour's survey of the extant manuscripts shows that most of them were copied by scribes either from or in Suffolk. However, there are some similarities between Bodley and Bodmeriana MS 48 that present the possibility of a Norfolk scribe creating multiple copies of this text. The collation of these tales in these two manuscripts are the same, with Seymour stating that Bodmeriana MS 48 has the "disturbed order of tales [...] also found in MS. Bodley 414."⁶¹⁴ He also states of the rubrics in Bodmeriana MS 48 that the manuscript was "written by [a] scribe in cursive display script, with a close but not exact correspondence with those of MS.

⁶¹³ *CCMII*: Petworth, p.221, MS Sloane 1686, p.131.

⁶¹⁴ *Id.*, p.48.

Bodley 414.”⁶¹⁵ Unfortunately, the identity of the scribe, the common exemplar for these two manuscripts or the owner of Bodemeriana MS 48 are all unknown. Similarly, little is known about Takamiya MS 24, other than it was made around 1475 by a Kent scribe working in London.⁶¹⁶ Whilst the original owner for this manuscript is unknown, f.274^v has the name ‘Knyvet’ “below a shield containing the arms of Sir Edmund Knyvet (d.1546) and his wife Jane Bouchier (d.1561).”⁶¹⁷ The fifteenth-century ancestors of these two subsequent owners of Takamiya MS 24 are key, highly influential, members of East Anglian society, with both Jane Bouchier and Edmund Knyvet being descended from John Howard, 1st Duke of Norfolk. Whilst we do not know who originally owned this manuscript there is another manuscript associated with the fifteenth-century Knyvets, Cambridge Trinity O.5.2. This codex contains *Generydes*, the *Troy Book* and the *Siege of Thebes* and will be discussed in the following chapter as we turn to consider the circulation of Lydgate’s work amongst the East Anglian gentry in the latter half of the fifteenth century.

Finally, there is one more manuscript of the *Canterbury Tales*, which does not belong to either of these two collation groups (group a and group d) that does highlight the library and literary activities of another East Anglian gentry family closely connected to the Paston family, Holkham, Norfolk, Earl of Leicester MS 667. Seymour dates this manuscript to the second quarter of the fifteenth century, with the possibility of its creation being nearer to 1450 than 1425.⁶¹⁸ On f. 86^v we find the names ‘Henry Doyle’, ‘Thomas Doyle’, ‘Phelip Doyle’ and ‘Jhon Coket’. These signatures appear to belong to gentlemen of the sixteenth century but the families have been identified as the Doyles of Pondhall, Suffolk who were linked by marriage to the Cokes of Holkham Hall, the library of which was known to have contained this manuscript by 1775.⁶¹⁹ Whilst the sixteenth- and eighteen-century ownership of this manuscript can be recovered, the commissioning and fifteenth-century circulation of Holkham MS 667 is less

⁶¹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶¹⁶ *Id.*, p.240.

⁶¹⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶¹⁸ *Id.*, p.86.

⁶¹⁹ *Ibid.*

clear. Manly and Rickert state that Richard Dodyngton, priest of Foxearth, bequeathed a manuscript of the *Canterbury Tales* to Sir William Clopton, in 1495.⁶²⁰ They point to the proximity of the Doyles of Pondhall to Long Melford and Kentwell, being approximately sixteen miles apart, that the two families were distantly related, and that “[m]ost of the Clopton legatees in the Dodyngton will were related to the Doyls [sic.]”.⁶²¹ Finally, they note the inscription of “Thomas Sparrow” on f.31, which leads them to the following hypothesis:

A Sparrow family of Long Melford was intimate with the Cloptons, and a Thomas who died in 1595 at a very great age could have been the writer of the MS.⁶²²

For Manly and Rickert, this point “confirms” the hypothesis that Holkham MS 667 belonged to Sir William Clopton but Seymour is “less certain” of this identification of ownership.⁶²³ The unique collation of the fragments in this manuscript makes this uncertainty over the identity of the commissioner of the manuscript all the more frustrating as Manly and Rickert’s assessment of the copying of this manuscript indicates a scribe-patron relationship that may not have been dissimilar to that between William Ebesham and John Paston II:

[t]he MS was not produced in a shop but by a professional scribe attempting to form for a patron from such sources as happened to be accessible to him a good collection of the Canterbury stories, perhaps using as his main basis a somewhat battered and disarranged MS.⁶²⁴

Unlike with MS Lansdowne 285 we do not have the exemplar from which Holkham MS 667 was copied so cannot ascertain how the ordering of the texts may or may not have been changed or if they were in any way tailored for the commissioner of the manuscript. What we appear to have is a provincial professional scribe being employed to copy a text from a lost exemplar in which the ordering of the fragments was unusual for the manuscripts circulating in East Anglia. If this manuscript is not that bequeathed to William Clopton by

⁶²⁰ Manly and Rickert, *Canterbury Tales I*, p.288.

⁶²¹ *Ibid.*

⁶²² *Ibid.*

⁶²³ *Ibid. CCMII*, p.86

⁶²⁴ Manly and Rickert, *Canterbury Tales I*, p.287.

Richard Dodyngton then we are left with the probability that two codices of the tales existed in very close proximity to one another. Whilst it would, obviously, be useful to know more about the context surrounding the creation of this manuscript, Sir William Clopton's ownership of a version of the *Canterbury Tales*, whether that survives as Holkham MS 667 or is now lost, remains a useful site for comparison with the library of John Paston II.⁶²⁵

3.4: Conclusions

The Chaucerian manuscripts associated with the Pastons (whether extant or as recorded in the inventory of John Paston II) highlight a number of further aspects about Paston's engagement with textual culture. Items Three and Five and Bodley show the Pastons were engaging with very popular texts and that John Paston II may have obtained these texts through different copying practices due to this popularity. That is to say, rather than bespoke manuscripts, Items Three and Five were probably produced through the pre-emptive scribal activity of copying pamphlets of "best-selling" works in combinations that seemed likely to prove commercially attractive.

The circulation of the *Canterbury Tales* in East Anglia adds further colour to our understanding of John Paston II as an East Anglian reader of Chaucer's work. Through this survey of the extant manuscripts we can see that there were numerous scribes in Norfolk and Suffolk copying manuscripts of the *Canterbury Tales*, furnishing members of the local gentry with what was evidently a very popular text. This popularity has a slightly more granular turn in that this survey highlights two forms of collation circulating in East Anglia, and, whilst Spirleng's manuscript follows, for the most part, Petworth d, the Pastons had the seemingly slightly more popular Ellesmere A. However, the collation of Bodley does contain a few idiosyncrasies, which are shared by Bodmeriana MS 48 from which we infer a shared exemplar and a Norfolk scribe creating copies of the *Canterbury Tales* for an eager gentry audience.

⁶²⁵ The literary activities of the Clopton family of Long Melford extended beyond these manuscripts and these are discussed in the following chapter.

Section Three: Manuscripts and Verses in the Paston Letters

Chapter Four: The works of John Lydgate in the letters of the Paston

Family

John Paston II's Inventory of English Books, the survival of his *Grete Boke* and the extant letter and bill from William Ebesham are, as we have seen, rich resources, providing detailed insights into John Paston II's interaction with the literary culture of medieval East Anglia. The wider corpus of Paston documents indicate that, whilst the combination of evidence surrounding John II's engagement with the creation and circulation of manuscripts is rare, he was not unique within his family for having an interest in reading texts and owning manuscripts. Amongst the letters from both John Paston II and other members of the Paston family we find requests for manuscripts to be bought, moved from one house to another, or returned to their owner. In this, and the following chapter, we turn to the wider corpus of the Paston letters not only to continue our exploration of John Paston II's engagement with texts and manuscripts but also to view this within the context of his family's interests in such things. Here in Chapter Four, we consider how John Paston II and Anne Paston's ownership of, respectively, Lydgate's *Temple of Glass* and the *Siege of Thebes* fits with the East Anglian readership of the monk's works. Whilst this echoes the study of John Paston II's ownership of Chaucerian works (as described in Chapter Three), the nature of the evidence surrounding their possession of these two particular texts both presents them as owners of popular gentry texts and further, in the case of John Paston II, suggests some ways in which these texts were being put to a form of cultural use. In the case of Anne Paston, it also suggests that she was slightly unusual in owning this particular work of Lydgate's.

4.1: Lydgate's East Anglian Gentry Readers

It is not surprising that we find the Paston family engaging with the works of John Lydgate. The manuscripts discussed in Chapter Three indicate the wide appeal of his secular works. The large volumes of collected works by Chaucer and Lydgate seem to show the two poets as linked within the cultural

imagination, echoing Lydgate's own claims to a literary kinship with Chaucer. Items Three and Five of John Paston II's inventory engage with this popular combination of works. However, the survey of the extant manuscripts of these Chaucerian and Lydgian texts indicate a national trend, rather than a regionally specific one, with the codicological evidence of these manuscripts pointing to East-, South-East, and West-Midlands, London, South-West, and East-Anglian provenances.⁶²⁶ Whilst these manuscripts indicate a national interest in Lydgate's work, which is unsurprising given his position as proto-Poet Laureate, studying his significance to the textual culture of East Anglia in the fifteenth century provides an extremely rich and detailed context against which to explore the Pastons' ownership and readership of his works.⁶²⁷

The introduction to this thesis draws on Samuel Moore's seminal study of the patrons of works and manuscripts in Norfolk and Suffolk to present an overview of an East Anglian network of scribes and owners or readers of manuscripts during the fifteenth century.⁶²⁸ At the heart of Moore's study is the hub of textual production, the Abbey of Bury St. Edmunds, and the work of John Lydgate. The significance of both Lydgate and the Abbey to the circulation of texts and manuscripts amongst this network of gentry readers is reiterated, as we have seen, in the studies on the patronage of Alice Chaucer by Carol Meale and Karen Jambeck (a study to which we will return and continue to explore in this chapter) and, of course, in the surveys of Lydgate's work by Walter Schirmer, Derek Pearsall, James Simpson and Larry Scanlon.⁶²⁹ These works are

⁶²⁶ See Appendix, Table IV for the list of manuscripts discussed in Chapter Three. These share works by Lydgate and Chaucer which are found in Items Three and Five of John Paston II's inventory of English books. The appendix contains an outline of the known provenance for each extant codex.

⁶²⁷ For discussion of Lydgate as proto-Poet Laureate see the collected essays in *John Lydgate: Poetry, Culture, and Lancastrian England*, ed. Larry Scanlon and James Simpson (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2006) particularly, Robert J. Meyer-Lee, "Lydgate's Laureate Pose," pp.36-60; Larry Scanlon, "Lydgate's Poetics: Laureation and Domesticity in *The Temple of Glass*," pp.61-97; and Scott-Morgan Straker "Propaganda, Intentionality, and the Lancastrian Lydgate," pp.98-128.

⁶²⁸ Samuel Moore, "Patrons of Letters in Norfolk and Suffolk, c. 1450. Part I," *PMLA* 27, 2 (1912), pp. 188-207. The essay continues in Samuel Moore, "Patrons of Letters in Norfolk and Suffolk, c. 1450. Part II," *PMLA* 28, 1 (1913), pp. 79-105.

⁶²⁹ Carol Meale, "Reading Women's Culture in Fifteenth Century England: The Case of Alice Chaucer," *Mediaevalitas: Reading the Middle Ages*, ed. Piero Boitani and Anna

enhanced by the studies of Antony Bale and A.S.G. Edwards into the circulation of Lydgate's *Lives of Saints Edmund and Fremund* and Gail McMurry Gibson's work on the verses from Lydgate's *Testament* and *Quis Dabit Meo Capiti Fontem Lacrimarum* painted on the cornice scrolls in the chantry chapel of Holy Trinity Church, Long Melford, Suffolk.⁶³⁰

Bale and Edwards add a further network of Lydgatian manuscripts to our picture of the libraries of the East Anglian gentry. Thirteen extant manuscripts or fragments of *Ss. Edmund and Fremund* survive with one further manuscript, Bodleian MS Laud misc. 683, containing Lydgate's *Extra Miracles of St Edmund*, but not *Ss. Edmund and Fremund*. Five of these manuscripts have been linked with scribes and artists working in Bury St Edmunds (BL, MS Harley 2278; BL, MS Yates Thompson 47; BL, Harley 4826; Bodleian MS Ashmole 46; His Grace the Duke of Norfolk, Arundel Castle MS (*Biblioteca Norfolciana*), *sine numero*), and one, the manuscript with the *Extra Miracles* being traced to Suffolk (Bodleian MS Laud misc. 683).⁶³¹ A further manuscript, Bodleian MS Tanner 347, contains marginal glosses in Latin (which has been partially lost in the trimming of the manuscripts) and three inscriptions "Nomen Brasyer" (f.95r)

Torti, (Cambridge: Brewer, 1996); Karen K. Jambeck, "The Library of Alice Chaucer, Duchess of Suffolk: A Fifteenth-Century Owner of a "Bok of le Citee de Dames",
Misericordi International VII.2 (1998), pp.120-121; Walter Schirmer, *John Lydgate: A Study in the Culture of the XVth Century*, trans. by Ann E. Keep, (London: Methuen and Company Ltd, 1961); Derek Pearsall, *John Lydgate*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd (1970); Larry Scanlon and James Simpson (eds.), *John Lydgate: Poetry, Culture, and Lancastrian England*, (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame, 2006). See also Rebecca Pinner, *The Cult of St Edmund in Medieval East Anglia*, (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2015).

⁶³⁰ Anthony Bale and A. S. G. Edwards, "Introduction," in *John Lydgate's Lives of Ss Edmund and Fremund and the Extra Miracles of St Edmund*, eds. Anthony Bale and A.S.G. Edwards, (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 2009), pp.11-29; Gail McMurray Gibson, *The Theatre of Devotion. East Anglian Drama and Society in the Late Middle Ages*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994).

⁶³¹ Bale and Edwards, *Ss Edmund and Fremund*, pp. 11-18. Another manuscript (Manchester, Chetham's Library MS 6709) has been traced to being copied and owned by William Cotson, canon of Dunstable. BL MS Harley 7333 was owned and, as Bale and Edwards suggest, copied for the Augustinian Abbey of St Mary le Pratis, Leicester. This last manuscript seems "to derive from exemplars prepared by the London scribe, John Shirley[...]" (*Ibid.*, p.14). The provenances of the remaining five manuscripts are unknown.

and “Prykke” and “Nomen Curte” (f.97r).⁶³² Bale and Edwards write that this last inscription “looks suspiciously like ‘Curteys’, Lydgate’s abbot”, suggesting that this codex may also be linked with Bury St Edmunds.⁶³³

The codicological evidence of these manuscripts reiterate the abbey as an important hub of production in East Anglia. As Bale and Edwards summarise:

[Arundel Castle MS, *sine numero*], [BL, MS Harley 372], and [BL, MS Yates Thompson 47] were copied by the same scribe and decorated by artists who had access to the illustrative models for [BL, MS Harley 2278], artisans all probably working in Bury, either within the Abbey or in a secular environment.⁶³⁴

This group of scribes and artists were employed to produce high quality manuscripts of Lydgate’s work, which, as Bale and Edwards argue, “indicates the local esteem in which the lives were held.”⁶³⁵ There is, then, a regional devotional identity being celebrated by both the content of these manuscripts and their production.

None of the extant manuscripts of *Ss. Edmund and Fremund* have been connected with the Paston family. Of those manuscripts made in East Anglia, BL, MS Yates Thompson 47 contains an inscription most likely made by Margaret Fitzwalter Radcliffe (d.1496) of Attleborough, Norfolk: “Thys boke gyften to my lady baumoun be har lovtfng moder margaret ffytz wauter with all my hart.”⁶³⁶ A Mistress Fitzwalter is discussed in a letter from John Paston III to John Paston II, seemingly with the hope that her sister “a mayd, to mary [...] myght come in-to Crysten menys handys”, with those “handys” most likely those belonging to John Paston III.⁶³⁷ A more concrete and informative link between the Paston family and the owner of this manuscript can be found in Lord John Radcliff Fitzwalter (1452-1496), of Attleborough, who, whilst serving

⁶³² *Id.*, p.15.

⁶³³ *Ibid.*

⁶³⁴ *Id.*, p.17.

⁶³⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶³⁶ *Id.*, p.12.

⁶³⁷ *PLI*, p.603. This letter is dated to 6th May 1476, approximately a year before John Paston III married Margery Brews.

in Calais in 1476, “married Margaret, the daughter of the lieutenant of Guînes Castle, Sir Richard Whetehill.”⁶³⁸ John Radcliffe was JP and MP for Norfolk and, having seemingly supported Henry Tudor in his claim to the English throne, “became steward and receiver of the honour of Richmond in Norfolk; steward of the duchy of Lancaster in Norfolk, Suffolk, and Cambridge [...]”.⁶³⁹ His career in the early Tudor reign shows a subsequently changeable allegiance to Henry VII (he would also eventually be attainted in 1495 for his involvement with Perkin Warbeck) and to the Earl of Oxford and John Paston III, but in 1476 things had been very cordial between the Pastons and Radcliffe Fitzwalters. John Paston II, having gone to Guînes in that year, wrote to either John Paston III or Margaret Paston (the letter is addressed to both, though the nature of the contents is more pertinent to John Paston III) of the Radcliffe marriage and their intention to return to Norfolk:

[a]s I conceyve he wyll come to Attylborogh and brynge my mestresse hys wyffe wyth hym, and theer to stablysshe hys howse contynuall. Wherffor he thynketh þat contré willyng me to wryght on-to yowe and to late yow weete off hys comynge. He also hathe tolde me moche off hys stomake and tendre fauur þat he owythe to yow, wherffore I asserteyn yow þat he is yowre very especiall goode master, and iffe ye were abydyng in that contré whylse he were there, he is dysposyd to doo largely fore yowe in dyuerse wyse whyche were to longe to wryght.⁶⁴⁰

John Paston II appears to be delivering thanks from Radcliffe to John Paston III for, as Ian Arthurson’s *ODNB* entry for Fitzwalter explains, supplying the lieutenant of Calais, William Lord Hastings, with a cook, hence the curious note about Radcliffe’s telling John II “moch off hys stomake”.⁶⁴¹ The letter indicates the potential for close links between the Pastons and the Radcliffes, with the latter offering influence and support for the Pastons in exchange for their service. Thus, during the period in which, as we will see in the case studies below, John Paston II and Anne Paston were engaging with their own works of

⁶³⁸ Ian Arthurson, “Ratcliffe [Radcliffe], John, sixth Baron Fitzwalter,” *ODNB*: <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/22984> - accessed 24th August 2018.

⁶³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴⁰ *PLI*, pp.492-493.

⁶⁴¹ Arthurson, “Ratcliffe [Radcliffe], John,” *ODNB. PLI*, p.493.

John Lydgate, we find the family very friendly with a powerful member of the local gentry, whose wife appears to have owned one of these elaborately decorated manuscripts from Bury St. Edmunds of Lydgate's *Ss. Edmund and Fremund*.

Another Paston-related point of convergence of the East Anglian gentry, the Abbey of Bury St Edmunds and the works of John Lydgate is the chancery chapel of Holy Trinity church, Long Melford, Suffolk. Holy Trinity church went through what Gail McMurray Gibson rightly calls an "ambitious rebuilding" program, which was financed by John Clopton.⁶⁴² John Clopton was the father of Sir William Clopton, the man to whom Richard Dodynton, priest of Foxearth, bequeathed his manuscript of the *Canterbury Tales* (as discussed in Chapter Three of this thesis) and who, thus, might feasibly have owned Holkham, Norfolk, Earl of Leicester MS 667.⁶⁴³ Whilst we can only speculatively identify an extant example of William Clopton's engagement with the works of Chaucer, the chancery chapel at Holy Trinity provides a securely identified instance of John Clopton's engagement with the devotional works of John Lydgate. As part of the decorating scheme for the newly rebuilt church John Clopton had verses from Lydgate's *Testament* and *Quis Dabit Meo Capiti Fontem Lacrimarum?* painted around the cornice. Gibson points out that the chosen verses, which "lament the sins of misspent youth and implore mercy and forgiveness" might not only be thematically appropriate for "the penitential purpose of the chanter and its prayers" but might also have had a very particular, site-specific, function: the Abbey of Bury St Edmunds not only owned the advowson of Holy Trinity church but the church also overlooked Melford Hall, the country estate of the monks of Bury St. Edmund.⁶⁴⁴ The painting of Lydgate's verses in the chapel might be a political nod to one of the most powerful institutions in the region, or may reflect the family's connection with the abbey (John Clopton's father had been made a lay brother) but, as J. B. Trapp and Gibson note, there

⁶⁴² Gibson, *Theatre of Devotion*, p.84.

⁶⁴³ John M. Manly and Edith Rickert, *The Text of the Canterbury Tales, studied on the basis of all known Manuscripts, Volume I*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1940), p.288. *CCMII*, pp.84-86.

⁶⁴⁴ Gibson, *Theatre of Devotion*, p.87.

may also be a very direct textual link between the abbey and the chapel, with Trapp observing that this combination of Lydgate's works appears in the manuscript made by Lydgate for his abbot William Curteys.⁶⁴⁵ Of course, and as Gibson states, it is feasible that the Clopton family owned their own manuscript of devotional lyrics and used this, rather than Curteys's manuscript, for the exemplar for their wall painting. However, finding this "lost" manuscript would most likely serve to reiterate what the wall paintings already demonstrate: an East Anglian gentry family commissioning the copying of Lydgate's devotional lyrics in a fashion which records and displays a social and spiritual link with the abbey.

John Clopton represents the clearest link between the Clopton family and the Pastons; in 1454 negotiations were underway between John Clopton's own father, another William Clopton, and John Paston I for John Clopton to marry Elizabeth Paston (John Paston I's sister).⁶⁴⁶ Both the chantry chapel at Long Melford and Margaret Fitzwalter Radcliffe's ownership of MS Yates Thompson 47 show close members of the Pastons' East Anglian network of friends, patrons and prospective spouses making quite expensive commissions of luxurious and impressive copies of Lydgate's work. Both may record particular links between their patron and Bury St. Edmunds, although the full extent of these links is not recoverable. These commissions, along with the case-studies discussed in the introduction to this thesis, are testimony not only to the general popularity of Lydgate's works within East Anglia (and to the variety of forms in which that work circulated) but how Lydgate's work were held in both national and a distinctively "local esteem".⁶⁴⁷ It is thus not surprising that the Paston family owned works by Lydgate; at the same time, the instances within the letters where these works are discussed record specific instances of circulation and reception that seem rather unusual against this wider background.

⁶⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p.87. Gibson draws on J.B. Trapp, "Verses by Lydgate at Long Melford," *Review of English Studies*, n.s., 6 (1955), p.2.

⁶⁴⁶ *PLI*, pp. 40-1; *PLII*, p.89.

⁶⁴⁷ Bale and Edwards, *Ss Edmund and Fremund*, p.17. Here Bale and Edwards describe the circulation of *Edmund and Fremund* in East Anglia, but I believe the phrase can be shown to hold true in the case of both Alice Chaucer and John Clopton.

4.2: Anne Paston and the readership of *The Siege of Thebes*

On 5th June 1472 John Paston III wrote to his brother, John Paston II, with the following request:

Also I prey yow to recomand me in my most humbyll wyse on-to þe good lordshepe of þe most corteys, gentylest, wysest, kyndest, most compenabyll, freest, largeest and most bowntefous knyght, my lord the Erle of Arran, whych hathe maryed the Kyngys sustyr of Scotlon. Her-to, he is on the lyghtest, delyuerst, best spokyn, fayirest archer, deuowghtest, most perfyght and trewest to hys lady of all the knyghtys that euer I was aqweyntyd wyth; so wold God my lady lyekyd me as well as I do hys person and most knyghtly condycyon, wyth whom I prey yow to be aqweyntyd as you semyth best. He is lodgyd at þe George in Lombard Strete. He hath a book of my syster Annys of þe Sege of Thebes. When he hathe doon wyth it he promysyd to delyuer it yow. I prey yow lete Portlond brynge þe book hom wyth hym. Portlond is loggyd at þe George in Lombard Stret also.⁶⁴⁸

This extract from the correspondence of John Paston III is notable for several reasons. First, there is the highly rhetorical nature of his address to the Earl of Arran, something that we find elsewhere in his letters and which will be discussed in Chapter Five. Secondly, and this is the aspect that will be explored here, is his emphatic statement that the book lent to the Earl belonged to “my syster Annys”. This letter is the only surviving record of any of the Paston women’s owning a secular manuscript.⁶⁴⁹

It is not known how the Pastons knew the Earl of Arran or how Anne (or perhaps her brothers) had come to lend the Earl her copy of this work. One possibility raised by the letter is that the Earl and the Paston servant, Portlond, both lodged at the George Inn of Lombard Strete. As A. I. Doyle pointed out, “[t]he inn may often have been as important in this traffic as the palace.”⁶⁵⁰ The

⁶⁴⁸ *PLI*, pp.574-575.

⁶⁴⁹ Margaret Paston’s will does record her ownership of devotional works, which is discussed directly below. *Id.*, p.384.

⁶⁵⁰ A. I. Doyle, “English Books in and out of Court from Edward III to Henry VII,” in *English Court Culture in the Later Middle Ages*, eds. V.J. Scattergood and J.W. Sherborne, (London: Duckworth, 1983), p.179.

Pastons' link to a different George Inn indicates the significance of the inn to the circulation of the texts of John Paston II. The first item in John Paston II's Inventory of English Books begins, "[a] boke had off myn ostesse at þe George".⁶⁵¹ We cannot say with absolute certainty that "myn ostesse at þe George", mentioned here, is or is not the hostess of The George in Lombard Street but the letters indicate a more likely alternative candidate. In their index to the letters, Beadle and Richmond record their belief that the "ostesse" mentioned in the inventory of books is the hostess of the George in Paul's Wharf.⁶⁵² The editors do not explicitly state their reasons for this identification but the letters of John Paston II indicate why this is the more likely location. The George at Paul's Wharf appears in the letters as one of John Paston II's primary places of residence when staying in London. It first appears in the extant document in 1474 (around the earliest possible date for the writing of the Inventory of English Books). Here John Paston II writes to his mother about his wish to purchase the books of the recently deceased James Gloys,

[i]tem, as for the bokes þat weere Syre James, God haue hys sowle, whyche it lykethe yow þat I shall have them, I beseche yow þat I maye have them hyddre by the next massenger; *and* iff I be goon, yit that they be delyueryd to my ostess at þe George at Powlys Wharff, whych wolle kepe them saffe, *and* þat it lyke yow to wryght to me whatt my peyne ore payment shall be for them.⁶⁵³

Almost three weeks after this letter, the hostess of the George Inn at Paul's Wharf is mentioned again by John Paston II, acting as a reciever of goods and messages. Wishing to know of the family's progress with the estate at Snailwell, and the books of James Gloys, he writes to John Paston III:

Wherffor in hast sende worde to me or to myn ostesse at þe George. I here no worde off my vessell nere off my bokys. I mervayll.⁶⁵⁴

Whilst Portland might reside at the George Inn at Lomard Street in 1472, between 1474 and (possibly) 1479, his masters seem to have preferred the

⁶⁵¹ *PLI*, p.517.

⁶⁵² *PLIII*, p.283.

⁶⁵³ *PLI*, p.477.

⁶⁵⁴ *Id.*, p.481.

George at Paul's Wharf.⁶⁵⁵ Whilst it is important to pinpoint, where possible, where and how the books owned by the Pastons came into and out of their possession, what this discussion of the two George Inns shows is that the books of the Paston family were mobile and that part of this mobility was facilitated by the London residences of certain family members. A communal living arrangement born of the itinerant travelling necessitated by numerous prolonged legal disputes seems to have created groups of people with shared interests in manuscripts and texts and Anne Paston's copy of the *Siege of Thebes* may have passed to the Earl of Arran through such a route as this.

There is, perhaps, something a little unexpected in the fact that the only text known to be associated with Anne Paston is Lydgate's *Siege of Thebes*. In surveying the manuscripts commissioned or owned by women during the late fifteenth century, Carol Meale considers the abundance of fine psalters and books of hours 'produced at the instigation of women', a tradition that had carried on from the fourteenth century.⁶⁵⁶ Meale's analysis of the evidence highlights that, for the most part, works commissioned by women were devotional:

if the evidence presented by book-patronage is taken together with that of wills, it would seem that religion was by far the dominant reading interest of medieval women; they owned a variety of texts in addition to their service books, ranging from lives of the saints, to didactic works such as *The Prick of Conscience* and *Pore Caitif*, to various of the treatises of the fourteenth-century mystics, Walter Hilton and Richard Rolle.⁶⁵⁷

The will of Margaret Paston participates in this more typical practice of owning devotional works, requesting that her executors "purveye a compleete legende in oon book and an antiphoner in an other book" which were to be given to Mautby church.⁶⁵⁸ She also bequeaths her primer to Anne Paston and her mass

⁶⁵⁵ Not only do we find John Paston II residing there, but he also addresses letters to his brother Edmond, indicating his residence at that establishment. See *PLI*, letters 290, 292. John Paston III also seems to have been there in 1479: see *Id.* letter 404.

⁶⁵⁶ Carol Meale, "Laywomen and their books in late medieval England," in *Women and Literature in Britain, 1150-1500*, ed. Meale, (Cambridge: CUP, 1996), p.137.

⁶⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵⁸ *PLI*, p.384.

book to Margery, the two Paston women for whom we have evidence of an engagement with secular texts.⁶⁵⁹ These bequests may show a recognition of the literary interests of her daughter and daughter-in-law, but they also highlight the likelihood that both of these women owned similar devotional books, the records for which (if there ever were any) are now lost. For Margaret, her “compleet legende” echoes the interests of the network of female patrons commissioning Osbern Bokenham’s lives of their particular, favourite, female saint and of those who read or commissioned Lydgate’s minor religious works.⁶⁶⁰

The popularity of devotional works amongst female readers in the fifteenth century is reflected in the identities of the patrons of Lydgate’s minor religious works, many of whom were women.⁶⁶¹ The extant evidence surrounding the reading habits of the Beauchamp family provides Meale with a specific illustration of this trend within female literary patronage:

Isabella Despenser, [who commissioned Lydgate’s *Fifteen Joys of Our Lady*] for instance, was the second wife of Richard Beauchamp, earl of Warwick, and Beauchamp’s first wife, Elizabeth Berkeley, was patron of John Walton’s 1410 verse translation of Boethius’ *Consolation of Philosophy* [...]. Elizabeth’s daughter, Margaret, was the owner of a fine book of hours made in France [...], Fitzwilliam Museum MS 41-1950; the book was possibly made on the occasion of her marriage to John Talbot, first earl of Shrewsbury. Another book of hours owned by Margaret and John Talbot, Fitzwilliam Museum 40-1950, has the prayer to St Albon from Lydgate’s *Lives of St Albon and St Amphabell* (1424) copied into it, and the fact that Margaret also commissioned from Lydgate one of the rare historical works connected with a female patron, his *Guy of Warwick*, which celebrated the exploits of her legendary ancestor, suggests that she had a particular interest in this writer.⁶⁶²

⁶⁵⁹ *Id.*, pp.386 and 387.

⁶⁶⁰ For an overview of Bokenham’s female patrons (and the scholarship in which this is explored) see section 0.3.v of this thesis.

⁶⁶¹ As outlined in section 0.3.i of this this thesis.

⁶⁶² Meale, “Laywomen and their books,” p.137-38.

We find Lydgate's *Guy of Warwick* in Item Five of John Paston II's inventory and feasibly again in Item One (although, as I have stated at the beginning of Section Two, there are other versions of this tale that also circulated during the fifteenth century).⁶⁶³ However, as much as we find a number of popular, shorter, more secular works by Lydgate in John II's inventory, the only manuscript of devotional works (Item Six) does not appear to contain any of Lydgate's devotional writings:

A reede boke þat Percyvall Robsart gaff m <...> off the Medis off þe Mass, þe Lamentacion <...> off Chylde Ypotis, A Preyer to the Vernycle <...> callyd The Abbeye off þe Holy Gooste <...>⁶⁶⁴

Initially, then, the nature of the surviving evidence presents the Pastons, especially Anne, as slightly anomalous within the wider trend of the commissioning and circulation of Lydgate's works. However, the evidence provided by the extant manuscripts of *The Siege of Thebes* show that Anne Paston and, as we will see, John Paston II were in many ways quite typical of the readership of this text (the extant manuscripts of this text are listed in Appendix, Table V).

From the extant manuscripts we can identify a number of trends.⁶⁶⁵ Of these twenty-four items we find that five were copied in East Anglia, with BL, Additional MS 5140 and Egerton MS 2864 being copied by the same Suffolk scribe, the possibility that Coventry Corporate Record Office, MS Acc. 325/1 was copied at Bury St. Edmunds, the copying of Arundel MS 119 for William de la Pole (possibly at the request of Alice Chaucer), and the association of Cambridge, Trinity College Library, MS O.5.2 with the Knyvett family. A further two manuscripts have tentative links with East Anglia.

BL Additional 18632 contains fragments of an account for the household of Elizabeth de Burgh, Countess of Ulster, (née Elizabeth de Clare), magnate and

⁶⁶³ *PLI*, p.517.

⁶⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶⁵ See Appendix, Table V.

founder of Clare College, Cambridge.⁶⁶⁶ De Burgh was buried at Clare Priory, Suffolk and there were strong further connections between her family and that institution. De Burgh was the daughter of Joan of Acre who, as Osbern Bokenham explains in his “Dialogue betwixt a Seculer asking and a Frere answering at the grave of Dame Johan of Acres”, founded the Saint Vincent chapel at Clare Priory, Suffolk.⁶⁶⁷ De Burgh’s paternal grandmother, Matilda of Hereford, donated the land to the abbey on the death of her husband.⁶⁶⁸ The links between the priory and this family are not only recorded in the works of Bokenham (in *Mappula Angliae* Bokenham includes Joan of Acre’s name in a list of English saints) but also in the material of the abbey, with the “marriage of Joan’s daughter, Elizabeth, to John of Burgh, [...] recorded in the windows of the dormitory, chapter-house, and refectory she founded.”⁶⁶⁹ The strength of this association between Elizabeth de Burgh and Clare Priory, the Priory’s reputation as a hub of literary production during the first half of the fifteenth century (see section 0.3.v of this thesis), and the reuse of the parchment on which her household accounts are recorded in the binding of BL Add.18632 presents the possibility that this copy of *The Siege of Thebes* was copied in the vicinity of the Priory.⁶⁷⁰ These leaves do, at the very least, present a connection between this manuscript and that East Anglian hub.

Another possible place of manuscript production associated with *The Siege of Thebes* is Hempton Priory, Norfolk. Richard III’s autograph appears on f. 98v of Longleat MS 28.⁶⁷¹ Manley and Rickert suggested that Longleat MS 28 was produced for Anthony Woodville who, as Carol Meale explains, was patron of

⁶⁶⁶ Jennifer Ward, “Clare, Elizabeth de [Elizabeth de Burgh; *known as lady of Clare*] (1294/5-1360),” *ODNB*: <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/5435> - accessed 10th July 2018.

⁶⁶⁷ Carroll Hilles, “Gender and Politics in Osbern Bokenham’s *Legendary*,” in *New Medieval Literatures, Volume 4*, eds. Wendy Scase, et al. (Oxford: OUP, 2001), p.198.

⁶⁶⁸ *Id.*, pp.198-99.

⁶⁶⁹ *Id.*, p.199.

⁶⁷⁰ For a discussion of Bokenham and his patrons see section 0.3.v of this thesis.

⁶⁷¹ Jordi Sánchez Marti, “Longleat House MS 257: a Description,” in *Atlantis* vol. 27(1), pp.82-3.

that priory until his death in 1483.⁶⁷² Meale debates the association of this manuscript with Hempton Priory and Jordi Sánchez Marti argues that the manuscript was “copied and illuminated by members of the book-trade community in York, from whom Richard or its earlier owner obtained this volume.”⁶⁷³

Finally, another two manuscripts have very uncertain connections with East Anglia: CUL Additional MS 6564 and Trinity MS R.4.20. The identities of the two former owners who inscribed their names in the manuscript of CUL Additional MS 6564 are unknown, and the subsequent ownership of the manuscript by J. H. Gurney of Northrepps, Norfolk in the nineteenth century may bear no relation to the original copying and circulation of that manuscript. On f.87 of Trinity MS R.4.20 is inscribed the name William Kelyng. A memorandum written by John Osbern, one of John Paston I’s clerks, mentions a William Kelyng of Castle Acre, an under-escheator.⁶⁷⁴ Whilst a very tentative link, the appearance of the name William Kelyng in the manuscript does, at the very least, present the possibility that Trinity R.4.20 was owned by another member of the East Anglian gentry.

There are two instances within this survey for which associations with the gentry of East Anglia are concrete and that provide some insights into the circulation of *The Siege of Thebes* within the Pastons’ social network, Trinity MS O.5.2 and BL Arundel 119. Of all the extant manuscripts surveyed, BL Arundel 119 is the only codex in which survives the entire text of this poem. The arms and crest of Alice Chaucer’s third husband, William de la Pole, Duke of Suffolk appear on f.4 of the manuscript.⁶⁷⁵ The extensive engagement with fifteenth-century literary culture by the Duke and Duchess of Suffolk is described in the

⁶⁷² Manly and Rickert’s argument is paraphrased by Carol Meale in “The Middle English Romance of *Ipomedon*: A Late Medieval ‘Mirror’ of Princes and Merchants,” in *Reading Medieval Studies* 10 (1984), p.139.

⁶⁷³ Marti, “Longleat House MS 257,” pp.82-3.

⁶⁷⁴ *PLII*, p.527.

⁶⁷⁵ “Arundel MS 119,” *Explore Archives and Manuscripts*:

http://searcharchives.bl.uk/primo_library/libweb/action/display.do?dscnt=1&doc=IA MS040-002039402&displayMode=full&dstmp=1514993594999&vid=IAMS_VU2&ct=display&tabs=detailsTab&fromLogin=true - accessed 3rd January 2018.

introduction of this thesis and includes a discussion of Oxford, St. John's College, MS 56 in which an incipit to Lydgate's *The Virtues of the Mass* records that the translation of the work was commissioned by Alice Chaucer.⁶⁷⁶ Chaucer's request for such a work echoes Isabella Despenser's commissioning of Lydgate's *Fifteenth Joys of Our Lady* and Margaret and John Talbot's inclusion of the prayer to St. Albon (from Lydgate's *Lives of St Albon and St Amphabell*) in their manuscript (Fitzwilliam Museum 40-1950).⁶⁷⁷ However, despite the appearance of the Duke of Suffolk's arms in Arundel 119, Carol Meale and Karen Jambeck argue that it was Chaucer who commissioned this manuscript of *The Siege of Thebes*.⁶⁷⁸ The British Library's catalogue entry for Arundel 119 does not pin-point the date of production beyond its being created in the fifteenth century.⁶⁷⁹ The poem, based on the astrological and astronomical descriptions that appear at the start of the text, is dated to around 1421 and, whilst William de la Pole was not created the Duke of Suffolk until June 1448, the form of his arms on f.4 does not seem to narrow the possible dates for the creation of this manuscript to after this date and before his death in 1450.⁶⁸⁰ Meale presents the prospect that a possible date of production is c.1430, the year in which Alice Chaucer was betrothed to William de la Pole.⁶⁸¹ Meale, and Jambeck both consider the possibility that this was a joint commission, or that Alice Chaucer may even have, as Meale speculates, "been responsible, either directly or indirectly, for the commissioning of Arundel 119," with Jambeck pointing to the "additional dimension of interest in that [the text] claims to be one of the *Canterbury Tales*."⁶⁸² However, this connection between these two texts has a wider significance amongst the extant manuscripts of Lydgate's text.

For, whilst Jambeck draws a rather neat and personal connection in Alice Chaucer's possible commissioning of a copy of *The Siege of Thebes*, the link

⁶⁷⁶ *MPLJ* I, note p.86.

⁶⁷⁷ Meale, "Laywomen and their books," p. 137-38.

⁶⁷⁸ Meale, "Alice Chaucer," pp.81-101. Jambeck, "Alice Chaucer," pp.106-35.

⁶⁷⁹ "Arundel MS 119," *Explore Archives and Manuscripts*.

⁶⁸⁰ Johnston Parr, 'Astronomical Dating for some of Lydgate's Poems,' *Publications of the Modern Language Association* 67 (1952), p.256.

⁶⁸¹ Meale, "Alice Chaucer," p.92.

⁶⁸² *Id.* pp. 92-3 and Jambeck, "Alice Chaucer," 124-5.

between this text and the *Canterbury Tales*, which Lydgate establishes in the introduction to his text by having his narrator join the pilgrims on their return from Canterbury to Southwark, is also embodied by four of the other extant manuscripts of Lydgate's text: BL Additional 5140, BL Egerton 2864, Christ Church 152, and University of Texas 143. In addition to these codices, there are Longleat 257, which contains *Arcite and Palamon*, the tale to which *The Siege of Thebes* responds, and St. John's College 266, in which a manuscript copy of Lydgate's poem is bound with Caxton's second edition of the *Canterbury Tales*. Two of these manuscripts, BL Add.5140 and BL Egerton 2864, were copied by the same Suffolk scribe. Further to this, we find Trinity College MS O.5.2 connected to Takamiya MS 24, a manuscript of *The Canterbury Tales*, through the library of another East Anglian gentry family, the Knyvetts.

On f.247v of Takamiya MS 24 is a shield "containing the arms of Sir Edmund Knyvet (d.1546) and his wife Jane Bouchier (d.1561)", under which is inscribed the name 'Knyvet'.⁶⁸³ Both of these people were kin to Elizabeth Tilney, whose first marriage had been to Humphrey Bouchier (the issue from which included Jane Bouchier's father, John Bouchier) and whose second husband was John Howard, 1st Duke of Norfolk.⁶⁸⁴ She was also briefly, and quite ambitiously, sought as a wife by one of the Paston brothers, following the death of Bouchier in 1471.⁶⁸⁵ The daughter of her second marriage, Muriel Howard, married Thomas Knyvet, by whom she had a son, Sir Edmund Knyvet.⁶⁸⁶ Muriel's sister, Elizabeth Howard (1486-1538), married Thomas Boleyn (c.1477-1538/9), son of the owner of CUL MS Mm 2.5 (another manuscript of the *Canterbury Tales*),

⁶⁸³ *CCMII*, p.230.

⁶⁸⁴ Anne Crawford, "Howard, John, first duke of Norfolk, (d. 1485)," *ODNB*: <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/13921> - accessed 24th June 2018.

⁶⁸⁵ David M. Head, "Thomas Howard, second duke of Norfolk (1443-1524)," *ODNB*: <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/13939?docPos=1> [accessed 10/2/15]. Davis, *Paston Letters I*, p.441.

⁶⁸⁶ S. J. Gunn, "Knyvet, Sir Thomas (c.1485-1512)," *ODNB*: <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/15799> - accessed 24th June 2018]. Stanford Lehmborg, "Knyvet, Sir Edmund (c. 1508-1551)," *ODNB*: <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/articleHL/15797?docPos=2&anchor=match> - accessed 10th February 2016.

William Boleyn.⁶⁸⁷ The ancestors of Sir Edmund Knyvet and Jane Bourchier were some of the most influential members of the East Anglian gentry in the fifteenth century. They were often conspicuously more powerful than the Pastons, but they were also part of the family's social milieu. If a sixteenth-century generation owned a late-fifteenth-century copy of the *Canterbury Tales*, the association of the Knyvetts with Cambridge Trinity O.5.2 links them more firmly to the contemporary literary culture of the Pastons.

Trinity O.5.2 contains *Generydes*, Lydgate's *Troy Book* and *The Siege of Thebes*. On f.190v of this manuscript, in a sixteenth-century hand, appears the inscription "Antonius Thwaites me possidet" with the name "Henry Twaites" appearing on ff.159v and 211v, and shields appear "carefully emblazoned" in the margins.⁶⁸⁸ William Aldis Wright, in his preface to his edition of *Generydes*, for which he used Trinity O.5.2, posits that the Anthony Twaites of this inscription "may have been the son or descendent of John Thwaites of Hardingham, Norfolk, who married Anne, daughter of Sir William Knevet [...]". Sir William Knyvet appears twice in the documents of the Paston family, once in 1485 when he stands as one of a number of witnesses to an indenture of a loan between John Paston III and Henry Colet and again, a decade later, when he appears alongside John Paston III in a list of addressees in a letter from the widowed Duchess of Norfolk, Elizabeth Talbot (widow of John de Mowbray, who held the title before John Howard).⁶⁸⁹ Again, the letters also indicate an attempt by the Pastons to marry into an influential family. In a letter tentatively dated to 1454 Margaret writes to John Paston I regarding the search for a husband for Elizabeth Paston,

It was told here that Knyvet the heyre [John Knyvet] is for to mary; bothe his wyff and childer be dede, as it was told here, wherfor she [Agnes Paston] wold þat ye shuld inquyer whedder it be so or no [...]⁶⁹⁰

⁶⁸⁷ Jonathan Hughes, "Boleyn, Thomas, earl of Wiltshire and earl of Ormond (1476/7-1539)," *ODNB*: <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/2795> - accessed 24th June 2018.

⁶⁸⁸ "O.5.2, Romance of Generydes, Lydgate's Troy Book etc." in *The James Catalogue of Western Manuscripts*: <http://trin-sites-pub.trin.cam.ac.uk/james/viewpage.php?index=829> - accessed 4th July 2018.

⁶⁸⁹ *PLIII*, p.37 and *PLII*, pp.474-75

⁶⁹⁰ *PLI*, p.254.

This enquiry did not lead to marriage but it is clear that by the end of the fifteenth century the later generations of the Paston and Knyvet families were still, if not more firmly, in the same close social circles.

The Knyvetts owned one of the three extant manuscripts to contain both the *Troy Book* and *The Siege of Thebes*. Derek Pearsall notes an anthologising link between these two texts, which Trinity O.5.2 encapsulates:

the story of Thebes existed in the medieval mind as a pendant to Troy, and had done ever since the composition of the *Roman de Thebes* in the late twelfth century as a pot-boiler to Benoit's *Roman de Troie*. Versions of the two regularly occur together in French MSS.⁶⁹¹

Both were popular texts, with the *Troy Book* surviving in twenty-nine manuscripts, most of which are "quality' texts prepared for aristocratic or upper-class patrons".⁶⁹²

The Knyvet's manuscript appears as an emulation of such "quality" manuscripts. The portion of the manuscript containing the *Troy Book* reproduces the cycle of miniatures found in the two manuscripts made in Lydgate's lifetime: Bodleian Digby 232 (1420-30) and Bodleian Rawlinson C. 446 (1425-1450), (neither of which also contains *The Siege of Thebes*).⁶⁹³ The fifteenth-century sections of BL Royal 18.D.2 contain both *The Troy Book* and *The Siege of Thebes* with *The Troy Book* also containing illustrations. This manuscript was made for Sir William Herbert and appears to have been intended as a gift to either Henry VI or Edward IV.⁶⁹⁴ Gillespie posits that the copying of these miniatures and the similarities between them across the extant manuscripts may be due to the artistic workshops that undertook this work retaining models for their work, suggesting that they were responding to a demand for "certain decorative schemes, [and] standardization of

⁶⁹¹ Pearsall, *John Lydgate*, p.151.

⁶⁹² *Ibid.*

⁶⁹³ Alexandra Gillespie, *Print Culture and the Medieval Author. Chaucer, Lydgate and their Books, 1473-1557*. (Oxford: OUP, 2006) pp.40-41.

⁶⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p.37 and "Royal MS 18 D II," *Digitised Manuscripts*.

decoration”.⁶⁹⁵ Whilst Gillespie’s study focuses on *The Troy Book*, for which she finds links to “an apparently growing commercial trade in vernacular manuscripts”, its frequent pairing with *The Siege of Thebes* in the manuscripts of this survey, the collation of *The Siege of Thebes* with printed works in St. John’s College 266 and b.2.21, and Wynken de Worde’s printing of *The Siege of Thebes* c.1500, all indicate that this text was also linked to commercial trade.⁶⁹⁶

The popularity of *The Troy Book* or *The Siege of Thebes* may have led to workshops’ employing more commercial copying practices but the reproduction of miniatures in the manuscripts, in their very similarity, may indicate something quite personal, or familial. As Gillespie writes,

they are evidence that owners like the Chaworths or Knevets, or the London vintner(s) who left his arms on Digby 232 – individuals unlikely to participate in the rituals of the court’s inner chambers – would not ‘pinche’ but rather lavish money on the books that remembered their magnificent origins, that recalled their value for a king, venerated a saint, and did so, in part, by keeping close to their English author’s making.⁶⁹⁷

None of the extant manuscripts of *The Siege of Thebes* has been associated with Anne Paston or her family, we do not know her copy was lavish and, like the Knyvett manuscript, contained these miniatures by which certain social and cultural connections might be invoked. However, in lending her manuscript to the Earl of Arran a similar sense of “recalling of value” is invoked. Or perhaps, more accurately, it is in John Paston III’s florid request for the return of this manuscript that this is invoked, marking the magnificence he perceives in the Earl of Arran and seeking to have that reflect on himself and his family through lending such a person Anne’s book.

The manuscripts of Alice Chaucer, and the Bouchier and Knyvet families shed some light on the sorts of East Anglian gentry libraries in which manuscripts of Lydgate’s *The Siege of Thebes* could be found. The Paston ownership of this

⁶⁹⁵ Gillespie, *Print Culture*, p.38.

⁶⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹⁷ *Id.*, p.41.

work is typical of the libraries within their social networks. There is a possibility that the Pastons owned their copy of the text before it entered into the libraries of the Bouchiers or Knyvets (the inscriptions associated with these families dating to the sixteenth centuries) but the wider survey of extant manuscripts shows Lydgate's work to have been a popular text across the fifteenth century, with this popularity influencing early print culture, as evident in St. John's College 266 and b.2.21.

We can see, then, that there were several hubs of production, with Stephen Dodesham copying three of the manuscripts (Boston Public Library MS f.med 94, New Haven, Yale University, Beinecke Library 661 (*olim* Mostyn 258), and CUL, Additional 3137) and the same Suffolk scribe copying BL Egerton 2864 and BL Additional MS 5140. The survey of these manuscripts also shows that the text circulated across England and Scotland, within East Anglia, London, Glasgow and other areas during this period. We find records of its being owned by monarchs, members of the gentry and merchants, with one manuscript (Bodleian MS Laud. Misc. 416) owned by two sisters of Syon Abbey. Whilst we have evidence for Anne Paston's ownership of *The Siege of Thebes*, a comparison to the libraries of Anne Harling and Alice Chaucer indicates the likelihood that Anne Paston also owned other more directly devotional works by Lydgate but that the evidence for these manuscripts and texts is now lost. *The Siege of Thebes* might, thus, be a distinctively secular work within a library that included devotional literature, echoing her brother's Inventory of English books. The surviving evidence thus points to Anne Paston's engaging with a very popular text in the late fifteenth century that seemed to have hubs of production in both East Anglia and London.

4.3.i: Lydgate's the *Temple of Glass*: the commissioning and circulation of the text.

On 17th February 1472 John Paston II wrote to John Paston III to "comande" and "praye" that his brother "loke vppe my Temple off Glasse, and sende it me by the berer heroff."⁶⁹⁸ This work also appears in the in Item Three of John Paston

⁶⁹⁸ *PLI*, p.447.

II's Inventory of English books, one of the collections of Chaucerian and Lydgatian works discussed in Chapter Three. The links between this text and the Paston family has received critical attention due to the suggestion by Henry Noble MacCracken that William Paston I had commissioned this work.⁶⁹⁹ This is, as I shall outline below, a rather tentative association but the documents of John Paston II show him utilising his texts to engage with particular social and cultural practices surrounding courtship, practices that are also invoked by the poetic composition of Margery Brews included in her letter of 1477 to John Paston III.

Whilst the *Temple of Glass* appears in the surviving Paston letters in 1472, critics have sought to link the family with the creation of this work. MacCracken first highlighted that the Paston motto, *de mieulx en mieulx*, appears as the motto of the lady in the Group B version of the poem (which predates the Group A form), leading to the theory that Lydgate wrote this poem for William Paston on the occasion of his marriage to Agnes Berry in 1420.⁷⁰⁰ This theory is, however, based on some quite tentative evidence. MacCracken points to the association of this motto with the later Pastons, particularly Sir William Paston (d.1608), whose motto was "De mieux en mieux pour tout", and a later William Paston, Earl of Yarmouth, who had the motto "De mieux je pense en mieux."⁷⁰¹ MacCracken said of this theory that "the fact cannot be considered as proved" but it is one that was upheld by Walter Schirmer in his study of Lydgate's work.⁷⁰² Doubts about this theory were recorded by Derek Pearsall and the theory is absent from the more recent study of Lydgate's work by Larry Scanlon and James Simpson.⁷⁰³ Numerous critics have also suggested their own candidates and events for which this poem was written, with alternative patrons or subjects including the marriage of Henry V to Katherine of Valois, the

⁶⁹⁹ Henry Noble MacCracken, "Additional Light on the *Temple of Glas*," in *PMLA*, vol. 23, no.1 (1908), pp.128-140.

⁷⁰⁰ *Id.*, pp.132-33.

⁷⁰¹ *Id.*, p.134.

⁷⁰² Schirmer, *John Lydgate*, pp.37-8.

⁷⁰³ Pearsall, *John Lydgate*, p.72. Larry Scanlon, "Lydgate's Poetics: Laureation and Domesticity in the *Temple of Glass*," in Scanlon and Simpson, *John Lydgate: Poetry, Culture, and Lancastrian England*, pp. 36-61.

marriage of Henry IV to Joan of Navarre, Katherine of Valoise and Owen Tudor, or Humphrey of Gloucester and Jacqueline of Bavaria.⁷⁰⁴ Whilst the commissioning of the text remains unknown, Samuel Moore's work on the literary patrons of Norfolk and Suffolk does highlight the feasibility of MacCracken's theory by noting the connection between William Paston I and the Abbey of Bury St. Edmunds during Lydgate's lifetime, with Paston becoming a lay brother of the Abbey in 1429.⁷⁰⁵

We have seen from discussions of the library of Alice Chaucer that members of the Pastons' wider social network commissioned works from Lydgate. We can see a specific instance of this with the names of important men within the social networks of the Pastons brought together in a manuscript of Lydgate's *Temple of Glass*, BL Sloane MS 1212, which contains extracts from this poem. This is a fifteenth-century manuscript copied by "lucas", whose name appears on several occasions within the manuscript and who MacCracken identified as John Lucas of Little Saxham, Suffolk, with the British Library Catalogue Description adding that Lucas was a secretary to Jasper Tudor, Duke of Bedford.⁷⁰⁶ This is a

⁷⁰⁴ Since MacCracken's article other critics have proposed other unions for which Lydgate might have composed this work. Samuel Moore raised objections to MacCracken's theory in Moore, "Patrons" I, pp.193-4. Boffey states that Moore "preferred the marriage of Henry V and Katherine of Valois, in the same year" but there is no evidence of this argument in the works cited by Boffey, the aforementioned article and Moore, in "Patrons" II, pp.79-105 (see Julia Boffey, "Shirley, Trinity College Cambridge MS. R.3.20, and the Circumstances of Lydgate's *Temple of Glas*: Coterie Verse over Time," *Studies in the Age of Chaucer* 38 (2016), pp.268-69). Susan Bianco argues for a connection between the poem and the marriage of Henry IV and Joan of Navarre, in "New Perspectives on Lydgate's Courtly Verse," in *Nation, Court and Culture: New Essays on Fifteenth-Century English Poetry*, ed. Helen Cooney, (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2000), pp.95-115. J. Allan Mitchell states that "there are several signposts that point in the direction of Katherine [Valois] and Owen [Tudor] rather than to any of the other candidates proposed by scholar to date," in "Queen Katherine and the Secret of Lydgate's *Temple of Glass*," *Medium Aevum* 77 (2008), p.64. Most recently, Julia Boffey has proposed a case for the poem making reference to the marriage of Humphrey of Gloucester to Jacqueline, of Bavaria, countess of Hainault, in the aforementioned article "Coterie Verse" pp.265-273.

⁷⁰⁵ MacCracken, "Additional Light," p.134. Moore, "Patrons" I, p.204. This statement is based on Rev. Richard Yates, *History and Antiquities of the Abbey of St. Edmund's Bury*, (London: Nichols, 1843), p.156.

⁷⁰⁶ MacCracken, "Additional Light," p.129. "Sloane 1212" *Explore Archives and Manuscripts*:
http://searcharchives.bl.uk/primo_library/libweb/action/display.do?tabs=detailsTab&ct=display&fn=search&doc=IAMS040-002113562&indx=1&recIds=IAMS040-

manuscript that records the later circulation of Lydgate's poem but one from which we can infer an East Anglian network of readers. F.1^v contains "a considerable number of marginal notes by the scribe," including the names and mottos of three prominent members of the East Anglian gentry, "Scales," "Morley," and "Felbrigge".⁷⁰⁷ There are also repeated variations on "Pur ma soueraine" on this folio.⁷⁰⁸ These names feature throughout the Paston letters and were part of the family's social milieu. The identity of the Lord Scales is complicated by an absence of a clear date for the composition of the manuscript: Thomas, Lord Scales, held the title until his death in 1460; Anthony Woodville held the title, 1461-83; and then the title was held by John De Vere, 13th Earl of Oxford.⁷⁰⁹ A copy made by John Paston III of a letter sent to the Countess of Oxford (probably) from her husband includes a request to "lete Pastun, Fylbryg, Brewce, cum to me", but each of the three possible Lord Scales would have been a significant person within the social and political landscapes of fifteenth-century East Anglia.⁷¹⁰ It is unclear why Lucas chose to record these names or include the mottos of each household. They appear on a folio with "two tries at a love-ballad, made of Lydgatian phrases" taken from *Temple of Glass* and do not, therefore, seem related to the meaning of the text that they accompany.⁷¹¹ They may record a circle of readers in which the manuscript circulated or may perhaps have performed a pseudo-heraldic function in collating the mottos of prominent gentry families associated with the owner of the manuscript. Alternatively, given MacCracken's suggestion that the changing of the motto on the dress of the Lady may have reflected a direct Paston connection with the text, Lucas may have foreseen his copying of this work for other members of the East Anglian gentry or aristocracy and recorded these

002113562&recIdxs=0&elementId=0&renderMode=poppedOut&displayMode=full&frbrVersion=&dscnt=0&frbg=&scp.scps=scope%3A%28BL%29&tab=local&dstmp=1531313629645&srt=rank&mode=Basic&&dum=true&vl(freeText0)=sloane%201212&vid=IAMS_VU2 – accessed 11th July 2018.

⁷⁰⁷ MacCracken, "Additional Light," p.129.

⁷⁰⁸ *Id.*, pp.129-30.

⁷⁰⁹ *PLIII*, p.303.

⁷¹⁰ *PLII*, p.592.

⁷¹¹ MacCracken, "Additional Light," p.128.

mottoes with an eye to personalizing each copy for his prospective commissioner.

4.3.ii: Lydgate's the *Temple of Glass*: literature and courtship in the Paston letters

The personalization of the text by the scribes of the *Temple of Glass*, as discussed by MacCracken, extends beyond the mottoes embroidered on the Lady's dress to include the changing of the colours of the dress from green and white in the A Group to black, red, and white in the B Group, while "the hawthorne branches (white flowers and green leaves) (l.505) were also changed to roses, and l.510, which had contained no name at all, was altered to bring in the name Margaret."⁷¹² Each change, according to MacCracken's theory, speaks to the influence of a specific commissioner or reader at some stage in the subsequent circulation of the text. There is also one change within the redactions of the text that speaks to usage of the poem rather than to its ownership.

MacCracken's article indicates a separation on f1. of Sloane 1212 between the "phrases borrowed from Lydgate's *Temple of Glass*" and the more sustained extract from lines 736-754 and 762-763.⁷¹³ However, Robbins' edition of the lyric in the Sloane manuscript emphasises how these extracts combine to form a single courtly love lyric. This "reworking" of Lydgate's poem by the author of the verse on f.1 of BL Sloane 1212, which I am about to briefly discuss below, embodies a practice of pseudo textual collage I shall explore in greater detail in the final section of the next chapter. Rossell Hope Robbins, in his discussion of the lyric "An Unkind Mistress" describes the ways in which the poem "extends its feeble lines to a literary tradition which, because a poem could be so composed from a corpus of kennings, must have been of considerable distribution and some establishment."⁷¹⁴ Robbins' study of the lyric "An Unkind

⁷¹² *Id.*, p.133.

⁷¹³ MacCracken, "Additional Light," p.128.

⁷¹⁴ Rossell Hope Robbins, "An Unkind Mistress (Lambeth MS. 432)," *Modern Language Notes* 69.8 (1954), p.558.

Mistress” shows how the author of the poem brings together “the cliched poetic formulas of his age”.⁷¹⁵ It is this authorial practice that I shall trace through the writings of the Pastons in the final section of this thesis. However, Lydgate’s *Temple of Glass* appears to have been identified by both the writer of BL Sloane 1212 and John Paston II as having particular kind of social and / or cultural cache and it is to this I now turn.

In the lines of verse that appear on f.1^r of BL Sloane 1212, which are taken from the *Temple of Glass*, changes have been made so that the poem reads as “a direct petition of a lover to his lady, instead of the lover’s remarks to Venus [...]”.⁷¹⁶ This suggests that the text has been changed from a more general debate between a Lady and her Lover in the Temple of Venus to an address for a specific intended reader (or, perhaps, listener). Indeed, the changes made by the writer of BL Sloane 1212 are interestingly articulated by the titles ascribed to the lines of the *Temple of Glass* that form what MacCracken states to be the second half of f.1 of the manuscript, lines 736-754 and 762-763. Schick describes this section of the poem as “The Knight’s Complaint to Venus” whilst, in Rossell Hope Robbins’ *Secular Lyrics of the XIVth and XVth Centuries*, he labels this poem “A Pitiless Mistress”.⁷¹⁷ Robbins’ title removes the mediating presence of Venus and replaces it with a sense of confrontation and petition. BL Sloane 1212 f.1 begins with a request for mercy, “Mercy me graunt off þat I me compleyne, / to ʒow my lyfis soueraigne pleasaunʒ”, with the next fourteen lines continuing this lament to a lover.⁷¹⁸ The larger, sustained, excerpt from the *Temple of Glass* starts on line seventeen and declares that the lover will remain true to this “pitiless mistress” of Robbins’ title, “to lofe ʒow best, and neuer to repent” before listing her virtues (ll.24-29) and concluding that the only virtue she lacks is that of pity. It is here that the change of third person address to direct address is most arresting. The words change from “Hir port, hir chere, hir

⁷¹⁵ *Id.* p.553.

⁷¹⁶ MacCracken, “Additional Light,” p.128.

⁷¹⁷ J. Schick, *Lydgate’s ‘Temple of Glass’*, EETS e.s.60 (1891), pp.30-31. Rossell Hope Robbins, “A Pitiless Mistress,” in *Secular Lyrics of the XIVth and XVth Centuries*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1902), pp.141-142.

⁷¹⁸ Robbins, *Secular Lyrics*, p.141.

goodness" in the *Temple of Glass* to "3our port, 3our chere, 3our goodness" with another eight uses of "3our" across four lines (ll.25-28).⁷¹⁹ The lyric change from "hir" to "3our" and the rapid repetition of this word in such a short space appears to confront the mistress with her virtues. However, the final stanza of the lyric returns to the more gentle, lamenting tone of the opening stanza and the idea of mercy, "so þat I shortly shal noȝt fayne, / Saue vpon mercy I can noȝt complayne."⁷²⁰ The text in BL Sloane 1212, then, appears to have been modified in order to function within the customs and rituals of courtship. John Paston II's request for his copy of the *Temple of Glass* demonstrate Lydgate's verse being put to use in the social and behavioural rituals of courtship.

Directly following John Paston II's request for his copy of the *Temple of Glass* he updates his brother on his progress with Anne Haute:

Item, as for tydyngys, I haue spoken wyth Mestresse Anne Hault at a praty leysyer and, blyssyd be God, we be as ferfforthe as we were to-foore, and soo I hoope we schall contenew; and I promysed hyre that at the next leysyer that I kowd fynde ther-too þat I wolde come ageyn and see hyre, whyche wyll take a leysere as I deeme. Now syn thys obseruance is ones doon I purpose nott to tempte God noo moore soo.⁷²¹

The engagement between John Paston II and Anne Haute lasted a decade and over those ten years the position of both parties seems to have fluctuated between trying to achieve matrimony and attempting to terminate the contract.⁷²² In February 1470 (almost precisely two years before his request for *Temple of Glass*) John II wrote that he "hope well I am offryd yit to haue Mestresse Anne Haulte, and I schall haue helpe j-now, as some seye."⁷²³ The initial socio-political appeal of the engagement can be seen in a letter from Anthony Woodville, then Lord Scales, to a member of the Duke of Norfolk's council:

⁷¹⁹ Schick, *Temple of Glass*, p.31 and Robbins, *Secular Lyrics*, p.142.

⁷²⁰ Robbins, *Secular Lyrics*, p.142.

⁷²¹ *PLI*, p.447.

⁷²² The engagement between Anne Haute and John Paston II is mentioned in the following letters: *PLI*, pp.372, 414, 442, 447, 458, 548, 569; *PLII*, pp.571-2. The dispensation from their engagement is addressed in *PLI*, pp.471, 498, 505.

⁷²³ *PLI*, p.414.

[a]nd for asmoch as maryage ys fully concluded by-twyx the seyde Ser John Paston and oon of my nerrest kynneswomen, I dout not that youre reason wele conceyveth that nature must compelle me the rathere to shewe my gode wyll, assystens, and favour vnto the seyde Ser John in such thyngys as concerne hys enherytauns⁷²⁴

Anne Haute becomes a means by which the Pastons might be aligned with some of the most influential people in England and, by marrying her, John Paston II hopes finally to conclude his disputes with the Dukes of Norfolk and Suffolk to the Pastons' satisfaction. This social and political tactic is most clearly articulated in a letter by Margaret Paston. In 1475 she wrote to her son wishing that he "war delyueryd of my Mastres A. H., and than I wold trost þat ye shuld do bettyr."⁷²⁵ However, Margaret's issue may have been less with Anne Haute herself than with the particular terms of the proposed match. In 1478 Margaret writes to John II advising him of how to deal with their claim to Hellesdon and Drayton. She claims that her son has as good a relationship with the King "as ony knyght þat ys longyng to þe Corte", but she also suggests that he "mary rygth nygth of þe Qwenys blood", reasoning that, "yf yt be so[,] þat yowyr lond schuld come a-gayne by þe reason of your maryage, and to be sett in rest [...]."⁷²⁶ The match between John Paston II and Anne Haute thus seems like a calculated political alliance for the Paston family. This, though, is hardly to suggest that the processes by which such an agreement was reached lacked accompanying practices of more formal courtship. Such elements surely went hand in hand and, at the point of asking John Paston III for a copy of Lydgate's *Temple of Glass*, in 1472, it would appear that the older brother was hoping to "contenew" his progress with Anne Haute through the more personable activities of sharing some "praty leyser" and a poem that debates love and courtship.⁷²⁷ Given their long and turbulent engagement the *Temple of Glass*, in which Venus counsels the knight that his pleasure in having the Lady accept

⁷²⁴ *PLII*, p.571.

⁷²⁵ *PLI*, p.372.

⁷²⁶ *Id.*, p.381.

⁷²⁷ Even Margaret's letter of 1478 continues that she hoped her son would "fynde in your harte to loue hyr". *Ibid.*

him as her love will be sweeter because of the suffering he has endured, seems an appropriate selection for John Paston II to share with Anne Haute.

The engagement negotiations with Anne Haute are not the only instance in the correspondence of John Paston II in which we find a link between his request for a text and an act of courtship. Before John Paston II became engaged to Anne Haute a Thomas Davers wrote to him regarding a copy of Ovid's *De Arte*

Amandi:

And as to Ouyde *De Arte Amandi*, I shall send hym you þis next weke, for I haue hym not now redy. But me thenketh Ouide *De Remedio* were more mete for yow, but yef ye purposed to falle hastely in my Lady Anne P. lappe, as white as whales bon, &c. Ye be the best cheser of gentellwoman þat I know, &c.⁷²⁸

Davers was in the service of William Wainfleet, the chief arbiter in the various disputes regarding the will of Sir John Fastolf. A letter from John Paston III to John Paston II, written 18th December 1472, indicates how both of these men were working to the benefit of the Paston family. The letter updates John Paston II on the progress made by the Bishop of Winchester, William Wainfleet, with the Duchess of Norfolk in relation to the unlawful possession of Caister castle by the Duke of Norfolk. The Bishop's pleading of the Paston's case coincided with his christening the Duke and Duchess's baby daughter, Anne. Thomas Davers appears to have acted as the Bishop's agent in the matter:

A lytyll be-for the Byshopys departyng my lady sent for Thomas Davers, and ther he spak wyth hyr of dyuers thyngys; so a-mong all he remembryd hyr of Caster, besechyng hyr to be good lady in that mater as she had promysyd, and as he knewe well that she had ben in tyme past, for he told hyr that it was a thyng that towchyd gretly the honour of my lord of Wynchester in as myche as he promyseid yow the pesybyll possessyon ther-of, whyche ye had not as yet. Then my lady answeyrd a-yen that thys next terme bothe my lord and she shold be at London, and she knewe well that soone aftyr that they wer com to London my lord

⁷²⁸ *PLII*, p.379.

and my lord of Wynchester shold meete, and aftyr thys lytyll
 aqweyntance heere ther they shold haue more; at qwhyche tyme she
 hyr-sylff wold devyse to my lord of Wynchester syche a way to brek in to
 my lord of that mater that he shold speed of hys entent. But er euer T.
 Dauers wold tell me what hys answer was of hyr, he mad me to be
 sworyn that I shold neuer dyscouer it but to yow, and þat ye shold kepe
 it secrett.⁷²⁹

That Dauers would divulge such a sensitive event as the Duchess of Norfolk's response to Wainfleet's argument, and swear John Paston III to secrecy, implies a closeness between the two men. There is also a sense of reciprocity of trust and service in the communications between Dauers and John Paston II. In 1467 Dauers appears to be out of favour with Wainfleet. He writes to John Paston II in the hope that Paston might help to bring Dauers back into the service of his lord:

All-so I beseche yow to recomand me to my lordes good grace as to hym whom of erthely estates next my dewté I moste love and drede, and that shuld he well knowe and hit late in my power; praying you hertely to declare his lordship such mater as Wylliam Rabbes shall enfourme yow and to send me my lordes answer.⁷³⁰

The relationship between Dauers and John Paston II is one of collegiality and fellowship, helping one another with legal disputes and patronage issues, and with Dauers acting as either scribe or stationer for John Paston II in Paston's obtaining a copy of Ovid's *De Arte Amandi*.

In his letter of 1467, Dauers looks to be making a joke of John Paston II's attempt to court Lady Anne P (whose identity remains unknown), indicating that perhaps John's pursuit of her is futile, suggesting that Paston might, instead, focus on suppressing his interest in the lady and remedying his affections for her.⁷³¹ Given that, two years later, John Paston II was in negotiations with the Woodvilles to marry Anne Haute, it seems that Dauers'

⁷²⁹ *PLI*, p.586.

⁷³⁰ *PLII*, p.379.

⁷³¹ *Ibid.*

assessment of the situation was accurate. What remains of interest, though, is that John Paston II was seeking *a text* in connection with his attempts to court Lady Anne P. Furthermore, Davers' letter was sent on 29th January whilst John Paston II's request for his brother to send him his copy of *Temple of Glass* is dated to 17th February 1472.⁷³² There is, thus, the possibility that John Paston II was specifically attempting to get hold of particularly pertinent literary works in time for the celebration of Valentine's Day. And this association between the 'literary' and Valentine's Day (and its relation to the business of negotiating marriage agreements) is also found in the letters of John Paston II's sister-in-law, Margery Brews.

In February 1477 Margery Brews wrote her famous letter to John Paston III in which she, by addressing him as "Ryght reuerent and wurschypfull and my right welebeloued Voluntyne", is recorded in history as writing the earliest surviving Valentine's Letter.⁷³³ A second letter, written in the same month, again addresses John Paston III as "Ryght wurschypfful and welebelouyd Volentyne" and this time she signs off the letter "Be 3our Voluntyne Mergery Brews".⁷³⁴ These letters will be explored more fully over the course of the following chapter, but we must linger for a moment, here, over the similarities to be found between Margery Brews' and John Paston II's use of verse in their attempts to find a spouse and on the manner in which Valentine's day appears to give this particular use of literature a particular site and focus.

The first of these two letters by Margery Brews contains several lines of verse:

Fer þer wottys no creature what peyn þat I endure,
And for to be deede I dare it not dyscure.⁷³⁵

And, then, a little later,

And yf 3e commande me to kepe me true where-euer I go
Iwyse I will do all my myght 3owe to love and neuer no mo.

⁷³² *Ibid.* and *PLI*, p.447.

⁷³³ *PLI*, p.662.

⁷³⁴ *Id.*, p.663.

⁷³⁵ *Id.*, p.662.

And yf my freendys say þat I do amys, þei schal not me let so for to do,
 Myn herte me byddys euer more to love zowe
 Truly ouer all erthely thing.
 And yf þei be neuer so wroth, I tryst it schall be bettur in tyme
 commyng.⁷³⁶

Julia Boffey has proposed that these verses were created especially for this Valentine's Day, stating that the work is "unmetrical and unpolished enough to seem an original composition spontaneously designed for the occasion."⁷³⁷ The coinciding of the mid-February date and the increasing intensity of the negotiations surrounding the Brews/Paston marriage can be seen in the seemingly conflicting tones of devotion and reproach in the poem as it holds in tension affection and the practicalities of the business arrangement that is their prospective marriage.⁷³⁸ There is also the possibility that Brews sought to remind John Paston III of a shared interest in literature.

In more recent work on the *Temple of Glass*, Boffey notes that on f.145 of Trinity College Cambridge MS R.3.20 the scribe, John Shirley, writes a heading for Lydgate's poem, "For love of hire þat excelleth all", in which he describes how it was a "balade made at þe reuerence of our lady by daun Johan Lidegate þe Munke of Bury in wyse of chesing loues at saint Valentynes day."⁷³⁹ Here we see that both John Paston II and Margery Brews were engaging with a cultural practice of association of Valentine's Day and the reading or sharing of literature that is known to have been taking place by the 1430s (when Shirley was compiling this manuscript). Whilst John Paston II appears to intend to lend or perhaps read the texts he requests to his own potential "welebeloued Voluntyne", Brews composes her own. As outlined in the introduction to this chapter, a few of the members of the Paston family identify John Paston III as being appreciative of their own short pieces of doggerel or, in the case of

⁷³⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷³⁷ Julia Boffey, *Manuscripts of English Courtly Love Lyrics in the Later Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Brewer, 1985), p.85.

⁷³⁸ The documents related to the negotiations of marriage between John Paston III and Margery Brews are as follows: *PLI*, pp.378, 499, 500-1, 606-10; *PLII*, pp.413 and 436.

⁷³⁹ Boffey, "Coterie Verse", p.266.

William Paston III, a few lines of verse in Latin.⁷⁴⁰ In a letter in which Margery states that she is unable to negotiate a larger dowry for herself and seeks to have John Paston III agree to marry her in spite of this, her poetry is not only emotive in its content but may also remind John III of a shared interest or of her accomplishment in something he appreciates. Poetry (and a literary association with Valentine's Day) may be intended to off-set the problems presented by the dowry.

4.4: Conclusion

The debates surrounding the commissioning of Lydgate's *Temple of Glass* draw on a rich combination of manuscript provenance and contextual evidence. In doing so, these arguments highlight the East Anglian networks of readers of Lydgate's work. MacCracken's suggestion that the work was commissioned by William Paston I is not markedly more or less tenuous than most of the other theories presented above. This is partially due to the Pastons' being of a piece with the *kinds* of people whom we know to have commissioned works by Lydgate. That is to say, given their status, their connections with the abbey of Bury St. Edmunds, and the sorts of works being commissioned by their contemporaries, we might *expect* to find such commissions from members of the Paston family.

The extant manuscripts of *The Siege of Thebes* share a number of texts with the corpus of texts associated with the Paston family. Whilst it is perhaps a little unusual that the only Lydgatian work associated with a female member of the Paston family is a secular text rather than devotional one, the information surrounding the other extant manuscripts of *The Siege of Thebes* show that it was owned by women, with Alice Chaucer perhaps being the commissioner of the only manuscript in which the entire text survives. We may infer from the information surrounding the other female literary patrons of East Anglia that this was not the only text owned by Anne Paston and the concrete evidence we do have shows her as an owner and lender of a very popular work.

⁷⁴⁰ For William Paston III see *PLI*, p.651.

The inclusion of Lydgate's work in the library of the Paston family thus appears quite typical within the textual culture of the East Anglian gentry. The mention of these texts within the letters of the family members provide an insight into a particular cultural use of these texts: the sharing or invocation of works on courtly love in the celebration of Valentine's day. Brews' Valentine's Letter is, in part, a reaction to Chaucer's *Parlement of Foules*. Margery's mother, Elizabeth, even writes of "Sent Volentynes Day" a date on which "every brydde chesyth hym a make", paraphrasing Chaucer's "For this was on Seynt Valentynes Day, / Whan every foul cometh there to chese his make."⁷⁴¹ The Valentine's letter and John Paston II's requests for texts around this time of year show that Chaucer's poem had, by the late fifteenth century, come to inform wider social and cultural practices and courtship rituals. The writing and reading of such works to a prospective husband or wife not only suggests a sense of culturally belonging to the same educated and courtly circles, but also, in the case of Margery Brews, may have acted as a reminder of a shared and distinctively personal interest. In writing verses to John Paston III Margery reminds him how well-matched they are as a couple.

⁷⁴¹ *PLII*, p.436. Chaucer, "The Parliament of Fowls," in Benson, ed., *Riverside Chaucer*, ll.309-310. This is discussed in Davis, "Language of the Paston Letters," p.12.

Chapter Five: Other instances of the reading and writing of texts in the Paston letters

Over the course of this thesis we have looked at the rich and varied examples of the Paston family's engagement with the literary culture of East Anglia, with our focus primarily on John Paston II as the key surviving instances of such engagement centre on him. There are, though, further smaller, scrappier, instances of manuscript ownership, the reading or reception of texts, as well as examples of members of the family writing verses. Some of these, especially the writing of verse, sustain an exploration whilst others, due to their brevity or their incidental nature can only be collated as a series of discrete units. This is not to devalue such moments within the letters but rather to point to their limitations in what they can individually add to our understanding of the Pastons and their writing, reception and ownership of literature. Collectively, though, these moments within the letters add further rich nuances to our understanding of the subject.

Due to the fragmentary but cumulatively pertinent nature of the evidence, this chapter will present these discrete moments from the letters but defer conclusions to the end. We will begin by looking at William Paston II and the manuscripts associated with him before turning to consider how, in composing their letters, certain members of the Paston family demonstrate their shared engagement with texts. Here we first look at the shared partly textualised culture evident in the weaving of proverbs into the letters before moving on to survey the use of literary quotations in the Paston's writing. We then consider the Pastons' involvement with East Anglia's rich dramatic culture. The chapter culminates in a return to Margery Brews' Valentine's letter and considers it alongside the verses composed by the recipient of this letter, John Paston III. Here we explore the language of service and courtly love in these petitionary poems and how they show a shared culture of writing as well as one of reading.

5.1: The Manuscripts of William Paston II

Most of the evidence surrounding the literary activities of the Paston family focuses on the fourth generation, John Paston II, John Paston III and his wife Margery Brews, and Anne Paston. As we will see over the course of this chapter, though, there are also examples of John Paston I, Margaret Paston and Agnes Paston demonstrating that they have either read texts or have had them read to them, and that these works also influence the composition of their letters. Of these earlier generations of the family it is William Paston II for whom we have the most substantial information about ownership of manuscripts, reading of texts and writing of texts. We know that William Paston II oversaw the delivery of copies of Pynson's *Statutes of Warre* to Thomas Lovell "before the Kyng departed, whiche were delyuered seyn vnto the capitaignes of his hooste" and one of which William II had "be crafte gotten" for Thomas Carey.⁷⁴² In this letter he explains that "[a]s for th'armes and the bagis portraid in the first leffe of thebook of the Statutes of Warre coude not be coloured, be cause John Pyk myght not tary" and goes on to detail how the images should be coloured if Carey were to manage to commission a "paynter" to complete the work.⁷⁴³ He discusses books with Carey again in 1495 (twenty-five months after the discussion of Pynson's book):

As for the boke of the Justes, Master Garter King of Arms was with me this day, and shewed me asmuch of the said boke as was clene made vp. It wall conteign whan it is fully made vp a vj or vij shetes of paper, and in conclusion the King hath commanded Master Garter that he shall in no wise puplish it nor shew it to no man beffore his grace haue sene it and affermed it." ⁷⁴⁴

Both of the works mentioned in these letters speak to a manuscript in which William II's hand appears, a book of blazonings that resides in the Norfolk Record Office, MS Walter Rye 38. This is a manuscript of 72 leaves on which appear the coats of arms of Norfolk families connected to the Pastons, either through kinship or social contract, and obituaries of members of the Paston and

⁷⁴² *PLIII*, p.22.

⁷⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴⁴ *Id.*, pp.26.

Barry families. Davis's assessment of the manuscript led him to identify William II as the writer of the obituaries as well as the memoranda of French grammar that follows in the remaining blank leaves.⁷⁴⁵ Davis dates William's additions to this manuscript as likely to have taken place "while William was at Cambridge. He was there in 1449 and had left by 1454."⁷⁴⁶ These instances echo (that is, anticipate) the interests of John Paston II and his *Grete Boke*, with both uncle and nephew reading manuscripts about jousts and warfare and participating in the creation and/or circulation of such manuscripts.

5.2: Books in the Wills of the Paston women

The extant wills of the Paston family, where we might anticipate the bequest of items such as manuscripts (as we have seen in Anne Harling's will), include few mentions of books. However, as we have seen in the previous chapter, Margaret Paston's will does include such gifts

executours purveye a compleet legende in oon book and an antiphoner in an other book, which bookes I will be yeven to abide ther in the seid church to the wursship of God aslonge as they may endure.⁷⁴⁷

She also "bequeath[s] [...] my premer" to her daughter Anne and to her daughter-in-law Margery Brews she left "my massebook".⁷⁴⁸ As we have seen from studies such as Carol Meale's survey of the books of late-medieval lay women, the items mentioned in Margaret's will are exactly those we might expect of a wealthy gentlewoman.⁷⁴⁹

For Agnes Paston, the surviving drafts of her will (where we may look for Agnes' similar ownership of a commonplace book or other manuscripts) focus on ensuring that her husband's will was honoured and do not record

⁷⁴⁵ *PLI*, p.150-153. The full description of this manuscript can be found in Norman Davis and G. S. Ivy, "MS. Walter Rye 38 and its French Grammar," in *Medium Aevum*, 31 (1962), pp.110-24.

⁷⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴⁷ *PLI*, p.384.

⁷⁴⁸ *Id.* pp.386 and 387.

⁷⁴⁹ Carol Meale, "Laywomen and their books in late medieval England," in *Women and Literature in Britain, 1150-1500*, ed. Meale, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p.137.

bequests.⁷⁵⁰ However, the appearance of Agnes in another will suggests that she may have owned similar devotional works. Hugh Kempster, in his study of the fifteenth-century reception of Julian of Norwich in Norwich, notes that in 1434 “a burgess of Yarmouth left the *Prick of Conscience* to Agnes Paston.”⁷⁵¹

Kempster presents Agnes as one amongst a growing stream of lay women to own devotional works or works that spoke to the living of a “mixed life”.⁷⁵²

There is little evidence in Agnes’s letters to indicate that she was particularly pious or sought such a life, but the burgess of Yarmouth evidently felt this an appropriate bequest. Kempster’s presentation of Agnes’s engagement with the increasing popularity amongst the laity of works like the *Prick of Conscience* is mirrored in John Paston II’s inventory of English books: Item Six includes another text Kempster identifies as increasingly popular over the course of the fifteenth century, *The Abbey of the Holy Ghost*.⁷⁵³

5.3: Proverbs and *Sententiae* in the Paston Letters

Diane Watt writes of the Paston letters that ‘even the most cursory study reveals that idioms and neologisms are scattered throughout [the corpus].’⁷⁵⁴

These instances of what Watt generally refers to as gnomic wisdom are a combination of proverbs and literary and biblical quotation. For many such instances in the letters they demonstrate a shared culture of idioms and aphorism that one might perhaps characterise as sub- or pre-textual:

William Paston II states that “[f]riendship may not hang by the wynd, nor for faire eyne, but causis must be shewid”.⁷⁵⁵

⁷⁵⁰ *PLI*, pp.44-49.

⁷⁵¹ Hugh Kempster, “A Question of Audience: The Westminster Text and the Fifteenth-Century Reception of Julian of Norwich,” in *Julian of Norwich: a Book of Essays*, ed. Sandra J. McEntire, (New York & London: Garland Publishing Inc., a member of the Taylor & Francis Group, 1998) p.265.

⁷⁵² *Ibid.*

⁷⁵³ *Ibid.* Also see, Julia Boffey, “The Charter of the Abbey of the Holy Ghost and its Role in Manuscript Anthologies,” *The Yearbook of English Studies*, vol.33 (2003), pp.120-130.

⁷⁵⁴ Diane Watt, “No Writing for Writing’s Sake”: The Language of Service and Household Rhetoric in the Letters of the Paston Women,” in *Dear Sister: Medieval Women and the Epistolary Genre*, eds. Karen Cherewatuk and Ulrike Wiethaus, (Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993), p.133.

⁷⁵⁵ *PLI*, p.170

Margaret Paston laments that the family “bette þe busschysse, and haue þe losse and þe dysworschuppe, and othere men haue þe byrdys”.⁷⁵⁶

Edmond Paston II stated that “pouerté partys feleschepe”.⁷⁵⁷

John Paston III, writes that “fere for jee, fer fro hert” and advises

Margaret Paston that “for who comyth fyrst to the mylle fyrst must grynd.”⁷⁵⁸

The integration of these proverbs into the letters demonstrates an element of thoughtful stylisation in the composition of the documents and Watt describes this as a “plain” style of writing that

would be fitting for general household correspondence. [...] This style could be described as “colloquial,” bearing a striking resemblance to, and having its origins in the spoken idiom.⁷⁵⁹

Watt presents this style in opposition to a “high style” which is “characterized by formal language and complex grammar.”⁷⁶⁰ Whilst we certainly see this more consciously rhetorical style in the Paston letters, and we will go on to discuss this in the final section of this chapter, there are moments within the letters when this lower and idiomatic style nods to a shared textual culture, where these proverbs are functionally replaced by quotations.

One particularly noteworthy example of *sententiae* in the Paston documents is a letter from Agnes Paston to her son, John Paston I, in which she counsels her son by invoking a saying used by her late husband (and John’s father) William Paston I:

3oure fadyr sayde, ‘In lityl bysynes lyeth myche reste.’ Þis worlde is but a þorough-fare and ful of woo, and whan we departe þer-fro, ri3th nou3ght bere wyth vs but oure good dedys and ylle. And þer knoweth no man how soon God woll clepe hym, and þer-for it is good for euery creature to be redy.⁷⁶¹

⁷⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p.365.

⁷⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p.634.

⁷⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 582 and p.593.

⁷⁵⁹ Watt, “Language of Service,” p.131.

⁷⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶¹ *PLI*, pp.43-44.

Watt identifies Agnes as drawing on the authority of the New Testament with this advice, with “reminders of the transitory nature of earthly things (1 Timothy 6:7), the inevitability yet unpredictability of death (Matthew 24:44), and the consolation of God’s greater wisdom (Hebrews 12:6).”⁷⁶² For Watt, this passage, “has the measured control of a medieval sermon”.⁷⁶³ Norman Davis pointed out that these quotations are not direct translations from the bible but, as we can easily imagine, Agnes would “doubtless have heard many sermons that might treat such texts.”⁷⁶⁴ These quotations may then denote a digestion or internalisation of such sermons so that they have become part of Agnes’s written voice, perhaps adding a certain kind of religious authority to her advice. Moreover, Davis goes on to highlight two other possible, secular, textual influences on the gnomic wisdom of Agnes and William Paston, as presented in this letter: Chaucer and Lydgate.

Davis points out that William Paston’s phrase, “In lytil bysynes lyeth myche reste”, also appears in Chaucer’s “Truth”: “Gret reste stant in litel besyness.”⁷⁶⁵ We have already seen in Chapter Three of this thesis that there is an extant manuscript of the *Canterbury Tales* (Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Bodley 414) tentatively linked to one of the John Pastons and we have seen the wider popularity of Chaucer’s work amongst the East Anglian gentry during the latter half of the fifteenth century. Davis suggests that Agnes wrote this letter in 1465, which, if we consider the dates of the extant East Anglian manuscripts of this work, rather neatly coincides with notable circulation of the *Canterbury Tales* in the region. We have also seen, in the survey of extant manuscripts associated with Items Three and Five of John Paston II’s inventory, that “Truth” appears in two of these large manuscript collections of Chaucerian and Lydgatean works (London, British Library, MS Harley 7333 and Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Fairfax 16 (in which it appears twice)).⁷⁶⁶ Both of the manuscripts have been

⁷⁶² Watt, “Language of Service,” p.133.

⁷⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶⁴ Norman Davis, “Style and Stereotype in Early English Letters,” *Leeds Studies in English*, n.s.1 (1967), pp.11.

⁷⁶⁵ *Id.*, p.12, with the quotation from Geoffrey Chaucer, “Truth,” in *The Riverside Chaucer*, l.10.

⁷⁶⁶ *CCMI*, p.23 and pp.85-87.

dated to the mid-fifteenth century, although neither shows signs of having circulated in East Anglia.⁷⁶⁷ It is, however, feasible that what I suggest to be the partial and idiosyncratic nature of John Paston II's inventory hides his ownership of shorter works by Chaucer, such as "Truth". We do not know when Items Three or Five came into John Paston II's library; given that Agnes and John both died in 1479 it was clearly within both of their life-times, but William Paston I's use of the phrase must have pre-dated this as his grandson was only two when William died. We do not know if Agnes had access to her grandson's collection of works, or if Agnes and William had their own copies of Chaucerian works, but it may be that her letter and Chaucer's poems echo one another because of the ubiquity and popularity of the proverb. Whilst it may be that Agnes and Chaucer both captured in their writing a popular formula for a piece of gnomic wisdom, there is another phrase in the letter, "Pis worlde is but a porugh-fare and ful of woo," that also appears in another work by Chaucer, *The Knight's Tale*. The appearance of a second phrase shared by a work by Chaucer in this letter strengthens the likelihood that Agnes is here quoting written Chaucerian texts (consciously or otherwise) as well as sermons.

Davis points out that the following phrase appears in lines 2847-2848 of *The Knight's Tale*, "This world nys but a thurghfare ful of wo, / And we been pilgrymes, passynge to and fro".⁷⁶⁸ The association of this phrase with Chaucer appears to have been quite strong in the cultural imagination, with Lydgate attributing it to Chaucer, saying that Chaucer "whiche in his tragedyes made ful yore agoo / Declared triewly that list nate for to feyn, / How this world is a thurghfare ful of woo."⁷⁶⁹ Lydgate uses this refrain as part of a treatise on the fickleness of Fortune. He draws on examples from classical tales, but in stanzas 14-16 Lydgate turns towards recent, simultaneously national and personal, instances to drive home his argument. Here Lydgate commemorates the lives of Henry V (d.1422), his brother, Thomas of Lancaster, 1st Duke of Clarence

⁷⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶⁸ Geoffrey Chaucer, "The Knight's Tale," in *The Riverside Chaucer*, ed. Larry D. Benson, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), ll.2847-2848. See Davis, "Style and Stereotypes," pp.11.

⁷⁶⁹ Davis, "Style and Stereotypes," p.12, with the quotation from *MPJLII*, p.828.

(d.1421), Henry V's uncle, Thomas Beaufort, 1st Duke of Exeter (d.1427), and Thomas Montacute, 4th Earl of Salisbury (and husband to Alice Chaucer: d.1428). In these examples the knightly prowess of the individual is shown to be helpless against Fortune:

The Duk of Excestre, ful famous of prowess,
 Though he were knyghtly, he was eke debonayre;
 But for al that fortune was yit contrayre:
 To both these dukes, allas! why died she so?
 But for hir list to shewe by mortal chaunce,
 How this world is a thurghfare ful woo.⁷⁷⁰

The poem survives in British Library, MS Harley 2251, which Derek Pearsall believes to be derived from a lost Shirley manuscript.⁷⁷¹ It was copied at some point after 1461 in London by the scribe John Multon (d.1475) and the monogram of John de Vale appears on f.175, a man mentioned in Multon's will.⁷⁷² There is nothing to link this manuscript to the Paston family or East Anglia. It is a large compendium of short devotional and moral works that also includes an extract from Lydgate's *Fall of Princes*, *Secrees of old philosopffres*, and *Hors, goose and sheep*, as well as Chaucer's *Prioress' Tale*, *Fortune*, *Gentillesse*, and "ABC".⁷⁷³ Whilst we cannot associate Lydgate's poem with an extant manuscript from East Anglia, in Harley MS 2251 it appears alongside texts we have seen circulating in the manuscripts studied in Chapter Three of this thesis. However, both Lydgate's and Agnes's use of the phrase may denote that rather than being a specific instance of Agnes's reading Lydgate's (or Chaucer's) poem, Lydgate's manipulation of Chaucer's line into a refrain may have come to speak to the social and political concerns of the mid-fifteenth century. Or, perhaps, Agnes's use of the phrase, whether quoted from Lydgate or Chaucer, or included out of a more general social and cultural underpinning, spoke to rather specific concerns being experienced by the family in 1465. Agnes's use of the phrase may both act as a warning and comfort to John Paston

⁷⁷⁰ *MPJLII*, p.826.

⁷⁷¹ Derek Pearsall, *John Lydgate (1371-1449): A Bio-Bibliography*, (Victoria, B.C.: ELS Monograph Series, 1997.), p.82.

⁷⁷² *CCMI*, p.143.

⁷⁷³ *Ibid.*, p.140-142.

who, if the letter was in fact written, as Davis suggests, on 29th October 1465, was probably still in the Fleet prison.⁷⁷⁴ This was also the month in which the Duke of Suffolk raided the Pastons' manors of Drayton and Hellesdon. *If* Agnes was drawing this quotation from Lydgate, then it may have helped to remind John Paston I of the unstable power of his adversary:

Reken vp the realms and the monarchyes,
Of erthly princes, reigning in theyr glorye,
With theyre sceptres and theyr regalyes,
With theyr trymphe conquered bi victorie,
Theyr marcial actes entitled by memorye,
And to remember whan that al this is doo,
They doo but shewe a shadew transitorye,
How this world is a thurghfare ful of woo.⁷⁷⁵

Her continuation that when we depart from the world we bear nothing but "our good dedys and ylle" could feasibly act as a criticism of the Duke of Suffolk or as counsel for John Paston I.⁷⁷⁶ More generally, the phrase, as used by both Lydgate and Agnes, appears to suggest a source of comfort for a world that, in the mid-fifteenth century, was "ryght qwesye" from frequent political upheaval at both the national and local level.⁷⁷⁷

Other members of the Paston family also use literary quotations in their letters. John Paston II's claim that "[w]herffor, late men deme what they wylle, grettest clerkys are nott alwyw wisest men" echoes line 4054 of *The Reeve's Tale*, "The gretteste clerkes been noght wisest men."⁷⁷⁸ Margaret Paston writes that "oftyn tyme rape rueth, and whan a man hath mad such a comenaunte he must kepit, he may not chese," part of which survives as what the *DIMEV* lists as an admonitory couplet in Oxford, Bodleian Library Rawlinson poet. 32 f.54^v:

⁷⁷⁴ *PLI*, p.43

⁷⁷⁵ *MPJLII*, p.828.

⁷⁷⁶ *PLI*, pp.43-44.

⁷⁷⁷ John Paston II uses this phrase following the Battle of Barnet but Davis notes that Friar Brackley also used the word "coisy" (which Davis translates as queasy) in 1459 in a letter to John Paston I. For the letters see *PLI*, p.438 and *PLII*, p.185. Davis, "Style and Stereotypes," pp.12-13.

⁷⁷⁸ *PLI*, p.491 and Chaucer, "The Reeve's Tale", in *Riverside Chaucer*, ed. Benson, l.4054.

“Know ell ere thou knit too fast / For often rape rueth at last.”⁷⁷⁹ John Paston III writes to John Paston II advising that “Fortune wyth hyr smylyng contenans strange / Of all our purpose may mak a sodeyn change,” which appears as a quotation but apparently from a text that no longer survives.⁷⁸⁰ Further to this, there are two occasions in the letters in which literary analogies are used to help characterise an event and an enemy. As regards the first of these, in describing the wedding festivities celebrating the marriage of Margaret of York to Charles, Duke of Burgundy, John Paston III writes to his mother that

Asfor the Dwkys coort, as of lordys, ladys, and gentylwomen, knytyts,
sqwyirs, and gentyllmen, I herd neuer of non lyek to it saue Kyng
Artourys cort.⁷⁸¹

For such an analogy to be effective both writer and recipient must be familiar with descriptions of the Arthurian court. We find “off þe Dethe of Arthur” and “the Greene Knyght” (which is unlikely to be *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* but could feasibly have been an Arthurian text) within John Paston II’s Inventory of English Books and, it would seem, that his brother and mother have either read or listened to these texts.⁷⁸² The second instance calls for more sustained attention in the section that follows.

5.4: The Paston Family and East Anglian Dramatic Culture

The literary allusions made by the Paston family in their letters also include a reference to a character in a Corpus Christi play. In 1478 a J. Whetley wrote to John Paston II with news of the Duke of Suffolk’s actions at the Paston properties of Hellesdon and Drayton. In this letter he states that “for at hys [the Duke of Suffolk] beyng ther þat daye ther was neuer no man þat playd Herrod in Corpus Crysty play better and more agreable to hys pageaunt then he dud.”⁷⁸³ As with the textual quotations and allusions outlined above, the resonance of this analogy relies on the familiarity of both parties with the work referred to.

⁷⁷⁹ *PLI*, p.337. *DIMEV* 3011.

⁷⁸⁰ *PLI*, p.570.

⁷⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p.539.

⁷⁸² *Id.*, p.517.

⁷⁸³ *PLII*, p.426.

However, with this reference to dramatic performance rather than to a written text the connection between reference point, writer, and addressee may not be the circulation of a particular manuscript or text but, rather, that Whetley and John Paston II had attended the same sort of communal performances of the Corpus Christi plays.

As outlined in the introduction to this thesis, East Anglia had an especially rich dramatic culture – or, rather, the extant examples of East Anglia’s dramatic culture are numerous, rich and express a certain regionality. Against the background of the *N-Town Plays*, the Macro Plays (*Mankind*, *Wisdom*, and *The Castle of Perseverance*), the *Croxton Play of the Sacrament*, and the *Digby Mary Magdalene*, Whetley’s to “Herrod in the Corpus Crysty play” indicates a perhaps predictable familiarity with a form of popular dramatic culture.⁷⁸⁴ For John Paston II, this engagement extended beyond watching these performances to supplying an actor for certain choice roles. On 16th April 1473 John Paston II wrote to John Paston III complaining of the disloyalty of his servants,

Plattyng, yowre man, wolde thys daye byd me fare-well to to-morow at Douer, not wythstondyng Thyrston, yowre other man, is from me and John Myryell and W. Woode, whyche promysed yow and Dawbeney, God haue hys sowle, at Castre þat iff ye wolde take hym in to be ageyn wyth me þat than he wold neuer goo fro me; and ther-vppon I haue keypd hym thys iij yere to pleye Seynt Jorge and Robynhod and the shryff off

⁷⁸⁴ For the *N-Town Mary Play* see Peter Meredith, ed., *The “Mary Play”. From the N.Town Manuscript*, (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1997). For the *N-Town Passion Play* see Peter Meredith, ed., *The “Passion Play”. From the N.Town Manuscript*, (London and New York: Longman, 1990). Greg Walker, ed., “Croxton, *The Play of the Sacrament*,” in *Medieval Drama an Anthology*, ed. Greg Walker, (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd., 2000), pp.213-33. Greg Walker, ed., “*Mankind*,” in *Medieval Drama an Anthology*, ed. Greg Walker, (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd., 2000), pp.258-279. For studies of the dramatic culture of East Anglia see, John C. Coldewey, “The non-cycle plays and the East Anglian tradition,” in Richard Beadle, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval English Theatre* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp.190. Other studies that focus on the East Anglian nature of these extant plays include: Victor I. Scherb, *Staging Faith. East Anglian Drama in the Later Middle Ages*, (London: Associated University Presses, 2001); Alan J. Fletcher, “The N-Town plays,” in Beadle, *Medieval English Theatre*, pp. 163-188; Gail McMurray Gibson, *The Theatre of Devotion. East Anglian Drama and Society in the Late Middle Ages*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994).

Notyngham, and now when I wolde haue good horse he is goon in-to
Bernysdale, and I wyth-owt a kepere.⁷⁸⁵

We may infer from this that Woode was not a particularly good servant, appearing to have momentarily left John Paston II when John would have need of him in the obtaining of a horse, however his skills as an actor were such that it was worth keeping him within the Paston household. This, in turn, indicates that there may have been a certain prestige or importance in supplying such a performer for these civic or communal events: that this was, perhaps, a public demonstration of the Pastons' interest in dramatic culture.

If the allusion to Herod shows John Paston II engaging with the kinds of play we would expect members of the East Anglian gentry to have seen, then this note about Woode allows us to glimpse at some of the dramatic culture of the region for which we have very little surviving evidence. As John Marshall notes, this letter "is the only known reference to a play or game of Robin Hood in an East Anglian context in the late Middle Ages."⁷⁸⁶ This is not to suggest that this was the only play of Robin Hood in the region, but, rather, as Marshall highlights, that the slightly different genre of this play means that it may have been "embraced by the generic term 'game', and thus become invisible in the records [...]"⁷⁸⁷ Margaret Paston, following the death of John Fastolf, considers the appropriate Christmas past-times for a household in mourning. Her letter perfectly, and frustratingly, illustrates Marshall's point: "þere were non dysgysynggys nere harping nere lvtynng nere syngyn, nere non lowde dysportys [...]"⁷⁸⁸ We do not know which performances are referred to by Margaret with "dysgysynggys", but clearly the word denotes a further form of dramatic

⁷⁸⁵ *PLI*, p.461. The *MED* gives nine different definitions for "kepere" with most senses of the word pertaining to guarding, protecting or taking responsibility for a person, animal, territory, property or item. "Keper(e) n.," *MED*: https://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/middle-english-dictionary/dictionary/MED24174/track?counter=1&search_id=958592 – accessed 4th May 2019. As such, Woode's name is associated with having responsibility for John II's acquisition of a "good horse".

⁷⁸⁶ John Marshall, "'goon in-to Bernysdale': The Trail of the Paston Robin Hood Play," *Leeds Studies in English*, n.s.29 (1998), p.188.

⁷⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

⁷⁸⁸ *PLI*, p.257.

culture, the household performances of mummings and disguisings. We know, for instance, that Lydgate composed three mummings as Christmas entertainments for Henry VI. Whilst it appears that the Paston household would usually follow suit in their festive activities, Margaret's letter does not tell us what pieces were performed.⁷⁸⁹

Two extant manuscripts containing Robin Hood play-texts have been tentatively linked with the Paston household. Marshall has argued convincingly that Cambridge University Library, MS R.2.64 belonged to the Paston family. This item consists of a single leaf (measuring 251mm x 209mm) and contains "twenty-one couplets of action inferring dialogue" of a Robin Hood play that Marshall calls *Robin Hood and the Sheriff of Nottingham*. Whether the Pastons owned CUL MS R.2.64 or not, the text of *Robin Hood and the Sheriff of Nottingham* was clearly known well-enough by John Paston II to quote it within his letter. As Marshall explains, at one point in the text

Robin, [is] angered by what he sees as Little John's challenge to his authority and courage [...] They part acrimoniously;
But often words they breeden ball
That parted Robin and John;
John is gone to Barn[e]sdale,
The gates he knowes eche one.⁷⁹⁰

The mention of Woode as "goon in-to Bernysdale" may, thus, be a very pointed comment, not only about Woode's failure of service to John Paston II but also as an expression of exasperation at the irony of keeping Woode for his acting skills only to have him embody the part of Little John to John Paston II's Robin.

The second manuscript to have been associated with the Paston household is Cambridge University Library, MS Ee.4.35.1, which Thomas Ohlgren argues

⁷⁸⁹ Claire Sponsler, "Mummings and Entertainments: Introduction," in John Lydgate, *Mummings and Entertainments*, ed. Claire Sponsler, (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publication, 2010): <http://d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/text/sponsler-lydgate-mummings-and-entertainments-introduction> - accessed 27th August 2018.

⁷⁹⁰ Marshall, "The Paston Robin Hood Play," p.201. Marshall quotes from R.B. Dobson and J. Taylor, *Rymes of Robyn Hood: An Introduction to the English Outlaw*, (London: Heinemann, 1976), p.142, stanza 11.

belonged to one of the Paston's most prominent servants (and eventual son/brother-in-law) Richard Calle.⁷⁹¹ CUL Ee.4.35.1 is a manuscript miscellany written in a practised hand, if not that of a professional scribe, and Ohlgren describes it as "a homemade miscellany".⁷⁹² The manuscript contains moral pieces such as "The Seven Virtues and Seven Deadly Sins," a short work on the ten commandments, short prayers, alongside *The Cheylde and Hes Stepdame*, *Robyn Hode [and the Potter]*, and *The Kyng and the Barker*.⁷⁹³ It also has a text titled *The Expences of Flesche at the Mariage of my Ladey Margaret þt she had owt off Eynghonde*, which probably refers to the wedding of Margaret of York in Burgundy, that is, the wedding attended by John Paston II and John Paston III. Whether the Robin Hood tale was included here because it was similarly redolent of particular events within the household or whether Calle just enjoyed ballads cannot be known.

Whether these tales of Robin Hood held particular significance to the Pastons, either in the details of their content or in the potential they had to be crowd-pleasing and uproarious and thus carry cultural cache for those gentry families that supplied players or playing places or financed performances, is unclear. What these instances do highlight are those "games" that existed alongside the more sophisticated plays for which medieval East Anglia is famous. The moments in the letters also show the practical role the Pastons, as members of the gentry, took in staging these games and plays, by retaining servants so that they might perform in these events.

⁷⁹¹ *Id.* pp.185-217. Thomas H. Ohlgren, "Richard Call, the Pastons, and the Manuscript Context of *Robin Hood and the Potter*:" <http://web.ics.purdue.edu/~ohlgrn/RobinHood/Paston.htm> - accessed 26th August 2018.

⁷⁹² Ohlgren, "Richard Call".

⁷⁹³ *Robyn Hode [and the Potter]* is printed in Joseph Ritson (ed.), *Robin Hood: A Collection of all the Ancient Poems, Songs and Ballads now extant, relative to that celebrated Outlaw*, vol.1 (London: Egerton and Johnson, 1795. Repr. London: William Pickering, 1832), pp.81-96. It has subsequently been edited by Stephen Knight and Thomas H. Ohlgren in their collection *Robin Hood and Other Outlaw Tales*, (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 1997): <http://d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/text/robin-hood-and-the-potter-introduction> - accessed 26th August 2018.

5.5: The Pastons as Poets

The most famous example of verse in the Paston Letters is the Valentine's letter written by Margery Brews to John Paston III. Whilst the letter is, I believe, more rhetorically sophisticated than hitherto explored by critics, the exploration of this letter and its verses needs to be reconsidered against the other instances of self-composed poetry in the letters and the wider use of courtly love lyrics by members of the Paston family and their social and cultural network.

There are a handful of instances across the Paston documents in which members of the family supplement their communication of news or instruction with a few lines of verse, which are often apparently of their own composition. William Paston III wrote to John Paston III updating him on a meeting with a potential wife whilst at a wedding in Eton. Towards the end of his report William discusses his "comynge from Eton" and includes two lines of verse in Latin, which he rather proudly states as being of "myn own makynge".⁷⁹⁴ John III was also the recipient of another letter in which one of his brothers composed some lines of doggerel verse. On 8th November 1472 John Paston II wrote to his brother with an update on a hawk he had bought, "wherffor preenes en gree, / þer is noon othere remedee".⁷⁹⁵ The wording of the second line of the couplet echoes line 1216 of Chaucer's *The Knight's Tale*, "Ther nas noon oother remedie ne reed."⁷⁹⁶ I have already discussed (in section three of this chapter) the appearance of another pair of lines from *The Knight's Tale* in a letter from Agnes Paston to John Paston I, in which Agnes' "Þis worlde is but a þorough-fare and ful of woo" matches with Chaucer's "This world ny but a thurghfare ful of wol", a phrase that also became the key refrain in Lydgate's 'A Thoroughfare of Woe'.⁷⁹⁷ The appearance of another line from Chaucer's *The Knight's Tale* in a Paston's letter is perhaps unsurprising, given their connection to the Bodley manuscript (discussed in Chapter 3.III of this thesis) and, thus, their likely ownership of *The Canterbury Tales*. However, what we start to see, in this instance, is a member of the Paston family engaging with similar writerly practices as the author of

⁷⁹⁴ *PLI*, p.651.

⁷⁹⁵ *Id.*, p.452.

⁷⁹⁶ Chaucer, *The Knight's Tale*, (l.2847), p.42. Lydgate, 'A Thoroughfare of Woe', in *MPJLII*, pp.822-828.

⁷⁹⁷ *PLI*, pp.43-44.

the verse on f.1 of Sloane 1212 (a composition constructed from extracts of Lydgate's the *Temple of Glass*, and the writer of "An Unkind Mistress" in London, Lambeth MS 732 who, as Rossell Hope Robbins describes, "composed from a corpus of kennings" and brought together "the clichéd poetic formulas of his age."⁷⁹⁸ This final section of the thesis will explore the ways in which a small number of the Paston family utilized these well-known "clichés" and "poetic formulas" in their letters to compose new poetry, as well as investigating the possible social functions of these new verses within the conventions of patronage and courtship.

5.5.i: Poetic interjections in the letters

As I have introduced directly above, on 8th November 1472 John Paston II included in a letter to his younger brother two lines of verse, "wherffor preenes en gree, / þer is noon othere remedee".⁷⁹⁹ John III had been requesting the procurement of a goshawk or tercel for at least a month. On 16th October, John III laments how his elder brother forgets him and his hawk, stating how he is "fere fro jee, fer for hert".⁸⁰⁰ The scenario bears a striking number of similarities with another episode of epistolary verse in the letters, this being John Pympe's lyric to John Paston II made in light of similar requests for the procurement of a horse.⁸⁰¹ We will go on to look at this more sophisticated example of verse in a moment but both incidents indicate that John Paston II could lead individuals to feel neglected and frustrated. John II's couplet may be intended to diffuse his brother's temper especially as the hawk he sends "woll neuer be nowght". Whilst he promises John III that he will get a better hawk if he can he refuses to apologise for the quality of the bird or the delay instead, almost belligerently, asking that John III "thanke me for it".⁸⁰² The couplet, then, seems intended to placate his brother whilst absolving himself: princes agree that there is no other

⁷⁹⁸ Rossell Hope Robbins, "A Pitiless Mistress," in *Secular Lyrics of the XIVth and XVth Centuries*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1902), pp.141-142. Rossell Hope Robbins, "An Unkind Mistress (Lambeth MS. 432)," *Modern Language Notes* 69.8 (1954), p.558.

⁷⁹⁹ *PLI*, p.452.

⁸⁰⁰ *Id.* p.582.

⁸⁰¹ *PLII*, pp.417-418.

⁸⁰² *PLI*, p.452.

remedy. The content of the verse is quite brusque but the form of delivery could be seen to mirror the sententiae of John Paston III's "fere fro jee, fer for hert".⁸⁰³ However, in the same letter, John II continues on to another piece of news that is also presented in rhyming couplets, and this extends the potentially quite facetious use of verse into a more jovial exercise.

In response to a person named Sampson's being "ageyn in favore wyth my lorde and my ladye" John II writes

Neuerthelesse I am sorey þat Rygge
 Hathe bytyn hym soo by the bygge,
 And that lytell Qwyall
 Pynchyd hys pendaunt so nyghe hys tayle.⁸⁰⁴

Unfortunately, the details of this episode are unclear. Rygge and Qwyall do not appear anywhere else in the extant letters and much of the meaning behind the euphemistic phrases, such as "Pynchyd hys pendaunt so nyghe hys tayle" and, possibly, "Hathe bytyn hym soo by the bygge", are lost to us.⁸⁰⁵ We are able to reconstruct a sense of an unfortunate argument, or an altercation that John Paston II states to regret. However, whatever the incident, John Paston II reports it with a light-hearted poetic commentary perhaps even adding a bawdy tone in the final line. The verse does not seem to be intended as a serious piece of poetry, the metre is erratic, running from ten syllables, eight, six, and finishing on ten, with the stresses shifting across the lines. The poetry is, in almost every sense of the word, informal. John Paston II's verse appears, here, as a cheerful interlude in his letter. He concludes this letter, stating how he "woll sleepe an howere þe lengere to-morow by-cawse I wrote so longe and late to-nyght".⁸⁰⁶ It would seem that, although John Paston II does not apologise to

⁸⁰³ *Id.* p.582.

⁸⁰⁴ *Id.*, p.452. Sampson is referred to in *PLI*, pp. 442, 452, 586, and 654.

⁸⁰⁵ The *MED* gives five definitions or usages of "pendaunt" with the two likely being punned here being "1 (a) The hanging end of a belt, girdle or garter, often richly ornamented; also the ornament itself" or (although this is if the word were plural) "5 [...] the testes." *MED*, "pendaunt, n.": https://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/middle-english-dictionary/dictionary/MED32812/track?counter=1&search_id=1000408 - accessed 13th May 2019.

⁸⁰⁶ *PLI.*, p.452

his brother for the feelings of neglect or ingratitude and frustration that have passed between them, this emphasis on the time taken to write the letter, the implication of effort in the composition of these six lines of verse, the increasingly playful tone as the focus moves away from the subject of the hawk, are intended to appease John Paston III and improve brotherly accord.

Whilst we will come on to look at more carefully designed poetry in the letters in a moment, John Paston I provides an almost equally informal but more overtly intimate example of poetic interjection in his letters, leaving a unique and enticing example of his engagement with literary culture, more specifically, the culture of prison poets and the complaint lyric. John Paston I, in his last extant letter to Margaret Paston, in a seemingly uncharacteristic moment of playfulness, includes twenty lines of his own doggerel.⁸⁰⁷ With a focus quite typical of John Paston I, the verse begins with an item of business:

Pampyng and I haue piked your male,
 And take out pesis v,
 For vpon trust of Calles promise we may [sone] onthryve.
 And if Call bring vs hedir xx li.,
 Ye shall haue your peses ayen good and round [...].⁸⁰⁸

The rhyming couplets (if we presume that “li.” was intended to be read as “pound”) give a playful tone to these five lines on the business of a loan, with the opening line establishing a slight silliness to the proceeding ones. The MED defines “pikenmale” as to “steal from (someone’s) bag or wallet”.⁸⁰⁹ The items apparently “stolen” are five “pesis”, which are most likely to be coins.⁸¹⁰ However, it is unlikely that this declaration of theft is intended to be taken seriously. Much like with John Paston II’s aforementioned verses to John Paston III, verse and the more artistic conceits licensed by the poetic form appear to be

⁸⁰⁷ *Id.*, p.145.

⁸⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸⁰⁹ MED, “Piken”: https://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/middle-english-dictionary/dictionary/MED33334/track?counter=1&search_id=921280 – accessed 26th April 2019.

⁸¹⁰ MED, “Peis”: https://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/middle-english-dictionary/dictionary/MED32750/track?counter=9&search_id=921280 – accessed 26th April 2019.

employed to defuse a sense of tension, although, here, that tension is not between the writer and the recipient.

The letter was written on 20th September 1465, following Margaret's return to Norfolk from her visit to John Paston I in the Fleet prison. The letter in which this verse appears begins with John I thanking Margaret for "he gret chere þat ye mad me here".⁸¹¹ However, much of this long letter is about the management of the family's estates as well as detailed instructions regarding the various documents needed to both procure his freedom and mount a legal defence against William de la Pole and his increasing threats to the Paston estates of Hellesdon and Drayton. The contexts surrounding these verses are quite desperate, with even the usually indomitable Margaret showing physical signs of stress.⁸¹² The inclusion of the verse at the end of the letter returns us to the sense of affection and comfort expressed by John at the beginning of his letter:

And loke ye be mery and take no thought,
For this ryme is cunningly wrought.
My Lord Persy and all this house
Recomaund them to yow, dogge, catte and mowse,
And wysse ye had be here stille,
For the sey ye are a good gille.⁸¹³

Furthermore, aside from the advice to be merry and expressing the wish for Margaret to still be there with him, John I appeals to the pride Margaret often has in her social status.⁸¹⁴ "Lord Percy" is most likely to be Henry Percy, 4th Earl of Northumberland (c.1449-1489) who had been imprisoned in the Fleet prison (with four servants to attend him) following the battle of Towton.⁸¹⁵ The Percys had the "reputation as the leading northern family" and one can imagine the flattery involved in Lord Percy and his servants asking to be remembered to

⁸¹¹ *PLI*, p.145.

⁸¹² *Id.*, pp.134-136.

⁸¹³ *Id.*, p.145.

⁸¹⁴ For an illustrative example of the numerous instances in which Margaret articulates or demonstrates her pride, see her account of Margaret of Anjou's visit to Norwich in 1453, *PLI*, pp. 249-250.

⁸¹⁵ Steven G. Ellis, "Percy, Henry, fourth earl of Northumberland (c.1449-1489)," *ODNB*: <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/21935> – accessed 26th April 2019.

Margaret as well as their stating her to be “a good gille”.⁸¹⁶ Such an acknowledgement may even provide greater comfort than John I’s request that she “be mery and take no thought”. John I was imprisoned under claims that the Pastons were not gentry and were, thus, illegally claiming ownership of manor estates. To be recognised by the Earl of Northumberland, even if in prison, might go some way to making light of the accusations about the social status of the Pastons.⁸¹⁷

The verse is surprising for the light it sheds on the character of John Paston I and his relationship with Margaret. However, within its slightly silly, humorous and affectionate tone, we can also trace a synthesis of the texts and literary culture on display within the family that is not visible elsewhere in the letters. As with John Paston II’s poetic interlude in his letter to John Paston III, the metrical feet are erratic, ranging from, most commonly, seven syllables, to a rather ungainly sixteen. The rhythm of the meter is also inconsistent and undisciplined, although a criticism has often been levelled by scholars at the works of John Lydgate.⁸¹⁸ However, whilst we might struggle to find literary

⁸¹⁶ *Ibid.* and *PLI*, p.145. *MED*, “gil n(2) (c) girl, woman; god - , good girl, agreeable companion,”: https://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/middle-english-dictionary/dictionary/MED18540/track?counter=3&search_id=1006402 – accessed 14th May 2019.

⁸¹⁷ These claims about the Pastons’ heritage also arose in 1448, when Margaret and her mother-in-law were called “right strong whores” by John Wyndham in the streets of Norwich. After which a sword fight broke out between the Paston servants and Wyndham’s men. See *PLI*, pp.223-225.

⁸¹⁸ The proto-poet Laureate confesses to his own short-comings in the *Troy-Book*, “For wel wot I moche þing is wrong, / Falsly metrid, boþe of short and long,” although this is likely to be the embodiment of the usual tropes of writerly humility. See the following seminal works in which Lydgate’s meter is discussed: Joseph Ritson, *Bibliographia Poetica: a Catalogue of Engleish [sic] poets of the twelfth, thirteenth, fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth centuries, with a short account of their works* (London: C. Roworth, for G. and W. Nicol, 1802); Henry Bergen, ed. *Lydgate’s Fall of Princes, Part I: Introductory Note, The Metre, Boccaccio’s and Laurence’s Prefaces, and Books I and II*, (Washington: The Carnegie Institution of Washington, 1923), pp.xxvii-xlvi; Alain Renoir, *The Poetry of John Lydgate* (London: Routledge and K. Paul, 1967); Walter Schirmer, *John Lydgate: A Study in the Culture of the XVth Century*, trans. Ann E. Keep (London: Methuen, 1961) esp. p.70; Schick, *Temple of Glass*, pp.liv-lx. For an overview of this scholarship see William T. Rossiter, “The Marginalization of John Lydgate,” in *Marginalia* 1 (2005): <http://merg.soc.srcf.net/journal/05margins/rossiter.php> - accessed 13th May 2019 and Rossiter, “Disgraces the name and patronage of his Chaucer’: Echoes and Reflections in Lydgate’s Courtly Poetry,” in *Standing in the Shadow of the Master?*

templates or direct textual influences for John I's doggerel he is, if perhaps only contextually, engaging with prison poetry, or what Robert Epstein, calls the "poetry of exile and imprisonment".⁸¹⁹ The most famous fifteenth-century example of this kind of poetry, are those verses written by Charles d'Orléans and, arguably, John de la Pole, which has been discussed in the introduction to this thesis (see chapter sub-section 0.3.ii). The verses of these men were likely written about thirty years before John I came to write his doggerel but are also written by men of higher status and who formed part of a coterie of writers.⁸²⁰ Epstein discusses another writer of such lyrics who was imprisoned in Fleet prison in 1463, two years before John I, George Ashby.

In "A Prisoner's Reflection", Ashby describes the Fleet prison as "Pryson properly ys a sepulture I Of lyuyng men, with strong lokkes thereon".⁸²¹ Epstein paraphrases the difficulties experienced by Ashby as the "of loss of position: poverty, debt, loss of property, loss of friendship. Also [...], Ashby seems equally distressed and puzzled by his loss of patronage."⁸²² Whilst Ashby was a clerk, Epstein could easily be referring to someone like John Paston I when he writes that poets such as Hoccleve (to whom he compares Ashby) and Ashby undergo a

crises of identity more destabilizing and more novel than anything expressed in the erotic complaints of James I or Charles d'Orléans. The reasons lie less in what they suffer than in who they are; specifically, the

Chaucerian Influences and Interpretations," Kathleen A. Bishop, ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2010), pp.2-27.

⁸¹⁹ Robert Epstein, 'Prisoners of Reflection: The Fifteenth-Century Poetry of Exile and Imprisonment,' *Exemplaria*, 15:1 (2003), pp.159-198. See also, Mariana Neilly, "William de la Pole's Poetic 'Parlement': The Political Lyrics of Bodleian MS Fairfax 16," in *Authority and Diplomacy from Dante to Shakespeare*, Jason Powell and William T. Rossiter, eds. (Surrey: Ashgate, 2013), pp.57-68; and, although a study of a later period, Ruth Ahnert, *The Rise of Prison Literature in the Sixteenth Century* (Cambridge: CUP, 2013).

⁸²⁰ Derek Pearsall, "The Literary Milieu of Charles of Orléans and the Duke of Suffolk, and the authorship of the Fairfax Sequence," *Charles d'Orléans in England, 1415-1440* (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2000), pp.145-156.

⁸²¹ George Ashby, "A Prisoner's Reflections," in *A Prisoner's Reflections*, in *George Ashby's Poems*, ed. Mary Bateson (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Triibner, 1899), ll.344-45. As quoted in Epstein, 'Prisoners of Reflection,' p.194.

⁸²² Epstein, 'Prisoners of Reflection,' p.194.

prime difference is class. Hoccleve and Ashby exist within a courtly culture in which they can construct themselves only in address and analogy to royal patrons.⁸²³

John Paston I's social status places him between Ashby and William de la Pole in his experience of life in prison. He does not have the number of servants enjoyed by the Earl of Northumberland but seems to be allowed attendants, such as Pampying. However, Paston, like Ashby, is dependent on the favour of powerful patrons and his inclusion of the Lord Percy in his verse similarly constructs both himself and Margaret Paston in relation to a royal (or aristocratic) patron.

However, whilst Ashby's experience of the Fleet prison might be more akin to that of John Paston I than it is to that of Charles d'Orleans or William de la Pole, the verses produced by each of them differ greatly. Ashby writes a sophisticated lyric that, as Epstein argues, shows the influence of Hoccleve's *Complaint*.⁸²⁴ Ashby's verses are the product of a study of literature, of a writer carefully seeking to engage with both content and form to find his own work within that of another poet. These lines of verses are the only evidence that survives for John Paston I's engagement with literary culture and whilst their existence denotes a familiarity with poetic forms that hint at the reading of works such as those found in Items Three and Five in his son's inventory of English books, the resulting poetry does not demonstrate a studied approach to such works. John Paston I's doggerel does not seek to reflect, lament or complain, rather, it appears as the product of an activity that emulates his imprisoned contemporaries and near contemporaries but without, necessarily, a deeper interest in the content and form of the art. He appears to write this verse out of an affectionate desire to comfort his wife, to effectively conclude on a cheerful (and silly) note a long letter about extremely serious threats to the Pastons and their estates.

⁸²³ *Id.*, p.198.

⁸²⁴ *Id.* p.194.

5.5.ii: Patronage and poetry: the Lyrics of John Pympe and John Paston III

So far, I have argued that members of the Paston family use verse in their letters to prompt a humorous or affectionate emotional response in their intended reader and that the form of the verse is often undisciplined or rudimentary. However, there are examples of poetic interjection in the letters born of a more studied undertaking, which bear certain similarities with John Paston III's lyrics to the Earl of Oxford.⁸²⁵ The writing of John Pympe to John Paston II, as we will see, echoes John Paston III's poems to the Earl of Oxford, in both purpose and style, but also provides points of important contrast.

For John Paston III we have evidence of a more studied approach to the writing of poetry. F.27 of British Library, Additional 43491 contains a draft poem that Davis dates to sometime after 1471. In his description of the document Davis summarises the debates surrounding the writer of these verses, with Gairdner first suggesting that "they may have been from the Countess of Oxford to her husband after he escaped abroad in 1471 [...]. Or they may have been the production of Lydgate writing in the name of a lady parted from her lord."⁸²⁶ However, Davis notes that numerous corrections in the document indicate that the poem "is clearly a draft of an original composition", with the work being "entirely in John III's hand".⁸²⁷ Another document, f.138 of BL, Additional 34889, contains a poem in the hand of John III, six stanzas of "facetious" verse in Latin addressed to a 'Nigro Militi' or 'Black Knight'.⁸²⁸ Internal evidence indicates that this work was meant for the Earl of Oxford:

Non decet sinescallo tam magni comitis
Vt Comes Oxonie [...]
[It does not behove a steward of so great an earl
As the Earl of Oxford [...]]⁸²⁹

⁸²⁵ Margery Brews' Valentine's letter is one such example but this will be discussed in the final section of this chapter.

⁸²⁶ Gairdner quoted in *PLI*, p.571. James Gairdner, *The Paston Letters A.D. 1422-1509, Volume 6*, (London: Chatto & Windus, 1904) p.67.

⁸²⁷ *PLI*, p.571.

⁸²⁸ *Id.*, p.631.

⁸²⁹ *Id.*, p.632. Translated by Dr John-Mark Philo, Norwich: University of East Anglia, 2016.

Davis, though, questions whether John III wrote the verses “on his own account or for a colleague in Oxford’s service”.⁸³⁰ In either instance it is significant that this member of the family was composing poetry for an audience outside of the immediate family, which suggests clearly that there was felt to be something socially important at stake in the writing of such verses.⁸³¹ However, the two lyrics written by John Paston III, whilst potentially written for the same recipient (a debate I shall shortly go on to describe in more details), are written in slightly different registers and perform slightly different functions within the patronage relationship, with the Latin poem sharing numerous similarities on these points with John Pympe’s verses to John Paston II.

Over the course of 1477, when John Paston II was in Calais, a John Pympe sent John II at least six letters, only three of which survive. His sixth correspondence of that year includes a seemingly exasperated signature, “By yowr John Pympe, thys beyng the vj lettyr that I have send yow”.⁸³² In his earliest surviving letter he inquires as to the state of things in Calais, discussing the benefits of a truce with the King of France, asking if he could pass on any “tydyngys or other thing to the partyes that were wont to warme theym by yowr fyre”, and updating John II on the price of barley.⁸³³ It would seem, though, that in each of these letters (including those now lost) there was also a repeated request for John Paston II to secure a horse for John Pympe, preferably a large horse that he would have “for the pleasure and not for the were, but if he myht be for both.”⁸³⁴ Much like John Paston II’s own response at not hearing from his mother about his attempt to purchase the books of James Gloys and his subsequent repeated request for updates, Pympe “mervyall[s]” at the silence.⁸³⁵ In Pympe’s fifth letter he states a worry that he may have displeased John Paston II and may not be receiving responses for the following reasons:

⁸³⁰ *PLI*, p.631.

⁸³¹ *Ibid.*

⁸³² *PLII*, p.418.

⁸³³ *Id.*, p.415.

⁸³⁴ *Id.*, p.417.

⁸³⁵ For John Paston II’s own exasperation at the absence of news on his purchasing of the books of James Gloys see *PLI*, p.487.

By-cause that I have wrytyn to yow iij long letterys which as yet be answereles I wote not whethyr that the length of matyr acvmbred yow, or ellys the simpylnes of the effect displesid yow, or ellys that ye have vtterly refused the proferys of my pore seruyce and frendeship.⁸³⁶

The apparently original poetry in the letter that Pympe next sends to John Paston II seems, therefore, an attempt at presenting his request in a different form, one that might perhaps correct any potential displeasure at “the simpylnes of the effect”.

Pympe corrects this “simpylnes of effect” by writing his lament at Paston’s neglect in rhyme royal:

Fresh amoureuse sihtys of cuntreys ferre and straunge
 Have all fordoone yowr old affeccion.
 In plesurys new yowr hert dooth soore and raunge
 So hye and ferre that, like as the fawcon
 Which is a-lofte tellith scorne to loke a-down
 On hym that wont was her federys to pyke and ympe,
 Ryht so forgotyn ye have yowr pore Pympe,⁸³⁷

Already, we can see that, as with the poetry of John Paston III, the endeavour is more studied than the poetic interjections previously discussed in this section and it is the *effort* of this work that appears an integral component to Pympe’s request. We can also see the articulation of literary effort in John Paston III’s latin poem to the Earl of Oxford. Here, John Paston III states that it is unbecoming of a servant of so great a knight as the Earl of Oxford to address him in anything other than Latin and,

Igitur ille pauperculus predicti Comitatus Magni sinescallus magni
 comitatus Nuncupatur Norfolk latinis in verbis
 [Therefore that poor little great steward of the aforementioned great
 Earl is announced as Norfolk in Latin words]⁸³⁸

⁸³⁶ *Id.*, p.416.

⁸³⁷ *Id.*, p.417.

⁸³⁸ *PLI*, p.632. Translated by Dr John-Mark Philo, Norwich: University of East Anglia, 2016.

Both writers stress their lowliness in relation to the status of the addressee whilst seeking to ameliorate that distance or demonstrate their worthiness of the attention of the addressee through either silently or explicitly highlighting the artifice in the mode of their address. Diane Watt notes that, according to the “high” style of medieval *ars rhetorica*, the language of letters to patrons or social betters should reflect the social divide between writer and recipient:

The greater the social divide between writer and recipient, the more exaggerated the formality of the language and the more extreme the writer’s appeal to the condescension of the recipient.⁸³⁹

John Paston III’s statement about his decision to write in Latin clearly speaks to these ideas. However, the deference coded into each of these verses and these statements of effort are two threads through the articulation of a transactional relationship. We can see this most explicitly in Pympe’s verse, where his deferential tone only barely hides a criticism of John Paston II’s conduct, accusing him of being distracted by new sights and suggesting that Paston has achieved a new height of social success and so forgetting the lowlier Pympe.⁸⁴⁰ This configuration of power within the poem implies that John Paston II is failing to conduct his duties within an implicitly agreed relationship with Pympe, and the poem engages with ideas of honour and shame and with Pympe’s need of the patronage of John Paston II, playing to its addressee’s vanity but also highlighting that it would be dishonourable for Paston to not fulfil his promise.

John Paston III’s latin poem, however seeks something slightly different from his patron, forgiveness as well as action. Whilst the first seven lines of the poem consider the most appropriate ways in which to address the Earl of Oxford, the remaining four stanzas address the legal case surrounding a man, named Langdon, refusing to pay some monies “which is a great impediment to our work”.⁸⁴¹ The verse thus appears to be an explanation of why John Paston III

⁸³⁹ Watt, “Language of Service,” p.127.

⁸⁴⁰ Pympe uses a formula of deference and criticism that is reminiscent of Lydgate’s complaint of penury to Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester, in *Letter to Gloucester*, which, in turn, echoes Chaucer’s *Complaint to his Purse*. See MPJLII pp.665-667 and RC p.656.

⁸⁴¹ *Ibid.*

cannot carry out his duties to the Earl of Oxford. The decision to write in Latin, then, seems to both echo the language in which court cases might be conducted but also seems to be penitential.⁸⁴² John III is not apologetic in his failure to achieve for the Earl of Oxford the task that appears to be behind this court case but the deferential language and this aforementioned highlighting of the effort taken to write the verse may be intended to reduce any displeasure the Earl might have in John's failure to resolve the matter himself. Furthermore, John III needs the Earl to take action, asking him to write a letter to Langdon, telling "that little man [to] fully release his store of money".⁸⁴³

Both of these lyrics echo the poetic interjections in the letters of John Pastons I and II and William Paston III but the more dedicated attendance the form and style of Pympe and John III is an important contributing factor to the navigation of their relationships with their patrons. For both these writers, the conventions of lament and of courtly love poetry provide a language of service and articulate an expectation of reciprocity; their verses speak as much to practices and conceptions of patronage as to literary and social configurations of love. This link between courtly love lyrics and patronage is, arguably, most successfully expressed in John Paston III's English poem.⁸⁴⁴

Whilst Davis has shown the English poem to be in the hand of John Paston III and has made a convincing argument for this Paston being the composer of the poem, the reasons underpinning Gairdner's interpretation of the provenance of the poem are important as they highlight some key tropes of the language of service within both the letters and the poetry of John Paston III. It is clear from the opening address of the poem, when combined with the generic mode of a lament, why Gairdner may have concluded that the poem was written by, or ventriloquized the voice of, a woman:

⁸⁴² For a discussion of the ways in which the language of the English legal courts changed over the course of the late fourteenth century and how those changes were linked to social status and the creation of "court elites" see W.M. Ormrod, 'The Use of English: Language, Law, and Political Culture in Fourteenth-Century England', *Speculum*, lxxviii (2003), pp. 750–87.

⁸⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁸⁴⁴ *Id.*, pp.572-3.

My ryght good lord, most knyghtly gentyll knyght.

[...]

For when I cownt and mak a reknyng
 Betwyx my lyfe, my dethe, and my desyer,
 My lyfe, alas, it seruyth of no thyng,
 Sythe wyth your pertyng depertyd my plesyer.
 Wyshyng youyr presence setyth me on fyer,
 But then your absence dothe my hert so cold
 That for the peyne I not me wher to hold.⁸⁴⁵

However, Gairdner, in attributing the poem to the Countess of Oxford or to Lydgate writing at the request of a “lady parted from her lord”, clearly overlooks the gendered pronouns elsewhere in the poem.⁸⁴⁶ The second stanza, quoted above, is preceded with these lines:

But wher a man is wyth a feuyr shake,
 Now hot, now cold, as fallyth by auenture,
 He in hys mynd coniecte wyll and take
 The nyghest meane to worche for hys cuyre,
 More pacyently hys peynys to endure;
 And ryght so I, so it not yow dysplese,
 Wryght in thys wyse my peynys to apease.⁸⁴⁷

Here, then, and much like in Pympe’s poem to John Paston II and John III’s Latin verses to the Earl of Oxford, Paston deploys the language and modes of courtly love literature to construct his position in the relationship between patron and patronized. He writes in rhyme royal, remaining consistent to the parameters of this form (maintaining the iambic pentameter and the rhyme scheme) over the course of his poem, unlike the more undisciplined verses of his father and brothers.

Furthermore these verses by John Paston III present an explicit synthesis of his reading, overtly recalling some of the texts already discussed in Chapter Three

⁸⁴⁵ *Id.*, pp. 571-573.

⁸⁴⁶ Gairdner quoted in *PLI*, p.571. Gairdner, *Paston Letters*, 6, p.67.

⁸⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

of this thesis. In the above extract, Paston's illness and the impetus to write these verses echoes the love-sick narrators of Chaucerian dream visions and complaints. Chaucer's own *Book of the Duchess*, *House of Fame*, *Parliament of Fowls* and *Legend of Good Women* (the last two of which, as we have seen, were owned by John Paston II) feature writers made restless and sleepless by love (as does another complaint owned by John Paston II, *La Belle Dame sans Mercy*). John Clanvowe's *The Boke of Cupide* (which appears alongside the *Parliament of Fowls* and the *Temple of Glass* in three extant manuscripts) also featured a love-sick narrator.⁸⁴⁸ However, Paston's work most explicitly draws on Lydgate's *Complaint of the Black Knight* (which also circulated alongside these slightly longer dream visions and complaints).⁸⁴⁹ Line 811 of Book II of Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde* reads "Now hoot, now cold; but thus, bi-twixen tweye".⁸⁵⁰ Lydgate extends this image of the feverish lover, in his *Complaint of the Black Knight*, to fourteen lines:

Now hote as fire, now colde as ashes dede,
 Now hote for colde, now cold for hete ageyn,
 Now colde as ise, now as coles rede
 For hete I bren; and thus betwext tweyn
 I possed am, and al forcast in peyn,
 So that my hete pleynly, as I fele,
 Of grevouse colde ys cause everydele.⁸⁵¹

The repetition of "now", "hote" and "cold", and the prevalence of the single-syllable words, evokes the restlessness of the lover, the discomfort and displacement brought about by the sickness. This restlessness and sense of hopelessness also appears in Paston's poem in his articulation of the movement

⁸⁴⁸ John Clanvowe, "The Boke of Cupide, God of Love", edited by Dana M. Symons in her book *Chaucerian Dream Visions and Complaints*, (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 2004), ll.31-35. See Table IV in the Appendix for brief descriptions of the Chaucerian manuscripts in which *The Boke of Cupide* appears: Bodleian, Bodley 638; Bodleian, Arch. Selden B.24 (SC 3354); Bodleian, Tanner 346.

⁸⁴⁹ Again, see Table IV in the Appendix, Lydgate's *Complaint of the Black Knight* is extant in the following Chaucerian manuscripts listed there: Bodleian, Bodley 638; Bodleian, Digby 181 (SC 1782); Bodleian, Fairfax 16 (SC 3896); Cambridge, Magdalene College Pepys 2006; Bodleian, Arch. Selden B.24 (SC 3354); and Bodleian, Tanner 346.

⁸⁵⁰ *RC* p.500.

⁸⁵¹ *MPJLII* pp.392, ll.232-238.

from hot to cold, the emphasis of the two metrical feet through the use of monosyllabic words, hurries along the rhythm of the line; the disorder of the narrator's physical state is made more urgent through this emphasis of the iambic pentameter. The final turn of the line, "as fallyth by auenture", elongates the remaining feet of the pentameter, with the rhythm echoing the content of line as the narrator resigns himself to fate almost with a sigh. John Paston III has taken the form, style and "the clichéd poetic formulas of his age" to write his own complaint, returning the language of service from the conventions of courtly love lyrics to the wider courtly world of patronage.⁸⁵²

John Paston III was not the only gentry poet to engage with this popular genre of poetry in this writerly way. The Findern manuscript (CUL MS Ff.1.6), which contains, among other texts, the *Parliament of Birds*, *La Belle Dame sans Mercy*, and *The Book of Cupid*, also contains twenty-four lyrics written by amateur poets, many of which pick up on the sense of lament at work in the opening movements of these longer poems by Chaucer, Lydgate, Roos, and Clanvowe.⁸⁵³ One such scribe writes on fol. 139r of the manuscript,

Full of thought, of joy desperate,
To my hert making my moone,
How I am the most infortunat,
And how Fortune his cruell hate
Hath to me caste and broght hit soo
That I am come for wele to woo.⁸⁵⁴

The sense of anguish we find here can also be seen in Chaucer's, Lydgate's and Clanvowe's work, as well as that of John Paston III. Sarah McNamer traces a number of themes that runs across these lyrics of the Findern manuscript one

⁸⁵² Rossell Hope Robbins, "A Pitiless Mistress," in *Secular Lyrics of the XIVth and XVth Centuries*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1902), pp.141-142. Rossell Hope Robbins, "An Unkind Mistress (Lambeth MS. 432)," *Modern Language Notes* 69.8 (1954), p.558. For one of the foundational discussions of the emergence of the language of courtly love from the wider social constructs of the court see C.S. Lewis, *The Allegory of Love: A Study in Medieval Tradition* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1936).

⁸⁵³ See the following article for a study on the lyrics in the Findern manuscript. Sarah McNamer, "Female Authors, Provincial Settings: The Re-versing of Courtly Love in the Findern Manuscript," *Viator* 22 (1991), pp.279-310.

⁸⁵⁴ As quoted in McNamer, "Re-versing", p.308.

of which is that “it is assumed that external circumstances are fixed: the poet’s project is thus to effect internal change which will make such circumstances bearable.”⁸⁵⁵ John Paston III does not write this verse as a lament for an absent lover, rather, he is writing to one of his most powerful patrons, the Earl of Oxford, most likely after the Earl has fled into exile following Edward IV’s return to the throne of England in 1471. Here, then, the dream visions, complaint poetry and lyrics that appear in his brother’s library, have been repurposed to articulate an anxiety and impotence regarding their place within the court but we must turn to the wider social and political contexts if we are to gain further insight into these matters that seemingly prompt and underpin the poetry of John Paston III.

Davis dates the English poem to “probably after 1471” on the evidence of a number of internal features, including changes in number of John III’s linguistic forms, concluding that “[t]he general style of writing is like that of letters written in the early seventies”.⁸⁵⁶ Gairdner’s suggestion that the poem might have been associated with the Countess of Oxford stems from the style and content of the poem, in which that absence of the writer’s lord is lamented, and information that the Earl of Oxford had “escaped abroad in 1471”, and whilst this attribution of the writing of the poem is dubious the context surrounding its composition may hold.⁸⁵⁷ The Earl of Oxford was one of the key Lancastrian commanders during the Wars of the Roses and in 1471 was defeated by Edward IV at the Battle of Barnet, after which he escaped to Scotland and then to France.⁸⁵⁸ We see the Pastons’ involvement with the Lancastrian cause in their service to the earl. In the November of the previous year, John Paston II writes to his younger brother “in haste”:

Brother, I comand me to yow, prayng yow þat thys be yowr guydyng iff
other folkys wyll agré to þe same: þat Master Roos, olde Kneuet, ye, and
the worshypffullest þat wyll do for owre sake, as Arblast, John Gyneye,

⁸⁵⁵ McNamer, “Re-versing”, p.295.

⁸⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁸⁵⁷ Gairdner quoted in *PLI*, p.571.

⁸⁵⁸ Helen Castor, “Vere, John de, twelfth earl of Oxford,” *ODNB*: <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/28213> - accessed 15th August 2018.

Wodhows, and al other gentelmen þat at the daye wyll be in Norwyche, þat ye all holl os on bodye come to-gedre þat my lorde off Oxenfforde maye ondestande þat som strenkethe restyth ther, by whyche iff it be well handelyd and proue in the handelyng I trow Heydonnes parte woll be but an easy comparyson.⁸⁵⁹

We do not have the Pastons' copy of Oxford's command of March 1471 to muster his Norfolk men to repel Edward IV's landing force, but the letter from the penultimate month of 1470 shows how his will could bind together the great families of Norfolk. The power of his command (as well as the beneficial nature of his patronage to the Pastons) can be seen one month earlier, in October 1470:

And as for my lord of Oxynforth, he is bettyr lord to me, by my trowthe, then I can wyshe hym in many maters, for he sent to my lady of Norffolk by John Bernard only for my mater and for non othyr cawse, myn onwetyng or wythowt eny preyer of me, for when he sent to hyr I was at London and he at Colchestyr, and þat is a lyeklyod he remembyrthe me. The Dwk and the Dwchess swe to hym as humbylly as euyr I dyd to them, in so myche that my lord of Oxynforth shall haue the rwyll of them and thers by ther owne desyirs and gret meanys.⁸⁶⁰

He was clearly very powerful amongst the gentry and aristocracy of Norfolk (and Suffolk) during the latter part of the fifteenth century. As much as John Paston III's English poem expresses personal sorrow at the absence of the recipient it also addresses the problems faced by the court after the removal of what he perceived to be a powerful, guiding figure of authority.

The penultimate stanza of the poem considers the nature of the court now that the lord of the address is absent:

A dew disport, farwell good companye,
 In all thys world ther is no joye, I weene,
 For ther as whyleom I sye wyth my jee
 A lusty lord leepyng vp-on a grene,

⁸⁵⁹ *PLI*, p.433.

⁸⁶⁰ *Id.*, p.565.

The soyle is soole, no knyghts ther be seen,
 No ladyse walk ther they wer wont to done.
 Alas, some folk depertyd hense to soone.⁸⁶¹

Here the poem laments the loss of a more joyful court, but its more pressing concern appears to be that of social isolation: the “good companye” has gone but so too are the knights and ladies. We are left with “a lusty lord leepyng vp- on a grene”. The Middle English Dictionary gives two definitions for the noun “grene”: the first is “A grassy place” and the second is “Desire, sexual passion”.⁸⁶² The absence of the ladies of the court, noted in the following line, could indicate that the passions of the “lusty lord” have become sexually aggressive and predatory and that their actions have driven away those men and women of good standing. It also indicates that there is no one at court to keep this “lusty lord” “in-check” and his actions are a destructive force.

The letters from the Earl of Oxford, and the letters from the various members of the Paston family in which the earl is mentioned, indicate a relationship of social patronage in which we have a powerful, formidable lord and diligent, loyal servants, but also, within that dynamic, a certain level of affection and a shared interest in the reading and writing of literary culture is suggested. Echoes of all of this can be seen in the poetry supposedly composed by John Paston III for the Earl of Oxford.⁸⁶³ The absence of other letters from John Paston III to the Earl of Oxford means that we cannot compare, as we can with Pympe, the relationship between the rhetoric of his more standard communications with his patron and his poetry. However, extant letters to other influential men within his social circle reveal a taste for artful, perhaps overwritten, addresses towards potential patrons. This is most clear in his letter regarding the Earl of Arran and Anne Paston’s manuscript of *The Siege of Thebes*, which we have already explored in a different context. Here, we see John III’s address to the Earl of Arran mirrors the opening address of his English

⁸⁶¹ *PLI*, p.571, lines 43-49.

⁸⁶² “Grene”, *MED*: <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/m/mec/med-idx?type=id&id=MED19377> - accessed 17th May 2016.

⁸⁶³ *PLI*, 571-573; and, a draft verse in Latin, pp. 631-2.

poem to the Earl of Oxford. As part of his writing about the Earl of Arran, John III lists some of the key attributes he admires in this knight:

Her-to, he is on the lyghtest, delyuerst, best spokyn, fayirest archer,
deuowghtest, most perfyght and trewest to hys lady of all the knyghtys
that euer I was aqweyntyd wyth; so wold God my lady lyekyd me as well
as I do hys person and most knyghtly condycyon, wyth whom I prey yow
to be aqweyntyd as you semyth best.⁸⁶⁴

The attributes listed here resonates with the interests of the court described in the poem:

Adew dysport, farwell good companye,
In all thys world ther is no joye, I weene,
For ther as whyleom I sye wyth myn jee
A lusty lord leepyng vp-on a grene,
The soyle is soole, no knyghtys ther be seen,
No ladyse walk ther they wer wont to doone.
Alas, some folk depertyd hense to soone.
Som tyme also men myght a wageor make,
And wyth ther bowys a feld haue it tried
Or at the paame ther ther plesure for to take.⁸⁶⁵

In both of these texts the skills of the men of the court are linked to romantic pursuits. Much like in *Guy of Warwick*, where the lady Felice refuses to marry the lowly Guy until he can prove himself the best knight in all the world, the letter and the poem construct the ideal of knighthood around the idea that the love is the reward for the most perfect, true, and skillful man.⁸⁶⁶ Within the poem, John Paston III has transposed this idea from the romances of *Guy of Warwick*, as well as the world of courtly love lyrics, onto the patronage structures of the court; to him, the qualities that form the ideal knight for the

⁸⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁸⁶⁵ *Id.*, p. 573.

⁸⁶⁶ Alison Wiggins, ed., *Stanzaic Guy of Warwick*. Kalamazoo, Michigan: Medieval Institute Publications, 2004.

<http://d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/publication/wiggins-stanzaic-guy-of-warwick> - Accessed August 26, 2016. Julius Zupitza, ed., *The Romance of Guy of Warwick: The Second or 15th-century Version, edited from the paper MS. Ff.2.38 in the University Library, Cambridge, EETS es 25 and 26 (1875-6)*.

ladies in such poems are the same qualities that he seeks in a good patron and thus it seems appropriate to write to the Earl of Oxford within this poetic mode.

5.5.iii: Reconsidering Margery Brews' Valentine's Letter

Finally, then, it is against this wider context of humourous or facetious rhyming couplets, doggerel, petitionary verses, complaints and courtly lyrics that I place Margery Brews' famous Valentine's letter of 1477. The first "paragraph" (if we use Davis's formatting of the letter) includes the first poetic interjections:

Fer þer wottys no creature what peyn þat I endure,
And for to be deede I dare it not dyscure.⁸⁶⁷

She introduces her letter by marking the pain she has suffered over the difficulties in the protracted negotiations that are delaying, if not derailing, her marriage. Here, as with John Paston III's poem to the Earl of Oxford, we apparently have a writer drawing on the words of one of Lydgate's love-sick narrators as inspiration for their own composition. Although, here, we return to that source for the "self-penned" lyrics of f.1 of BL Sloane 1212, and a text apparently associated by John Paston II with courtship and Valentine's Day, Lydgate's the *Temple of Glass*.⁸⁶⁸ In lines 359-62 the Lady complains to Venus how

Me to complein, god wot, I am not boold,
Vnto no wigt, nor a word vnfold
Of al my peyne, allas þe hard[e] stond!
That hatter brenne þat closed is my wounde.⁸⁶⁹

Margery is writing herself into the same literary tradition as John Paston III, and the writer of f.1 of BL Sloane 1212. Using these conventions and tropes of love-sick narratives but, here, and quite understandably, using the voice of Lydgate's Lady, rather than the male lover, to articulate her complaint.

⁸⁶⁷ *PLI*, p.662.

⁸⁶⁸ See Chapter 4.II.ii.

⁸⁶⁹ Schick, *Temple of Glass*, p.15.

Sarah McNamer, in her study of female writers of lyrics in the late fifteenth century (with her particular focus on the coterie of women potentially involved with the writing and scribing of verses in the Findern manuscript), suggests that Margery is, here, writing in earnest, using “the terms of the game of courtly love [...] to express her own heartfelt sentiments.”⁸⁷⁰ McNamer presents a curiously gendered divide in the employment of the conventions of courtly love lyrics, arguing that those written by the women of the Findern manuscript and Margery Brews are “using them in the service of sincere self-expression” whilst the potential for irony, insincerity or ventriloquism is deemed the sole property of male writers.⁸⁷¹ Whilst I do not disagree with this reading of a sincerity to Brew’s poetry I do believe that the rhetorical scope of this letter and its verse has yet to be fully understood.

I have already stated in the previous chapter that this letter was sent by Brews to John Paston III as part of the negotiations surrounding their marriage. The language of courtly love and Valentine’s day are used here and in a second letter sent by her that month.⁸⁷² However, she also states that the earlier letter “was jndyte at Topcroft wyth full heuy herte”.⁸⁷³ The full and heavy heart echoes the sentiments of the first line of verse in the letter, of the hurt creature who dare not disclose her love-sickness, and yet, the letter has been dictated (or ‘jndyte’) with the scribal hand identified by Norman Davis as belonging to Thomas Kela, Brews’ father’s secretary.⁸⁷⁴ Of course, the dictation of the letter and verse need not preclude a heart-felt sincerity but it does raise the possibility of a significant difference between Brews and McNamer’s understanding of the women who possibly both composed and wrote the lyrics in the Findern manuscript; that Brews’ letter and verse were composed and read in a differently particular, public, if familial, forum. McNamer shows that the composition of the Findern manuscript, with the courtly lyrics seemingly written on leftover blank leaves in the codex, must have circulated around a social network that also seems to have

⁸⁷⁰ McNamer, “Re-versing,” p.288.

⁸⁷¹ *Id.* p.289

⁸⁷² *PLI*, p.663. Here she signs off with “Be 3our Voluntyne Mergery Brews”.

⁸⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁸⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

embodied familial links however, the function of the circulating manuscript (in which writers may have been engaging with a more intellectually motivated exercise of writing and sharing verses) and that of a letter sent as part of a marriage negotiation have different purposes and contexts underpinning their composition.⁸⁷⁵ In “publicly” confessing this private sentiment that Brews dare “not dyscure” she is, I believe, establishing a complex authorial voice, one that very consciously plays with the conventions of the courtly love lyrics, which may both convey a sincere feeling of hurt but which might also be used to both confront and persuade John Paston III into agreeing to their marriage.

The echoes of Lydgate’s *Temple of Glass* in the first couplet in the letter, whilst adhering to the conventions of love-sickness already discussed in this chapter may also feasibly cause the reader to recall the larger passage from which the imagery is taken. Brews’ poem echoes lines 359-360 but in lines 342-248 the Lady states how she will forego her choice of lover in order to save her dignity.⁸⁷⁶ This sense of being torn between duty (or dignity) and love is the cause of the pain that dare not be spoken but I believe that the shadow of these earlier lines pointedly hang over the rest of the letter and the later verse included therein. After this initial couplet Brews then turns to the crux of the correspondence, telling John Paston III that her father will not increase her dowry before adding the following challenge to his affections:

But yf þat 3e loffe me, as I tryste verily that 3e do, 3e will not leffe me þerfor; for if þat 3e hade not halfe þe lyvelode þat 3e hafe, for to do þe grettyst labure þat any woman on lyve might, I wold not forsake 3owe.⁸⁷⁷

There is an anxiety present in the suggestions that John Paston III might not, in fact, love her and that he might forsake her. This point in the letter suggests that love, rather than the matters of finance, should prevail in these marriage negotiations, that personal and romantic loyalty are of greater importance to Brews. Again, this could be read as the statement of a sincere and rather justified fear that the man she loves will not marry her.

⁸⁷⁵ McNamer, “Re-versing”, p.282.

⁸⁷⁶ Schick, *Temple of Glass*, p.15

⁸⁷⁷ *PLI*, p.663

The numerous letters between John Paston III and John II regarding his various prospective wives include an exasperated request, written the previous March, for the elder brother to “aspye some old thryffty draffwyff in London for me.”⁸⁷⁸ Beadle and Richmond translate ‘draffwyff’ as ‘waste-wife’ or widow while “thryffty” refers to someone who is of a worshipful status although it also suggests that the woman is “well-living” or prosperous.⁸⁷⁹ The phrase employed by John Paston III in this letter of 1476 expresses exasperation at his marital status and whilst there is often humour shared between the two brothers across their letters, John Paston III rarely sees his potential marriages as a laughing matter. John Paston III goes on to ask that Thomas Brampton ‘wyth syche other as he and I apoynted, wyll helpe yow to aspye on for me on ther part’.⁸⁸⁰ It would appear that John Paston III, much like Januarie in Chaucer’s *Merchant’s Tale*, had selected a small group of men to draw-up a shortlist of eligible widows (and most likely heiresses).⁸⁸¹ Although thirty-two when he wrote this letter, John Paston III parrots his sixty-year-old literary counterpart:

And I wol fonde t’espian, on my syde,

To whom I may be wedded hastily⁸⁸²

The letter (and Chaucer’s poem) articulates a frustration and desperation, with John Paston III perhaps self-consciously echoing Januarie, and thus potentially parodying himself in that moment though this invocation. However, as we see across the various marriage discussions and negotiations of John III there are serious mercenary concerns at the centre of his search for a wife.

These instructions to find John Paston III an eligible widow, the frustrations and desperation that underpin them, are likely to have fed into Brews’ anxiety over the loyalty of her prospective husband, as he had started to gain a reputation for being fickle. A letter written two months after his request that

⁸⁷⁸ *Id.*, p.599.

⁸⁷⁹ *PLIII*, p.207. Oxford English Dictionary online, “Thrify, adj.”: <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/201253?redirectedFrom=thrifty#eid> accessed 22nd April 2019.

⁸⁸⁰ *PLI*, p.599.

⁸⁸¹ *RC*, p.156

⁸⁸² *Ibid.* ll.1410-1411.

John Paston II find him “some old thryffty draffwyff” indicates that the lack of discernment and exasperation expressed by John Paston III (perhaps exacerbated by the possible indiscretion of the men appointed to find him these eligible women) was raising suspicions amongst the members of his social network that he may prove an unfaithful husband to their daughters, sisters or nieces.⁸⁸³ John Paston III writes again to his elder brother, this time regarding the sister of a “Mastyr Fytzwater”. He asks his brother to tell Fitzwater that

he wyll haue my servyse, it wer as good, and syche a bargayn myght be mad, that bothe she and I awaytyd on hym and my mastress hys wyff at oure owne cost, as I a-lone to awayt on hym at hys cost; for then he shold be swer that I shold not be flyttyng and I had syche a qwarell to kepe me at home. And I haue hys good wyllle it is non jnpossybyll to bryng a-bowght.⁸⁸⁴

John Paston III identifies Fitzwater’s hesitation regarding the match with Mistress Fitzwater, that Paston it thought to be “flyttyng”. The use of “flitting” to mean the changing of one’s position “in either a material or immaterial sense” first appears in the *Ormulum* (c.1200), it also appears in Richard Rolle’s *Pricke of Conscience* (“When a man fra þis world sal flitte”, line 3762) but it is specifically linked with wealth in Chaucer’s translation of the *Romaunt of the Rose*: “What it [Richnesse] failith, he [Love] wol flit.”⁸⁸⁵ The extant evidence does not show the Pastons as having owned or read any of these texts but Paston’s letter does appear to also draw a connection between steadfastness and wealth. He suggests that he wait on Master Fitzwater and his wife at his own expense in order to show that he will not “flit” away. Is there, perhaps, here, a rather cynical calculation along the lines of spending money to make money? What is clear is that John Paston III believes that in order to prove himself steadfast in his pursuit of Mistress Fitzwater he must invest both his time, effort and money in serving her brother.

⁸⁸³ *Ibid.*

⁸⁸⁴ *Id.*, p.603.

⁸⁸⁵ Oxford English Dictionary online, “Flit, v.”: <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/71701?rskey=m9p9ze&result=4&isAdvanced=false#eid> accessed 17th April 2019.

Furthermore, “qwarell” may also be intended to reassure Fitzwater of a genuine affection between John Paston III and Fitzwater’s sister. The *MED* presents a few different potential meanings for “qwarell”, each of which might be used to differently configure a statement about loyalty and steadfastness. Firstly, ‘qwarell’ could mean ‘querele’ and refer to a dispute or altercation.⁸⁸⁶ Over the course of February to March 1476, John Paston III’s letters to his mother and brother refer to the anger felt by the Duchess of Norfolk, one of the Pastons’ key patrons and a woman to whom John Paston III often showed great respect and loyalty, over the insensitively swift occupation of Caister castle by John Paston II following the death of her husband in the January of that year.⁸⁸⁷ In a letter probably written in the same month as this discussion of Mistress Fitzwater, John Paston III also repeats a request from the Duchess of Norfolk to Margaret Paston that she attend the Duchess for the birth of her child.⁸⁸⁸ As such, the idea that John has “syche a qwarell to kepe me at home” might mean that he had very good reasons to remain in the household of the Duchess of Norfolk but would, in order to show the depth of his loyalty to Mistress Fitzwater, attend on her brother instead. Alternatively, the *MED* defines the figurative use of “quarell” as ‘for a temptation to sin, a seductive glance, etc.’⁸⁸⁹ With this interpretation, the statement “syche a qwarell to kepe me at home” gains a slight lewdness but, in doing so, might be intended to emphatically express a sense of attraction to Mistress Fitzwater. Evidently, given the letters and event of 1477, this attraction and loyalty did not last.

If, by 1476, John Paston III was increasingly deemed by those in his social circle to be “flytting” when it came to marriage negotiations, the circumstances surrounding those between him and the Brews family, in 1477, further compound this reputation. A month after Brews wrote her celebrated

⁸⁸⁶ *MED*, “querele, n.”: http://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/middle-english-dictionary/dictionary/MED35552/track?counter=2&search_id=895878 – accessed 13th May 2019

⁸⁸⁷ *PLI*, pp.598-599, 602 and 603.

⁸⁸⁸ *Id.*p.602.

⁸⁸⁹ *MED*, “quarrel, n. (1)”: <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/middle-english-dictionary/dictionary/MED35437> – accessed 13th May 2019

Valentine's letter, on 9th March, John Paston II wrote to his younger brother with his advice on the matter:

I praye yow sende me som wryghtyng to Caleys off yowre spede wyth Mestresse Brewys. Bykerton tellyth me þat she lovyth yow weell. Iff I dyed I hadde lever ye hadde hyre than the Lady Wargrave; neuerthelesse she syngeth weell wyth an harpe.⁸⁹⁰

John Paston II appears to enthusiastically support the marriage between his younger brother and Margery Brews, foregrounding the affection Brews is reported to feel for Paston over the musical abilities and the higher social status of Lady Wargrave. John Paston II is presenting the two women (whether they know it or not) as in competition with one another. Indeed, and as I briefly alluded to towards the end of Chapter Four, Margery Brews may have intended the *act* of writing verse to John Paston III to appeal to his interest in poetry as much as the message she may be trying to convey. That, here, and as seemingly with Lady Wargrave, we have a woman seeking to show off her artistic accomplishments as part of the courtship process. In 1474 John Paston III had commented to a Mistress Anne, a woman he was then seeking to marry, that he was 'prowd that ye can reed Inglyshe'.⁸⁹¹ However, here, he sees the benefit of Mistress Anne's literacy for the reception of his own writing,

I prey yow aqweynt yow wyth thys my lewd hand, for my purpose is that ye shalbe more aqweyntyd wyth it or ellys it shalbe ayenst my wyll. But yet when ye haue red thys byll I prey yow brenne it or keepe it secret to yoursyllf, as my feythefull trust is in yow.⁸⁹²

This is a postscript to a letter in which John Paston III's writing embodies many of the tropes of courtly love, particularly the language of service. This final request, which states an intension to continue to write to her and requests that that writing be made secret, echoes his elder brother's advice on his courtship of an unnamed daughter of the Boleyn family in 1467:

yowre beyng ones in the syght of þe mayde, and a lytell descueryng of your good wyl to hyre, byndyng hyre to kepe it secret, and þat ye kane

⁸⁹⁰ *PLI*, p.499.

⁸⁹¹ *PLI*, p.591.

⁸⁹² *Ibid.*

fynde in yowre hert, wyth som comfort of hyre, to fynde the meane to brynge suche a mater abowt as schall be hyre pleasur and yowrys, but that thys ye kannot do wyth-owt som comfort of hyre in no wyse---. And bere yore-selfe as lowly to þe modere as ye lyst, but to þe mayde not to lowly.⁸⁹³

The language of courtship and service are bound together in these moments, as we would expect, but there is also a sense of the game of courtship. That John Paston III and Mistress Anne, or John Paston III and the Boleyn daughter are performing certain roles that are informed by and expressed through literary culture. Or, rather, that literary culture, epistolary culture, and court culture are different versions of the same mode. They are all aureate and conventional. Unfortunately any letters these women may have sent to John Paston III in response do not survive. The skewed view given by the extant evidence might lead us to think these women as passive recipients of John III's letters of courtship. McNamer's work on the Findern manuscript shows that, within the wider context of England, that Margery is not unique as a gentlewoman composing lyric poetry and it is highly likely that she was not unique within Norfolk either.⁸⁹⁴

Given the impression we now have of John Paston III's reputation within the marriage market of the late-fifteenth-century East Anglian and London networks of the gentry, the issues surrounding Margery's dowry, and what seems to have been known amongst friends and family of John Paston III's interest in writing verse, Brews's poetry seems both sincere and *pointed*. McNamer wrote of the lyrics in the Findern manuscript that they 'have little intrinsic meaning or interest' but that 'they take their life and significance from their social context' gaining 'their original vitality [from] the "game of love"'.⁸⁹⁵ McNamer continues, 'set in this context, the courtly love lyric becomes a token

⁸⁹³ *Id.* pp.396-397. This letter was probably written in March 1467 and regards John Paston III's hope to marry a daughter of the Boleyn family.

⁸⁹⁴ McNamer, "Re-versing", p.282.

⁸⁹⁵ *Id.*, p.287. Here McNamer draws on the work of John Stevens and his definition of courtly love. See John Stevens, *Music and Poetry in the Early Tudor Court* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979).

of flirtatious, playful insincerity.⁸⁹⁶ However, McNamer's suggestion that Margery has 'missed the meaning' of courtly lyrics and writes in earnest fails to attend to the social context I have described as surrounding the poem.⁸⁹⁷ The following lines may act as a sincere or earnest expression of her feelings but it is also an important part of a very delicate negotiation.

And yf ze commande me to kepe me true where-euer I go
Iwyse I will do all my myght zowe to love and neuer no mo.
And yf my freendys say þat I do amys, þei schal not me let so for to do,
Myn herte me byddys euer more to love zowe⁸⁹⁸

These first two lines *could* be read as an innocent declaration of "trowth" but it follows directly on from Margery's statement that her father will not increase her dowry. These lines articulate a loyalty but I believe they are also confrontational, that Brews is establishing an expectation that John Paston III reciprocate her own efforts. The third line might adhere to the conventions of lovesickness in courtly love lyrics, echoing the earlier lines of verse in her letter. Here her friends may be concerned at her declaration that she will love no one but John Paston III. However, it could also highlight that her reputation might be damaged through her love of John Paston III, a suggestion that to love John is to 'do amys'.⁸⁹⁹ If the poem is, in fact, in earnest it is also informed by personal and familial pride, might Margery even be reminding John Paston III that it is *she* who is the heiress from a well-established family marrying the second son of a family with numerous financial issues and disputed properties?

Whilst the metre of the poem and the rhyme scheme can occasionally go awry, the tonal dexterity of the verse and the wider letter - the movement from love-sickness to business, to both a declaration of love and thinly veiled reproach, and ending on a reminder that this "private" letter was dictated at her father's house - is rhetorically impressive with each stage drawing on literary, cultural and social conventions to convince John Paston III to accept the dowry being

⁸⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁸⁹⁷ McNamer, "Re-versing", p.288.

⁸⁹⁸ *PLI*, p.662

⁸⁹⁹ *PLI*, p.662

offered to him. It may be that, as McNamer suggest, the verses were meant “in earnest” but the wider context of the letter and the letters surrounding the prospective marriage suggests that this sincerity was part of a serious game of courtly love.⁹⁰⁰

5.6: Conclusions

Whilst this thesis has endeavoured to mine the documents associated with the Paston family for evidence of the ownership and commissioning of texts and manuscripts, the epistolary nature of many of those documents themselves present them as sites of textual reception and circulation in their own right. The appearance of quotations and allusions in the letters indicates that more of the Paston family engaged with literature than those for whom we have direct evidence of manuscript ownership. Such *sententiae* present the possibility that Agnes read, or listened to, the works from which the quotations are taken, and perhaps even owned manuscripts containing these texts. The use of quotations may also indicate the ubiquity of certain texts: that quotations from works by Chaucer and/or Lydgate were part of a common, shared, culture of idiomatic expression.

The writing of verses by John Pympe, Margery Brews and John Paston III, as well as the doggerel by John Paston I, and the few couplets of John Paston II and William Paston III, demonstrate a different kind of reception of works. These moments show an internalisation not only of the content of the works discussed in this wider study of the texts read by the Paston family but also of the form and tropes of this material. In some instances – the doggerel of John I, perhaps – the digestion of these works seems more instinctive than studied. Brews, Pympe and John III show a more thoughtful utilisation of their forms, images and language, identifying its cultural functions within the patronage system. Each of these three writers, by writing in verse and parroting or personalizing the tropes popularised by writers such as Chaucer and Lydgate, seems to have deliberately picked a form that intended to appeal to their intended reader: that

⁹⁰⁰ McNamer, “Re-versing”, p.288.

is, each writer has engaged with a form of literature the recipient is known to have enjoyed. As much as these verses may seek to criticise, convince or lament, the demonstration of rhetorical abilities may also endear the sender to their patron, master or prospective husband by reminding them not only of the writers' creative and intellectual abilities but also that both sender and receiver are connected by delighting in a shared textual culture.

Conclusion

At the simplest level, the basic project of this thesis has been to seek to bring together all of the moments, within the corpus of Paston materials, in which an engagement with textual culture, of one kind or another, may be seen. Together, these materials - the correspondence between Ebesham and John Paston, the "Grete Boke" itself, the Inventory of English Books, the references to the acquisition, possession, and circulation of books within the letters, and the moments of quotation and more independent composition - constitute a rich body of material for considering the making, reading, and writing of manuscripts and the very earliest printed books within an important, fifteenth-century, East Anglian gentry family. I have explored this material in relation to what we know of fifteenth-century East Anglian literary culture and in relation, in particular, to the literary interests and practices of other fifteenth-century East Anglian gentry patrons.

The findings of this thesis thus suggest that to view the Paston family as representative of the gentry readers and manuscript owners of East Anglia is to suggest a network of people taking a keen interest in the obtaining and reading of texts, with some even extending their engagement with textual culture to write short verses. The influences on their textual culture are both internal to East Anglia with at least one locally produced manuscript (Bodley) and external to the region with the employment of a Westminster scribe and further interactions with the London book trade, and international. The library of the Pastons (and those of some of their East Anglian peers) record distinctive local interests that mesh with wider English interests and even international interests, with the influence of the French and Burgundian royal libraries filtering into that of John Fastolf and John Paston II. However, as we have seen over the course of this extended case-study, for all that the Paston family appear typical within their seemingly active participation with the literary culture of East Anglia, such an engagement is (as we would expect) characterized by myriad interesting and insightful idiosyncrasies.

The letters from William Ebesham to John Paston II and the differences between Lansdowne and Pierpont Morgan show John Paston II to be quite particular in his commissioning of manuscripts. This is borne out in the movement of the *Epistle of Othea* into the section of his inventory marked as being “in quayers”, as it moved from an exemplar (Pierpont Morgan) (the works of which were reconfigured into a courtesy book) to a putative codex of humanistic works. Both Lansdowne and the putative manuscript present John Paston II as working quite closely with the makers of these productions (either with his scribe, Ebesham, or with members of the Fastolf household who translated at least three of the works in Paston’s “in quayers” section). We see him taking a keen interest in the works he owns and the experience of reading those works together. This interest in the production of books is not limited to manuscripts, extending to the very early printed works of Caxton, which, in turn, and most likely, echoes John Paston II’s interaction with the London book trade, as evident in his employment of William Ebesham.

John Paston II’s Inventory of English Books and Anne Paston’s ownership of Lydgate’s *Siege of Thebes* show members of the family engaging with widely circulating and evidently popular, works by Chaucer and Lydgate. The extant manuscripts that contain combinations of the *Parliament of Fowls*, *La Belle Dame sans Mercy*, and the *Temple of Glass* indicate that Items Three and Five of this inventory mirrored a wider, perhaps national, interest in creating anthologised manuscripts of Chaucerian and Lydgatian items. Alongside this is a regional expression of interest in works by these writers. The extant manuscripts of the *Canterbury Tales* record the East Anglian network of scribes and patrons through which the various iterations of this text circulated. Similarly, the extant manuscripts of Lydgate’s *Lives of Ss. Edmund and Fremund* present a circle of readers engaging with a text of local significance with many of these readers appearing to obtain their manuscripts from a prominent, socially and religiously important hub of textual production, the Abbey of Bury St Edmunds. The surviving evidence associated with the Pastons’ ownership or reading of Lydgate’s work does not indicate such a direct connection with Bury; rather, the extant documents point towards the Pastons’ ownership of Lydgate’s

secular works and the lending of the *Siege* to the Earl of Arran and the requesting of the *Temple of Glass* to read to Anne Haute, places the Pastons' reception of these works within the context of the royal court and its relation to a network of gentry readers.

This familiarity with, and interest in, the court and its literary culture is not only expressed in the circulation of two of the Pastons' manuscripts but in numerous other instances, perhaps most clearly in the creation of Lansdowne. Here John Paston II curates a collection of texts celebrating impressive jousts by his contemporaries and near-contemporaries, placing them alongside other works that might prove useful guides to someone attempting to make friends and influence people at court. The manuscript (in conjunction with what we know about John Paston II's career) presents him, in part, as a student of the court, and reveals a broad interest in chivalric activities that were enjoyed by the English and Burgundian courts. Further to this, the language of the court (or, perhaps more accurately, the "high" language which would be used in places such as the court) is present within the addresses of John Paston III and the writings of other members of the family. In the use of the language of courtly love in the verses of Margery Brews, John Pympe and John Paston III to articulate their particular relationship with their respective patron (or, in the case of Margery Brew, prospective husband), these verses record an influence of their reading and an engagement with an audience of similar readers who accepted (or perhaps expected) such language to be utilized within this kind of relationship.

This thesis has sought to highlight the varied and rich nature of the extant evidence surrounding the Pastons, their ownership of manuscripts, and their reading and writing. Further possibilities for rich enquiry emerge from the materials gathered within the thesis and remain to be pursued. Perhaps pre-eminent among these is the relationship between the devotional materials recorded within the Inventory of English books and wider fifteenth-century practices of East Anglian lay piety. In Chapter Four, for example, I looked at Anne Paston's ownership of Lydgate's *Siege of Thebes*. By way of establishing

the context surrounding her ownership of this particular secular text by Lydgate I pointed to the popularity of his devotional work amongst the Pastons' peers and highlighted that John Paston II's inventory included (as we have come to anticipate) an anthologised collection of devotional works. From those texts we can identify in Item Six, Lydgate is, surprisingly, absent from this collection but the anthology suggests an engagement with similar kinds of works to those produced by Lydgate for Paston's peers which, more generally, reflects a genre of devotional literature celebrating the *vita mixta*. It would add further complexities and nuances to our understanding of John Paston II's library to look at the circulation of these works amongst his various networks of readers. A further fruitful line of enquiry would be to more explicitly and fully consider the militaristic and heraldic literature of John Paston II's library and compare it to that of his uncle, William Paston II. Both men sought to make powerful connections and gain influence at court, with William Paston II possibly the more successful of the two. Both men appear to have served in Calais. The extant information surrounding their owning of texts and manuscripts show that both men were interested in heraldry, with MS Rye 38 (a book of blazonings) having once been owned by William Paston II and representing the sort of manuscript that precede John Paston II's *Grete Boke* in his inventory. They also both owned guides to warfare – John Paston II included *De Rei Militari* in Lansdowne and William Paston II sought to own Pynson's *Statutes of Warre*. Most studies of the Paston family focus on the immediate family and household of John Paston I but it is clear that there are resonances between both the careers and the manuscript interests of John Paston II and his uncle, William Paston II, which merit further exploration.

For all of the recurrent and varied interest the Paston materials have received, the fullest implications of the evidence we have of the Pastons as the readers and makers of books and texts remains to be explored. The materials remain an uncommon resource for probing the interests and habits of a fifteenth-century East Anglian 'common' (or gentry) reader.

Appendix**Table 1: Contents of London, British Library MS Lansdowne 285**

	Folio ⁹⁰¹	Hand 902	Text
1	ff. 2r-5v	A	The coronation of Kings & Queens of England
2	ff. 5v-6v	A	The coronation procession & banquet of Henry VI, 1429
3	ff. 6v-7r	A	John Lydgate, 'sootitlees' & the courses of the coronation banquet.
4	ff. 7v-9r	A	The ceremony for creating the Knights of the Bath
5	f. 9r-9v	A	The armour & equipment needed for foot combat
6	ff. 9v-10v	A	Instructions for 'jousts of peace'
7	ff. 11r-15r	A	Thomas of Woodstock, Duke of Gloucester, regulations for trial by combat
8	f. 15r-15v	A	Challenge of Phillippe de Boyle & John Astley, 1442
9	ff. 15v-16r	A	Challenge of Piers de Masse & John Astley
10	ff. 16r-17v	A	Challenge of Richard Beauchamp, Earl of Warwick, against three French knights, 1415
11	ff. 18r-22v	A	A proposed challenge between Anthony Woodville, Lord Scales, & Antione, Grand Bastard of Burgundy, 1465
12	ff. 22v-24v	A	Challenge of Louise de Brutallis (squire of Lord Scales) & Jehan de Chassa, chamberlain of the Duke of Burgundy, 1467
13	f. 25r-25v	A	Challenge of Phillippe de Bouton, 1467
14	ff. 26r-29r	A	Challenge of Antione, Bastard of Burgundy, following the marriage of Margaret of York & Charles the Bold, Duke of Burgundy, 1468
15	ff. 29v-43r	A	Documents relating to the challenge between Anthony Woodville, Lord Scales, & Antoine, Grand Bastard of Burgundy, 1467
16	f.43r	D	Statute of Arms
17	ff. 43v-44r	C	Guillaume de Boursset, equire, chapter on feats of arms on horseback & on foot
18	ff. 44r-46r	C	Proclamation of a tourney between de Jonvelle & de Commines
19	ff. 46v-47r	C	Proclamation of jousts at Smithfield, "probably in October 1390" ⁹⁰³
20	f. 47v	C	Thomas of Lancaster, Duke of Clarence, Constable of England, ordinance regulating the fees of officers of arms, issued 1408

⁹⁰¹ *SJPG*, pp.9-12.

⁹⁰² *Id.*, p.16.

⁹⁰³ *Id.*, p.11.

21	ff. 48r-52r	A	Challenge between John Chalons & Louis de Beul, 1446
22	ff. 52r-56v ff. 56v-57v ff. 58r-59v	A	The fictional background of a <i>pas d'armes</i> , 1463 A table of contents, added later Blank
23	ff. 60r-82v f. 83r-83v	B	<i>Pas du Perron Fée</i> held by Philippe de Lalaing, 1463 Blank
24	ff. 84r-138r	A	Prose translation of Flavius Vegetius Renatus, <i>Epitoma Rei Militaris</i>
25	ff. 138r-142r	A	Sailing directions for the coastal waters of Britain, France & Spain
26	ff. 144r-150r	C	Ordinances of war made by Henry V at Mantes, 1419
27	ff. 150r-152r	C	Ordinances of war made by Thomas Montague, Earl of Salisbury, France, c.1425
28	ff. 152v-153v	C	Summons of surrender issued by Thomas Montague at the siege of Le Mans in 1425
29	ff. 153v-154r	E	Geoffrey of Monmouth, 'Book IX, Chapter 15,' <i>Historia Regum Britanniae</i>
30	f. 154r-154v	F	Ranulf Higden, 'Book VII, Chapter 18,' <i>Polychronicon</i>
31	ff. 155r-199v	A	John Lydgate & Benedict Burgh, <i>Secrees of old Philisoffres</i>

Table 2: Contents of New York, Pierpont Morgan MS M775

	Ff. ⁹⁰⁴	Text
1	ff. 3r-4v	<i>The Abilment for the Justs of the Pees, To crie a justus of pees, The coming into the felde</i>
2	ff. 5r-11v	“A table for calculating expenses by the day and year” ⁹⁰⁵
3	ff.12r-13v	The assize of bread & ale, tables of weights & measures
4	ff. 14r-15r, 24r	The coronation procession & banquet of Henry VI, 1429
5	ff. 16r-23v	The coronation of Kings & Queens of England
6	ff. 25r-121v	Prose translation (for Thomas Berkeley) of Flavius Vegetius Renuatus, <i>Epitoma Rei Militaris</i>
	f. 122v	Illumination in the upper half of the folio
7	ff. 122v- 123v	<i>How a Man shall be Armed at his ease</i>
8	ff. 124r- 130r	Thomas of Woodstock, Duke of Gloucester, regulations for trial by combat
	f. 130v	Full-leaf depiction of shipping
9	ff. 131r- 138v	Sailing directions for Britain & the Bay of Biscay
	f. 138v	Most of the leaf is filled with an illumination of a ship
10	ff.139r- 195r	John Lydgate & Benedict Burgh, <i>Secrees of old Philisoffres</i>
11	ff.195v- 198r	“How Knyghtis of the bath shulde be made”
12	f. 199r	“To make agua composyta” (written in a later hand) ⁹⁰⁶
	f. 199v	Blank
	f. 200r	“Last page or prologue of a poem in English beginning: I that to youre service wolde were able, and ending: The pore effecte of my litill konnyng” ⁹⁰⁷
13	ff. 200-274v	Prose translation of Christine de Pizan’s <i>Epistle of Othea</i>

⁹⁰⁴ As identified in Harold Arthur, Viscount Dillion, “On a MS Collection of Ordinances of Chivalry belonging to Lord Hastings,” in *Archeologia* (1899), pp.1-2.

⁹⁰⁵ *Id.*, p.1.

⁹⁰⁶ The Pierpont Morgan catalogue of Medieval and Renaissance Manuscripts only states that this text was “added in a slightly later hand” but Dillion’s assessment of the manuscript states that this is was “written in a 16th century hand”. See “Pierpont Morgan Library Manuscript M 775,” *Corsair Online Collection Catalog*: <http://corsair.themorgan.org/cgi-bin/Pwebrecon.cgi?v1=1&ti=1,1&CNT=1&HC=1&RelBibID=158842&HostBibID=257560&ProfileCode=FOLTOMS&SEQ=20180404141412&PID=22JN9QQA5Z2cezd2xv3qXzCj9W2Tv> - accessed 4th April 2018; Dillion, “On a MS Collection of Ordinances of Chivalry,” p.1.

⁹⁰⁷ “Pierpont Morgan Library Manuscript M 775,” *Corsair Online Collection Catalog*

- | | | |
|----|------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| | ff. 200r,
202r, &
204r | Illuminations |
| | f. 274r | Armorial ensigns of Sir John Astley |
| 14 | f. 275r | Recipe for a powder to take when 'ye be dysessud' |
| 15 | ff. 275v-
279r | Challenge of Piers de Masse & John Astley, 1438, Challenge of Phillippe de Boyle & John Astley, 1442 |
| | ff. 275v &
277v | Pictures illustrating these jousts between Astley & Pier de Masse and Phillippe de Boyle. |
| 16 | ff. 279v-
280r | The oath made by a herald |
| 17 | ff. 280v-
291r | Calendar, thunder prognostications, astrological tables and diagrams |
| 18 | ff. 283-287 | A Kalendar |
| | ff. 288-292 | These were originally blank but the following illustrations have been added: f. 288v, an astrological diagram; f. 289r, a picture of a human body labelled with the names of the zodiac; f. 289v, an astrological diagram |
| 19 | ff. 293r-
320r | Benedict Burgh, trans., "Parvus Cato & Magnus Cato" |
| 20 | f. 320v | John Lydgate, "Four Things that make a Man a Fool"
Medical recipes written in later hands |

Table 3: Extant Manuscripts copied by William Ebesham

Manuscript Information	Text
<p>Rylands Latin MS 395</p> <p>204mm x 128mm</p> <p>Vellum and paper</p> <p>Second half of the fifteenth century</p> <p>All in the same hand</p> <p>The manuscript originally included two works printed by Caxton, the <i>Propositio Johannis Russell</i> (which is still in the MS) and an “edition of the office of the Visitation of Our Lady” (which survives as British Library I.A.55065).⁹⁰⁸</p> <p>“quod W. Ebsham” appears on f.117v, with “quod Stevens E” appearing on f.119v.⁹⁰⁹</p>	<p>Richard Rolle, “Postillae super Canticum Canticorum,” “De incendio amoris,” “De amore dei contra amatores mundi”⁹¹⁰</p> <p>Extracts from the writings of St. Bonaventura, St. Matilda, St. Catherine of Siena, St. Bridget of Sweden, Grosseteste</p> <p>St. Katherine of Alexandria⁹¹¹</p> <p><i>Meditationes passionis Christi</i> (in English)⁹¹²</p> <p>Three poems with the following first lines:</p> <p>“As holy Chirche techith the thyne almes hide & laye”⁹¹³</p> <p>“Why sittist thou so syngyng þenkyst þou nothing”⁹¹⁴</p> <p>“With faouere in hir face ferr passyng my Reason”⁹¹⁵</p> <p>“VI vertuous Questions and thanswers ensuyn, the which vi holy and wyse clerkes assembled to gedyr in þe Courte of Rome [...]” (in English)⁹¹⁶</p> <p>St. Bridget, <i>de Vitis Patrum</i></p>

⁹⁰⁸ Doyle, “William Ebesham,” p.309.

⁹⁰⁹ *Id.*, p.310. Doyle argues that “quod Stevens E” is likely to be the “transmitter, previous copyist or author of the item (a unique copy) to which it is appended [“Why sittist thou so syngyng þenkyst þou nothing”]; and in fact there was an Edmund Stevyns, gentleman, of London, recorded in the last quarter of the fifteenth century and buried in the Charterhouse in 1517.”

⁹¹⁰ Doyle does not give the titles of these three works by Richard Rolle, see p.308. For the details of the works by Rolle included in this manuscript see Moses Tyson, “Hand-list of Additions to the Collection of Latin Manuscripts in the John Rylands Library, 1908-1928,” *The Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, vol. 12 (repr.1928), p.604.

⁹¹¹ For a survey of how this version of the life of St. Katherine of Alexandria differs to other extant copies see Jennifer Bray, “An Unpublished Life of St. Katherine of Alexandria” in “Notes and News” in *Bulletin of John Rylands Library of Manchester*, ed. F. Taylor, Vol. 64, No.1 (Autumn 1981), pp.2-6.

⁹¹² Tyson, “Hand-list of Latin Manuscripts,” p.604.

⁹¹³ Carleton Brown and Rossell Hope Robbins, *The Index of Middle English Verse*, printed for The Index Society, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1943), no. 339. In this work the manuscript is referred to by its previous catalogue number, Rylands Library 18932.

⁹¹⁴ *Id.*, no.4163.

⁹¹⁵ *Id.*, no.4189.

⁹¹⁶ Tyson, “Hand-list of Latin Manuscripts,” p.604.

	<p><i>legenda S. Sampsonis (of Dol)</i>⁹¹⁷</p> <p>A lament of the Virgin Mary, beginning, “In a tabernacle of a toure/As I stode musyng on the mone”⁹¹⁸</p> <p>“an extract from Grosseteste’s Latin version of the Testament of the twelve Patriarchs”⁹¹⁹</p> <p>Propositio Johannis Russell (printed, by Caxton)⁹²⁰</p> <p>Autores Bible</p>
<p>British Library Additional MS 10106 146mm x 96mm Vellum and paper</p> <p>The manuscript is in its original binding and has the “distinctive “carrot” or “lily” tool of a binder employed oby Caxton, found on books dated c.1477-1504, but possibly in use only c.1483 onwards”.⁹²¹</p>	<p>Endleaf (f.1) “Latin verses and convention memoranda”⁹²²</p> <p><i>Cronica de regibus Anglie [...] usque regem Edwardum quartum</i>⁹²³</p> <p><i>The maner & forume of the coronacion of kynges and quenenes of England</i></p> <p><i>De dedicatione ecclesie beati Petri Westmonasterii</i> (in Latin)</p> <p><i>Privilegia Westmonasterii</i> (in English)</p> <p><i>A good and a profitable table of the feythe of Cristen people</i></p> <p><i>A good & a profitable tretys of gode levyng to all maner astates of the people, made and ordeyned for gret & myghty & her Justicis</i></p> <p><i>The temptacions of the devill [...] of the vij dedly synnes & of her braunches, And the answers [...] of the gode angel</i></p> <p>An account of the physiognomy of Christ⁹²⁴</p> <p>Devote meditaciones de beneficiis dei [...] que vocatur Stimulus Compassionis (in Latin)</p>

⁹¹⁷ Doyle, “William Ebesham,” p.309.

⁹¹⁸ Brown and Robbins, *Index of Middle English Verse*, no.1460.

⁹¹⁹ Doyle, “William Ebesham,” p.309.

⁹²⁰ *Ibid.*

⁹²¹ *Id.* p.315.

⁹²² *Ibid.*

⁹²³ *Id.*, p.313. Doyle notes that this text ends with the coronation of Henry IV.

⁹²⁴ The English items up to this point in the manuscript also appear, as Doyle states, “in the same order in Bodley MS. 596, a volume probably compiled at Westminster in the first quarter and still thereabouts in the middle or third quarter of the century.”

Although Doyle does go on to point out that the manuscript could have been bound “sometime after the main texts were written.” *Id.*, p.314.

	<p>Saint Pantaleon, Saint Wilgefort, and Saint Blaise</p> <p>Endleaf (f.79r), a stanza beginning “Wine of nature properties hath nine.”⁹²⁵</p>
<p>St. John’s College, Oxford, MS 147</p> <p>204mm x 128mm</p> <p>Vellum and paper</p> <p>It contains two hands, with one being Ebesham’s⁹²⁶</p> <p>“Iste liber constat [Thome Lynne] Mon. Westmonasterij” appears at the front of the volume⁹²⁷</p> <p>“Iste liber pertinet Willelmo Graunt T[este?] Willelmo Grove Monarch[is] Westm.” appears on f.264v⁹²⁸</p>	<p>An original table of contents</p> <p><i>Moralitas vernerabilis Ricardi heremite super lectiones sancti Job</i></p> <p><i>A tretys that tellyth howe [...] vj Doctours [...] were accordytt to speke of trybulacion</i> (copied by another scribe and incomplete)⁹²⁹</p> <p><i>Vitae & Passiones</i> of thirteen saints of the early church (one leaf at the end has been lost)⁹³⁰</p> <p><i>Meditationes passionis Christi</i> (with later additions by another hand)⁹³¹</p> <p><i>Sexdecim gaudia in celo, miracula, dignitates, leges, premia</i></p> <p><i>Sententie</i> from Saints Bernard and Ambrose</p> <p><i>Septem criminalia</i></p> <p>Latin verses on women</p> <p>Latin verses on monks at wedding-feasts</p>
<p>Westminster Abbey Muniments Book I</p> <p>330mm x 250mm</p> <p>Vellum</p> <p>Completed after 1485⁹³²</p> <p>Made at the expense of Thomas Clifford, “a monk from the noble family of the</p>	<p>A copy of the <i>Liber Niger Quarternus</i></p>

⁹²⁵ “DIMEV 6697, IMEV 4175, NIMEV 4175: Wine of nature properties hath nine,” *Digital Index of Middle English Verse*: <http://www.dimev.net/record.php?recID=6697#wit-6697-2> - accessed 13th April 2018.

⁹²⁶ Doyle, “William Ebesham,” p.316.

⁹²⁷ *Id.* pp.316-317. Doyle states that the name, Thome Lynne, was only made decipherable under ultra-violet light. Doyle notes that there was a Thomas Lynne who “said his first mass in 1455/6 and died in 1473/4”.

⁹²⁸ William Grant was a member of the Westminster community c.1469-1510; William Grove was a member of the community c.1485-92. *Id.*, p.317.

⁹²⁹ *Ibid.*

⁹³⁰ *Id.* p.316.

⁹³¹ *Ibid.*

⁹³² *Id.* p.317.

<p>same name, who also compiled the table of contents”⁹³³</p>	
<p>College of Arms Young MS 72 318mm x 210mm In Ebesham’s hand “except for a partial index added later at the end.”⁹³⁴ “It is in a contemporary binding bearing a stamp of the Beaufort arms which is otherwise found only on a book of Wynkyn de Worde’s printing dated 1495, and other tools belonging to the shop connected with Caxton.”⁹³⁵</p>	<p>A copy of the <i>Liber Niger Quarternus</i></p>
<p>Westminster Abbey Library MS 29 255mm x 191mm Vellum “made by Ebesham in the same style as the registers from a somewhat earlier manuscript of which a fragment survives in Trinity College, Dublin, MS. 548.”⁹³⁶ “The book has been rebound, but on the back of the last leaf is still stuck a piece of printed paper, probably former paste-down material, identifiable as lines 2-16 from the top half of f.63v of Caxton’s first edition of Le Fevre’s <i>Recueil des histoires de Troie</i>, produced at Bruges c.1474: another relic of his bindery?”⁹³⁷</p>	<p>John Flete, <i>History of Westminster Abbey</i>⁹³⁸</p>
<p>Durham University Library, Cosin MS V.III.7 230mm x 159mm Vellum and paper</p>	<p>The “least common version of “Mandeville’s Travels””⁹⁴² <i>De compositione chilindri & de officio eiusdem & quadrantis</i> “the story of the Holy Cross, the crusades and the kingdom of Jerusalem”⁹⁴³</p>

⁹³³ *Ibid.*

⁹³⁴ *Ibid.*

⁹³⁵ *Ibid.*

⁹³⁶ *Id.* p.318.

⁹³⁷ *Ibid.*

⁹³⁸ John Flete was a monk of the house between 1420 and 1465. See, J. Armitage Robinson (ed.), *The History of Westminster Abbey by John Flete*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1909), vii.

⁹⁴² *Ibid.*

⁹⁴³ *Id.*, p.319.

<p>It contains a watermark “found in English books and documents c.1477-85”⁹³⁹</p> <p>All of the content of this MS is in Latin⁹⁴⁰</p> <p>The content is copied by two contemporaneous hands, Ebesham’s and another’s. Ebesham copied the first three items and the final three items⁹⁴¹</p>	<p>“a verse summary of the book of Judith”⁹⁴⁴</p> <p>“sequences on the phrases of the <i>Pater Noster</i> and <i>Ave Maria</i>”⁹⁴⁵</p> <p>“sequences and suffrage for King Henry VI”⁹⁴⁶</p> <p><i>Prelim mortis & vite</i></p> <p><i>Disputacio inter monacham & clericum</i></p> <p>“a stanzaic poem on monastic life”⁹⁴⁷</p> <p>A passage from <i>Augustinus de laude psalmodum</i></p> <p>A passage from <i>Per quem Enchiridion transfertur in psalterium</i>⁹⁴⁸</p>
<p>Bath, Longleat House, MS 38</p> <p>220mm x 159mm</p> <p>Vellum</p> <p>The MS is missing its first eight leaves</p> <p>The manuscript is a collaboration between two scribes with ff.9r-49v and 53r-200v in Ebesham’s hand and ff.50r-52v and 201r-308 by another.⁹⁴⁹ The marginal notes in both sections are by this second hand.⁹⁵⁰</p> <p>Doyle believes that it was most likely “transcribed for Westminster itself, since the manuscript does not look like a presentation copy to an outsider of influence.”⁹⁵¹</p>	<p>ff.9r-256v, <i>Objectiones et argumenta contra et pro privilegiis Sanctuarii Westmonasteriensis</i></p>

⁹³⁹ Doyle, “William Ebesham,” p.318.

⁹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁹⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁹⁴⁸ “[...] both found also in Rylands, only there in the opposite order and separately in the middle of the volume (fol. 128r and 126r respectively), whereas here used to fill the last leaf in a rather cramped fashion. The recurrence implies that if one manuscript was not a direct source for the other there was a common exemplar available to the copyist, despite the possible gap in time between the two. Rylands must have been finished after 1480 and Cosin after 1485 [...]” *Ibid.*

⁹⁴⁹ *Id.* p.320.

⁹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁹⁵¹ *Ibid.*

Table 4: Manuscripts of Chaucerian Works

Below are brief descriptions and outlines of the contents of those extant manuscript, dating to the fifteenth century, which share the Chaucerian works of Items Three and Five in John Paston II's Inventory of Books. Unless stated otherwise the titles listed and the descriptions have been taken from M.C. Seymour, *A Catalogue of Chaucer Manuscripts. Volume I, Works Before The Canterbury Tales*, (Aldershot: Scholar Press, 1995). In this work, Seymour does not ascribe the *Temple of Glass* to Lydgate, and I have amended this entry in the tables below.

MS: Cambridge, Magdalene College MS Pepys 2006, part 1⁹⁵²

Date: 1450-1475

Scribe(s): There are three main hands with the second hand (ff.23-35 and 37-71, which is section two of the MS) identified by Seymour as being East Anglian (possibly Ely).⁹⁵³ The other two hands are not identified.

Fifteenth-century Owner(s): Seymour writes that the

titles of items 1 and 5 added in late sixteenth-century hand, perhaps by John Stow (d.1605) who appears to have collated this text of *Temple of Glass* with that of MS. Fairfax 16.⁹⁵⁴

The provenance of this manuscript has also been studied by Mary C. Erler who focuses on the inscriptions found on f.378, "Johannes Kiriell," Erler identifies three possible candidates for this inscription:

John Kyriell I who died in 1483; John Kyriell II who died in 1504; and John Kyriell III, who flourished in the early sixteenth century.⁹⁵⁵

Erler links John Kyriell I with Kent, with Ethel Seaton suggesting that he was the younger brother of "the well-known Kentish military man Sir Thomas Kyriell."⁹⁵⁶ Sir Thomas served in France in the 1430s and 1440s but Erler notes

⁹⁵² M.C. Seymour, *A Catalogue of Chaucer's Manuscripts, Volume I: Works before the Canterbury Tales*, (Hants: Scholar Press, 1995), pp.90-92

⁹⁵³ *CCMI*, p.92.

⁹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁹⁵⁵ M.C. Erler, "Fifteenth-Century Owners of Chaucer's Work: Cambridge, Magdalene College MS Pepys 2006," *The Chaucer Review*, vol.38, no.4 (2004), p.402.

⁹⁵⁶ *Ibid.* Here Erler draws on the following work, Ethel Seaton, *Sir Richard Roos, c.1410-1482, Lancastrian Poet* (London, 1961), pp.106-8.

that he is also mentioned in the Paston letters.⁹⁵⁷ Erler states that Kyriell is mentioned twice in the letters but Richmond and Beadle, in editing the third volume of the Paston Letters and providing an index for all three volumes of the Early English Text Society edition of the documents only finds one mention of a “Sir Thomas Kiriell (Keriel)”.⁹⁵⁸ This letter was written by William Lomnor to John Paston I and in it he reports of the murder of the Duke of Suffolk (which took place on the 3rd May 1450, and Lomnor’s letter dating to 5th May) and also records that “Ser Thomas Keiriell is take prisoner” seemingly as part of this attack on event.⁹⁵⁹

The second inscription discussed by Erler reads, "Iste liber constat Willielmo ffetypace mercery londoniensis" which Manly and Rickert suggest was made by the son of the London draper John Fetplace (or Fetiplace).⁹⁶⁰ Erler writes, that William Fettyplace was “certainly the youngest son of the great draper and royal servant John Fettyplace” and shows this William to be the most likely candidtate for the inscription in the manuscript.⁹⁶¹ Erler goes on to question how the manuscript passed between the two families, proposing London as the most obvious location for transmission:

Both Kyriells and Fettyplaces were active in London, as we have seen, and the manuscript might have been sold in the capital's secondhand book market. ⁹⁶²

Although, there is also the possibility that this manuscript circulated within Kent:

[t] hough the Fettyplaces' principal focus was Berkshire, they too, like the Kyriells, owned property in Kent. Since the early fifteenth century they had held the manor of New Langport, Kent, a mile west of Lydd –

⁹⁵⁷ Erler, “Owners of Chaucer’s Work,” p.402.

⁹⁵⁸ *Ibid.* Richard Beadle and Colin Richmond, (eds.), *Paston Letters and Papers of the Fifteenth Century, Part III*, EETS s.s.22 (2005), p.280.

⁹⁵⁹ Norman Davis, ed., *Paston Letters and Papers of the Fifteenth Century, Part II*, Early English Text Society, s.s.21 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976, reprt. 2004), p.36.

⁹⁶⁰ John M. Manly and Edith Rickert, eds., *The Text of the Canterbury Tales, Volume I*, (Chicago, Illinois: University of Chicago Press, 1940) p.406-9.

⁹⁶¹ Erler, “Fifteenth-Century Owners of Chaucer’s Work,” p.408.

⁹⁶² *Ibid.*

the Kent town whose civic records show payments to local men mustered by both John Kyriell I and II.⁹⁶³

Section One

- 1 Lydgate, *Complaint of the Black Knight*
- 2 Lydgate, *Temple of Glass*

Section Two

- 3 Chaucer, *Legend of Good Women*
- 4 Chaucer, *A, B, C*
- 5 Chaucer, *Hous of Fame*
- 6 Chaucer, *Complaint of Mars*
- 7 Chaucer, *Complaint of Venus*
- 8 Chaucer, *Fortune*
- 9 Chaucer, *Parlement of Foules*

Section Three

- 10 *Three Kings of Cologne*
- 11 *Letter of Prester John*
- 12 *Serpent of division*

Section Four

- 13 Burgh, *Cato minor*
- 14 Burgh, *Cato major*

MS: Cambridge, Trinity College MS R.3.19⁹⁶⁴

Note: This MS consists of thirteen separately designed booklets, with sections 11-13 being early sixteenth century additions.⁹⁶⁵

Date: Largely fifteenth century (with the exceptions outlined above), c.1478-83.⁹⁶⁶

Scribe(s): There are at least four hands identified by Seymour, with the first hand stated to have the character of an East Midland hand, with some Suffolk forms.⁹⁶⁷

⁹⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁹⁶⁴ *CCMI*, pp.95-98

⁹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p.95.

⁹⁶⁶ "Cambridge, Trinity College R.3.19," *The James Catalogue of Western Manuscripts*: <http://sites.trin.cam.ac.uk/james/show.php?index=1370> - accessed 23rd August 2013.

⁹⁶⁷ *CCMI*, pp.98.

Fifteenth-century Owner(s): Unknown. Seymour does write that it was probably written in London and “possibly under the influence of a former associate of John Shirley (d. 1456) for the character of its miscellany resembles mss. put out by him.”⁹⁶⁸

Section One

- 1 *Festum natalia domini*
- 2 *To his mistress*
- 3 Lydgate, *Fall of Princes IV and III*
- 4 *O all ye*
- 5 *O lady myne*
- 6 *Go lilyl boke*
- 7 *My lefe ys faren in a lond*
- 8 *Craft of lovers*
- 9 *Of theyre nature*
- 10 *Now freshe floure*
- 11 Lydgate, *Bycorne and chychevache*
- 12 *Honour and ioy*
- 13 *A lover's lament*
- 14 *A virelai*
- 15 *Praise of marguerite*
- 16 *Lady of pite*
- 17 *O merciful*
- 18 *Judgement of Paris*
- 19 Lydgate, *Testament*

Section Two

- 20 *The unware woo*
- 21 *A list of gods and goddesses*
- 22 Lydgate (?) *Assembly of gods*
- 23 Lydgate, *Churl and the Bird*
- 24 Lydgate, *Isopes fabules*

Section Three

- 25 Chaucer, *Parlement of Foules*

Section Four

- 26 Gilbert Banester, *Guiscardo and Ghismonda*

⁹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

27 Ashby, *A prisoner's reflections*

Section Five

28 Lydgate and Burgh, *Secrees of old philosoffres*

29 *Four complexions*

Section Six

30 *Assembly of ladies*

Section Seven

31 Roos, *La belle dame*

32 *Ten commandments of love*

33 *Nine ladies worthy*

Section Eight

34 Chaucer, *Legend of Good Women*

35 Chaucer, *Complaint unto Pity*

Section Nine

36 “[E]xtract from Chaucer’s *Monk’s Prologue and Tale* [...] possibly copied from Caxton’s edition c.1478.”⁹⁶⁹

37 “composite verse, mainly Lydgate, *Fall of Princes* [...] bracketing 91 stanzas of Chaucer’s *Monk’s Tale*, [...] copied from Caxton’s edition of *Canterbury Tales* c.1478”⁹⁷⁰

Section Ten

38 *Discriving of a fayre lady*

39 *O mosy quince*

40 Lydgate, *Horns Away*

41 *Looke well*

42 *Pilgrim’s song*

43 Lydgate, *They that no while endure*

44 *Proverbs and Wisdom*

45 *How the good wife*

Sections 11-13 are sixteenth-century additions

⁹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p.97.

⁹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

MS: Cambridge, University Library MS Ff.1.6 (the Findern Manuscript)⁹⁷¹

Date: According to Seymour, it is "written over several years after c.1450. [...]

Bound together in the early sixteenth century."⁹⁷²

Scribe: Copied between 1450-1475, in the North-West Midlands, by over forty scribes. Seymour identifies, "the first part of *PF* [the *Parliament of Fowls*] ff. 29-34, Hoccleve's *Letter of Cupid* ff.71-6v, and the major part of *La Belle dame [sans Mercy]* ff. 117-9v, 123-6v, 130-4v" as being by the same scribe, Scribe 6 in Seymour's survey.⁹⁷³

Fifteenth-century Owner(s): According to Seymour, this is a "home-made household book, [...] put together in one Derbyshire household, possibly but not certainly the Finderns. Owned by Sir Thomas Knyvett (d. 1618) [...]." This later owner is Sir Thomas Knyvett of Ashwellthorpe, Norfolk.⁹⁷⁴

- 1 A fragment of the tale of 'Philomeme' and Tereus
- 2 *Herypus King of Armenia*, an excerpt from Gower's *Confessio Amantis*.
- 3 Chaucer, *On the Death of Pity*
- 4 Chaucer, *Of the Cuckoo and the Nightingale*
- 5 Chaucer, *Parliament of Birds*
- 6 *Story of a King and a Knight*
- 7 *Parliament of Love*
- 8 *On the Deadly Sins*
- 9 Chaucer, *Complaynt to his empty Purse*
- 10 Chaucer, *Complaint of Annelida*
- 11 *Pyramus and Thesbe*
- 12 Chaucer, *The Complaint of Venus*
- 13 *Lierar Cupidinis*
- 14 A story about King Antiochus
- 15 *Sir Degrevaunt*
- 16 *The Cronekelys of Seynts and Kyngs of Yngelond*, a chronological table, to which are added some heraldic notes

⁹⁷¹ Charles Hardwich and Henry Richards Luard, *A Catalogue of the Manuscripts Preserved in the Library of the University of Cambridge*, 2. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (1858) pp. 286-290. For codicological information on the manuscript see *CCMI*, pp.19-20.

⁹⁷² *CCMI*, pp.19-20.

⁹⁷³ *Ibid.*, p.20.

⁹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

- 17 *La Belle Dame sans Mercy*
- 18 "Several short poems"⁹⁷⁵
- 19 *A Prayer to the Virgin*
- 20 Lydgate (?), *A Ballad of Good Counsail*
- 21 *How myschaunce regnyth in Ingleland*, possibly an extract from a longer poem
- 22 *On different temperaments*
- 23 *A tretise for Lavandres*
- 24 No title or colophon. Begins "Cassamus roos aftre this talkynge"
- 25 A ballad addressed to Fortune
- 26 Begins "Chaunge not the freende that thou knowest of oolde."

MS: Cambridge, University Library MS GG.4.27 part 1⁹⁷⁶

Date: c.1420

Scribe: "East Anglian (perhaps W. Suffolk writing in Cambridge or Ely)"⁹⁷⁷

Fifteenth-century Owner(s): Unknown.

- 1 Chaucer, *A, B, C*.
- 2 Chaucer (?), *Litera directa de locgon*
- 3 Verse, beginning "In May when every herte is lyght"
- 4 *De amico and amicam*
- 5 *Responcio*
- 6 Chaucer (?), *Five Books of Troilus and Cresseide*
- 7 Chaucer, *Canterbury Tales*
- 8 A gap, which is followed by the remainder to "The Parson's Tale"
- 9 Chaucer, *The Legend of Good Women*
- 10 Chaucer, *Parliament of Fowls*
- 11 Lydgate, *Temple of Glass*
- 12 *Supplicacio Amantis*
- 13 An excerpt from the *Romance of Florice and Blauncheflour*
- 14 *Horn*
- 15 *Assumpcion de nostre Dame*

⁹⁷⁵ Harwich and Richards, *Catalogue of the Manuscripts in the University of Cambridge* 2, pp. 286-290.

⁹⁷⁶ Charles Hardwich and Henry Richards Luard, *A Catalogue of the Manuscripts Preserved in the Library of the University of Cambridge*, 3, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1858) pp.172-174. For codicological information on the manuscript see *CCMI*, p.19.

⁹⁷⁷ *CCMI*, p.19.

- 16 A later insertion – Chaucer, *Retraction*
- 17 A later insertion – a glossary of words
- 18 A later insertion – three small pieces grouped together as *Bon Counsail* or a “Saiying of dan John”
- 19 A later insertion – *Chaucer to his emptie Purse*
- 20 Insertion – *Chaucer’s words to his scrivener*

MS: Cambridge, University Library MS Hh.4.12⁹⁷⁸

Date: 1475-1500

Scribe(s): Two hands, both South-East Midlands

Fifteenth-century Owner(s): “f.44^v ‘John yarrade’ twice and ‘Wyllm bryan” and Seymour includes information on later subsequent ownership.⁹⁷⁹

Section One

- 1 Burgh, *Cato major*
- 2 Burgh, *Cato minor*
- 3 Lydgate, *Stans puer*

Section Two

- 4 Lydgate, *St. Austin*
- 5 Chaucer, *Former age*
- 6 *Complaint of Christ*

Section Three

- 7 Lydgate, *Horse, goose, and sheep*
- 8 Lydgate, *Fabula*
- 9 Lydgate, *The churl and the bird*

Section Four

- 10 Lydgate, *Utter thy language*
- 11 Lydgate, *Horns away*
- 12 Lydgate, *Upon a cross*
- 13 Lydgate, *Midsummer rose*
- 14 *The world so wide*
- 15 *Lamentation of the duchess of Gloucester*
- 16 *Quid eligam ignore*

⁹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p.29. Neither of the names inscribed in this manuscript appear in the Paston letters.

⁹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p.29. Neither of the names inscribed in this manuscript appear in the Paston letters.

17 Chaucer, *Parlement of foules*

MS: London, British Library MS Additional 9832⁹⁸⁰

Date: 1450-1475

Scribe: South-East Midlands

Fifteenth-century Owner(s): Unknown, although Seymour includes information on later inscriptions and subsequent ownership.⁹⁸¹

- 1 Chaucer, *Legend of Good Women*

MS: London, British Library MS Additional 12524⁹⁸²

Date: after 1472

Scribe: Northern, possibly the West Riding

Fifteenth-century Owner(s): Unknown, although Seymour includes information on later inscriptions and subsequent ownership.⁹⁸³

- 1 Chaucer, *Legend of Good Women*
- 2 Gilbert Banester, *Guiscardo and Ghismonda*

MS: London, British Library MS Additional 16165⁹⁸⁴

Date: c.1450 (with internal evidence pointing to a possible date of between 1423 and 1439)⁹⁸⁵

Scribe(s): John Shirley

Fifteenth-century Owner(s): "possibly the copy bequeathed by Sir Peter Arderne, baron of the Exchequer (d.1467) [...] to his son-in-law John Bohun."⁹⁸⁶

- 1 Shirley, verse table of contents
- 2 Chaucer, *Boece*
- 3 Trevisa, *Gospel of Nicodemus*
- 4 Edward, duke of York, *Master of Game*

⁹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, pp.98-100.

⁹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, pp.99-100.

⁹⁸² *Ibid.*, pp.89-90.

⁹⁸³ *Ibid.*, p.90.

⁹⁸⁴ In M.C. Seymour and Ralph Hanna III, "Boece," in *CCMI*, pp.43-53, with British Library MS Additional 16165 on pp.49-50.

⁹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p.50.

⁹⁸⁶ *Ibid.* Here Seymour and Hanna draw on James Raine (ed.), *Testamenta Eboracensia: A Selection of Wills from the Registry at York 4* (London: Nichols, 1869), p.102.

- 5 Lydgate, *Complaint of a lover's life*
- 6 *Regula sacerdotalis scripta*
- 7 Lydgate, *Temple of Glass*
- 8 Chaucer, *Anelida and Arcite*
- 9 Halsham, balade (here ascribed to Chaucer)
- 10 *Deuotissima suffragia*
- 11 Richard Beauchamp, earl of Warwick, a *virelai*
- 12 *Proverbs*
- 13 Lydgate, *Invocation to St. Anne*
- 14 Lydgate, *Departure of Thomas Chaucer*
- 15 Lydgate, *Lover's lament*
- 16 Pycard, a *devynale*
- 17 Lydgate, *Women's inconstancy*
- 18 Lydgate, *A lover's new year gift*
- 19 Lydgate, *A complaint*
- 20 *Doctrina sacerdotis*
- 21 Balade of complaint
- 22 Chaucer, *Anelida and Arcite*

MS: London, British Library MS Additional 28617⁹⁸⁷

Date: 1475-1500

Scribe: East Midlands, with some East Anglian forms

Fifteenth-century Owner(s): Unknown, although Seymour includes information on later inscriptions and subsequent ownership.⁹⁸⁸

- 1 Chaucer, *Legend of Good Women*

MS: London, British Library MS Harley 372 part 1⁹⁸⁹

Date: 1450-1475

Scribe: South-East Midlands

⁹⁸⁷ *CCMI*, pp.92-93.

⁹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p.93.

⁹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, pp.37-39.

Fifteenth-century Owner(s): Unknown, although Seymour includes information on later inscriptions and subsequent ownership.⁹⁹⁰

- 1 Lydgate, *Lives of St. Edmund and St. Fremund*
- 2 Lydgate, *Banners of St. Edmund*
- 3 Lydgate, *Advice on marrying*
- 4 *Kings of England, from Alfred to Henry VI*
- 5 Lydgate, *Christ's Passion*
- 6 *Gaude flore virginale*
- 7 A prayer to St. Sebastian
- 8 Chaucer, *Anelida and Arcite*
- 9 Roos, *La belle dame*
- 10 Lydgate, hymn to the Virgin

MS: London, British Library MS Harley 7333

Date: 1450-1475

Scribe: "Apparently compiled from seven separate manuscripts, some of which derive directly or by copy from exemplars of John Shirley (d. 1456) and carry his 'Nota per Shirle'." There are five scribal hands at work, which come from/use the dialect of the Central Midlands "with strong southerly (Hants.) underlays."⁹⁹¹

Fifteenth-century Owner(s): Possibly William Stoughton at the Augustinian abbey of St. Mary de Pratis, Leischester. His signature appears on f.41 and rebus of his name on ff.32^v, 45^v, 189, 190, and 192.⁹⁹²

Section One

- 1 *Brut*

Section Two

- 2 Burgh, *Cato minor*
- 3 Burgh, *Cato major*
- 4 Lydgate, *Against fortune*
- 5 Lydgate, *Henry VI's title*
- 6 Lydgate, *Roundel on the coronation [of Henry VI]*

Section Three

⁹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p.38.

⁹⁹¹ *Ibid.*, pp.21 and 23.

⁹⁹² *Ibid.*, p.23.

- 7 Lydgate, *Guy of Warwick*
- 8 Sellyng, *Old man's counsel*
- 9 Charles d'Orleans, *Mon cuer chante*
- 10 Chaucer, *Canterbury Tales*

Section Four

- 11 Gower, *Confessio amantis*, extract of the first recension of Book V
- 12 Burgh (?), *Proverbs quod Impingham*
- 13 Gower, *Confessio amantis*, extracts from Books I and II
- 14 Chaucer, *Parlement of Foules*
- 15 Lydgate, *Life of Our Lady*
- 16 Chaucer, *Complaint of Mars*

Section Five

- 17 Chaucer, *Anelida and Arcite*
- 18 *Complaint against hope*
- 19 Chaucer (sometimes attributed to), *An amorous complaint*
- 20 Lydgate, *Life of St. Edmund and St. Fremund*
- 21 Lydgate, *Christ's complaint of his passion*
- 22 Chaucer, *Stedfastnesse*
- 23 Chaucer, *Gentilesse*
- 24 Chaucer, *Truth*
- 25 Chaucer, *Complaint to his purse*
- 26 Halsam, balades
- 27 Latin verses separated by an extract from *Pilgrimage of the Soul*

Section Six

- 28 Lydgate, *Kings of England*, ending with Henry VI "with blank space presumably for the insertion of another stanza on Edward IV"⁹⁹³
 Burgh, *Christmas game*
 Gesta Romanorum

Section Seven

- Hoccleve, *Regiment of Princes*

⁹⁹³ *Ibid.*, p.22.

MS: Longleat House MS 258⁹⁹⁴

Date: 1460-70⁹⁹⁵

Scribe(s): East Midlands

Fifteenth-century Owner(s): Unknown, although Seymour includes information on later inscriptions and subsequent ownership.⁹⁹⁶

Section One

1 Lydgate, *Temple of Glass*

Section Two

2 Chaucer, *Complaint of Mars*

3 Chaucer, *Complaint unto pity*

4 Chaucer, *Assembly of ladies*

5 Chaucer, *Anelida and Arcite*

Section Three

6 Chaucer, *Parlement of foules*. affiliated to MSS. Digby 181, Tanner 346

Section Four

7 *The eye and the heart*

Section Five

8 Roos, *La belle dame*

9 Lydgate, *The churl and the bird*

MS: Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Arch Selden B 24 (SC 3554)⁹⁹⁷

Date: c.1490

Scribe: "James Gray, notary public and priest, who also wrote Advocates Library MS. 34.7.3 and Haye MS in the Scott Collection at Abbotsford.

Fifteenth-century Owner(s): James Gray?

1 Chaucer, *Legend of Good Women*

MS: Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Bodley 638 (SC 2078)⁹⁹⁸

Date: 1475-1500

⁹⁹⁴ Eleanor Prescott Hammond, "MS. Longleat 258: A Chaucerian Codex," *Modern Language Notes*, 20.3 (March, 1905) pp. 77-79 and *CCMI*, pp.31-33. With the list of content coming from Seymour.

⁹⁹⁵ Prescott Hammond, "MS. Longleat 258," pp.77-79.

⁹⁹⁶ *CCMI*, p.33.

⁹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p.100.

⁹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp.88-89.

Scribe(s): Mixed hands but all West Midlands. Signed 'Lity', 'Lyty' and 'JL'.⁹⁹⁹

Fifteenth-century Owner(s): Unknown, although Seymour includes information on later inscriptions and subsequent ownership.¹⁰⁰⁰

Section One

- 1 Lydgate, *Complaint of the Black Knight*
- 2 Chaucer, *Anelida and Arcite*
- 3 Clanvowe, *Book of Cupid*
- 4 Lydgate, *Temple of Glass*
- 5 Hoccleve, *Letter of Cupid*
- 6 Chaucer, *Complaint unto Pity*

Section Two

- 7 Chaucer, *Legend of Good Women*
- 8 Chaucer, *Parlement of Foules*
- 9 Chaucer, *Book of the Duchess*
- 10 Chaucer, *Hous of Fame*

Section Three

- 11 *Chance of dice*
- 12 Chaucer, *A, B, C*
- 13 Chaucer, *Fortune*
- 14 *Complaint against hope*
- 15 *Ragmans roll*
- 16 Lydgate, *Order of Fools*

MS: Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Digby 181 part 1 (SC 1782)¹⁰⁰¹

Date: 1475-1500

Scribe(s): Seymour notes that "the same hand wrote Rylands MS. Eng. 113 (*Canterbury Tales*) and inscribed it 'Constat Iohanni Brode Iuniori'. A John Brode is recorded at Haberton, near Totnes in 1459-61 and 1489; MS. Eng. 113 was owned by John Hull, collector of customs at Exeter (d.1549)."¹⁰⁰²

⁹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p.88.

¹⁰⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p.89.

¹⁰⁰¹ *Ibid.*, pp.30-31.

¹⁰⁰² *Ibid.*, p.30.

Fifteenth-century Owner(s): Unknown, although Seymour includes information on later inscriptions and subsequent ownership.¹⁰⁰³

- 1 Hoccleve, *Letter of Cupid*
- 2 *Pain and sorrow of marriage*
- 3 *Examples against women*
- 4 Peter Idley, *Instructions to his son*. Book I.
- 5 Lydgate, *Complaint of the Black Knight*
- 6 Chaucer, *Anelida and Arcite*
- 7 Chaucer, *Parlement of foules*
- 8 Lydgate, *Fall of Princes*, extract of nineteen stanzas

MS: Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Fairfax 16¹⁰⁰⁴

Date: c.1450

Scribe(s): Mixed hand, West Midlands. Seymour tentatively suggests that the scribe was working in London.¹⁰⁰⁵

Fifteenth-century Owner(s): "f.14^v coat of arms of John Stanley, of Hooton, Cheshire, Usher of the Chamber and Serjeant of the Armoury 1431-60, who died by 1469, cf. MS Harley 6163."¹⁰⁰⁶

Section One

- 1 Chaucer, *Complaint of Mars*
- 2 Chaucer, *Complaint of Venus*
- 3 Lydgate, *Complaint of the Black Knight*
- 4 Chaucer, *Anelida and Arcite*
- 5 Clanvowe, *Book of Cupid*
- 6 Chaucer, *Truth*
- 7 Hoccleve, *Letter of Cupid*
- 8 *Ragmans roll*
- 9 Roos, *La belle dame*
- 10 Lydgate, *Temple of Glass*
- 11 Chaucer, *Legend of Good Women*
- 12 Chaucer, *Parlement of Foules*

¹⁰⁰³ *Ibid.*, p.31.

¹⁰⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, pp.85-87.

¹⁰⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p.87.

¹⁰⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

13 Chaucer, *Book of the Duchess*

14 *Envoi to Alison*

15 *Chance of dice*

16 Chaucer, *Hous of Fame*

Section Two

17 Chaucer, *Complaint unto Pity*

18 Chaucer, *A, B, C*

19 Chaucer, *Fortune*

20 Chaucer, *Envoi to Scogan*

21 Chaucer, *Complaint to his purse*

22 Chaucer, *Envoi to Buxton*

23 Chaucer, *Lack of steadfastness*

24 Chaucer, *Against women unconstant*

25 Lydgate, *Fall of Princes II*

26 Lydgate, *Four things*

27 *Proverbs*

28 *Complaint against hope*

29 *An amorous complaint*

30 Hoccleve, *To Henry V*

31 Lydgate, *Doubleness*

32 Lydgate, *Prayer for Henry VI*

33 Chaucer, *Truth*

Section Three

34 Lydgate *Reason and sensuality*

Section Four

35 *A lover's praise*

Section Five

36 Lydgate, *Venus mass*

37 "a sequence of 20 balades of a lover, on of which (the eighth, on f.321) is by Charles d'Orleans"¹⁰⁰⁷

¹⁰⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, p.86. The authorship of these poems has been debated with H.N. MacCracken suggesting that they were by William de la Pole, Duke of Suffolk, who, as Mariana Neilly points out, was guarded by John Stanley, the commissioner of this manuscript. The authorship of the poems remains uncertain and Neilly also states that Charles d'Orleans translated his own poetry into English and, thus, have written all twenty in this booklet. See H.N. MacCracken, "An English Friend of Charles of Orléans," *PMLA* vol.26, no.1 (1911), pp.142-180 and Mariana Neilly, "William de la Pole's Poetic 'Parlement': the Political Lyrics of Bodleian MS Fairfax 16," in *Authority and Diplomacy*

- 38 *Seven articles on the order of heralds* (an addition in a late fifteenth-century hand)
- 39 Lydgate, *Verses on the kings of England* (an addition in a late fifteenth-century hand)

MS: Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Laud misc. 416 (SC 1479)¹⁰⁰⁸

Date: c.1459

Scribe(s): At least three scribes, two of which write in a Kentish hand. "The second hand added after the colophon f.226^v 'Scriptum Rhodo per Iohannis Neuton die 25 Octobris 1459.' *Rhodo* denotes 'at la Rode,' the name of the manor house of John Tiptoft, earl of Worcester (executed 1471), in the parish of Selling, Kent, otherwise part of the estate of the Benedictine cathedral priory of Canterbury [...]."¹⁰⁰⁹

Fifteenth-century Owner(s): Possibly the household book of the Tiptoft family.

- 1 Peter Idley, *Instructions to his son*
- 2 Tabula of *Cursor mundi*
- 3 *Cursor mundi*
- 4 Walton (trans.), *De re militari*
- 5 Lydgate, *Siege of Thebes*
- 6 Lydgate and Burgh, *Secrees of old philosoffres*
- 7 Chaucer, *Parlement of foules*

MS: Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Rawlinson C86 (SC 11951) part 3¹⁰¹⁰

Date: Very late fifteenth century or early sixteenth century

Scribe(s): Hand of the SE Midlands

Fifteenth-century Owner(s): Unknown, although Seymour includes information on later inscriptions and subsequent ownership.¹⁰¹¹

- 1 Lydgate, *Horse, goose, sheep*
- 2 Piers of Fulham, *A man that lovith fishing*
- 3 *Colyn Blowbols testament*

from *Dante to Shakespeare*, eds. Jason Powell and William T. Rossiter, (Surrey: Ashgate, 2013), pp.57-68.

¹⁰⁰⁸ *CCMI*, pp.25-26.

¹⁰⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p.26.

¹⁰¹⁰ *CCMI*, pp.94-95.

¹⁰¹¹ *Ibid.*, p.95.

- 4 Chaucer, "The complaynte of dido" extract from *Legend of Good Women*. The marginalia attributes this work to "Lidgate" and Seymour notes that the text "shares some of the peculiarities of MS Pepys 2006 and its affiliates."¹⁰¹²
- 5 *Sir Launfal*
- 6 *Weddyng of Syr Gawen*

MS: Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Tanner 346 (SC 10173)¹⁰¹³

Date: 1450-75

Scribe(s): Three hands. SE Midlands

Fifteenth-century Owner(s): "Sir John Greystoke (d.1501), second son of Ralph lord Greystoke (d.1487) of Cumberland."¹⁰¹⁴

- 1 Chaucer, *Legend of Good Women*
- 2 Hoccleve, *Letter of Cupid*
- 3 Lydgate, *Complaint of the Black Knight*
- 4 Chaucer, *Anelida and Arcite*
- 5 Chaucer, *Complaint of Mars*
- 6 Chaucer, *Complaint of Venus*
- 7 Chaucer, *Complaint unto Pity*
- 8 *As oft as syghes*
- 9 *To his mistress*

Section Two

- 10 Lydgate, *Temple of Glass*
- 11 Clanvowe, *Book of Cupid*
- 12 *Envoi to Alison*

Section Three

- 13 Chaucer, *Book of the Duchess*

Section Four

- 14 Chaucer, *Parlement of Foules*

¹⁰¹² *Ibid.*, p.94.

¹⁰¹³ *Ibid.*, pp.83-85.

¹⁰¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p.84

MS: Oxford, St. John's College 57¹⁰¹⁵

Date: 1450-1475

Scribe: Essex. "Similar to, and possibly identical with, C.U.L. MS Kk.1.2 part 10 (Lydgate, *Life of Our Lady*) [...]."¹⁰¹⁶

Fifteenth-century Owner(s): the manuscript contains a pennant and an amorial shield with the pennant carrying the name 'hoole' and the possibility of a letter W supporting another device of a mitre and crown, above which are inscribed two Tudor roses.¹⁰¹⁷ The original owner is not identified but Seymour presumes that these devises were added in 1485. "On the parchment end-leaves in various sixteenth-century hands 'Dodlay' (perhaps John Sutton, Baron Dudley; not Edward, 6th Baron Dudley (d.1530) [...])."¹⁰¹⁸

- 1 *Pricke of Conscience*
- 2 *Hic suplemur defectus libri precendentis*
- 3 *Chronicle of London*
- 4 Chaucer, *Parlement of Foules*
- 5 *Statutes and ordinances* of Henry V's host before Mantes 1419

¹⁰¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp.23-25.

¹⁰¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p.24.

¹⁰¹⁷ The devices and further heraldic information is given in Seymour: *Ibid.*

¹⁰¹⁸ *Ibid.*

Table 5: Manuscripts of John Lydgate's *Siege of Thebes*

MSS ¹⁰¹⁹	Date ¹⁰²⁰	Contents	Owner/Scribe/Location
Boston Public Library MS f.med 94	c.1430	1) <i>Siege of Thebes</i>	Written by the Stephen Dodesham, who also copied <i>The Siege of Thebes</i> in Beinecke Library MS 661 and Cambridge University Library Additional MS 3137. A Carthusian monk at Witham in Somerset and then at Sheen, "it seems likely that Dodesham copied the three manuscripts of Thebes previous to taking his vows, when he was working as a lay scribe [...]. Belonged to the Lyle family at the end of the 15 th century, who owned estates near Renfrewshire, just west of Glasgow [...]." ¹⁰²¹
Cambridge, Magdalene College Library, Pepys 2011	c.1500	1) <i>Siege of Thebes</i> . ¹⁰²² On the first of the back fly-leaves has been added "A lenvoye to all prynces that be disposid to be lecherous". ¹⁰²³	F.4 "Edwardus sextus dei gracia Anglie. ffrauce et hiberbe rex fidei defensor et in terries ecclesie Anglicane et hibernice supremus." ¹⁰²⁴
Cambridge, Trinity College Library, MS. O.5.2 (SC 1283)	c.1475	1) <i>Generydes</i> ; 2) <i>Troy Book</i> ; 3) <i>Siege of Thebes</i> . ¹⁰²⁵	Associated with the Thwaites of Hardingham, Norfolk, and the Knevet family. ¹⁰²⁶

¹⁰¹⁹ Axel Erdmann (ed.), *Lydgate's The Siege of Thebes, part I*, EETS o.s. 108 (London: Oxford University Press, 1911), pp. ix-x.

¹⁰²⁰ From Middle English Compendium HyperBibliography for "John Lydgate, Siege of Thebes [Lydg.ST]: <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/m/mec/hyp-idx?type=byte&byte=3245597> - accessed 4th July 2018

¹⁰²¹ "Boston Public Library MS f.med 94," *Boston Public Library*: <http://catalog.mbln.org/Polaris/search/title.aspx?ctx=12.1033.0.0.6&pos=1> - accessed 5th July 2018.

¹⁰²² Axel Erdmann (ed.), *Lydgate's Siege of Thebes, part II*, EETS e.s. 125 (London: Oxford University Press, 1930), p.52.

¹⁰²³ *Ibid.*, p.53.

¹⁰²⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁰²⁵ "O.5.2, Romance of Generydes, Lydgate's Troy Book etc." in *The James Catalogue of Western Manuscripts*: <http://trin-sites-pub.trin.cam.ac.uk/james/viewpage.php?index=829> - accessed 4th July 2018.

¹⁰²⁶ *Ibid.*

Cambridge, Trinity College Library, MS. R.4.20 (SC 652)	c.1450	Part I: 1) <i>The Travels of Sir John Mandeville</i> . Part II: 2) <i>Siege of Thebes</i> ; 3) Lydgate, <i>Hymns to the Virgin and Christ</i> ; 4) 3 stanzas from Chaucer's <i>Troilus and Crisseyde</i> . ¹⁰²⁷	The names William Kelyng and John Hydes are inscribed on f.87. ¹⁰²⁸
CUL Additional 3137	c.1500	1) <i>Siege of Thebes</i> . ¹⁰²⁹	Written by the scribe Stephen Dodesham.
CUL Additional 6864 (<i>olim</i> Gurney 150)	c.1500	1) <i>Siege of Thebes</i> . ¹⁰³⁰	"Inside the front cover are names of (seemingly) two former owners of the MS.: "Antonius Morellus Parrhisiensis medicus" and "William Rookes." It was subsequently owned by J. H. Gurney of Northrepps, Norfolk. ¹⁰³¹
Coventry, Corporate Record Office, MS Acc.325/1	c.1430 -1460	Part I: 1) <i>De Regimine Principum</i> ; 2) Hoccleve, his "holograph collection for the Countess of Westmoreland (ca. 1425); 3) <i>Dance of Death</i> ; 4) Chaucer, minor poems; 5) Mandeville, <i>Travels</i> . Part II: <i>Siege of Thebes</i> . Part III: <i>Siege of Jerusalem</i> . "a current hand of the second half of the fifteenth century has added 24 English quatrains on mortality [...]." ¹⁰³²	This may have been copied at Bury St. Edmunds "but it may have been in London, and it seems that the compilers of the Coventry MS, up to a quarter of a century later, had access to the same or related sources of importance, as for Chaucer too." ¹⁰³³ The manuscript has a close kinship with Gg.4.27 ¹⁰³⁴ .

¹⁰²⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁰²⁸ "R.4.20, Mandeville, Lydgate's Thebes," in *The James Catalogue of Western Manuscripts*: <http://trin-sites-pub.trin.cam.ac.uk/james/viewpage.php?index=1444> – accessed 4th July 2018.

¹⁰²⁹ Robert R. Edwards, "Introduction," to John Lydgate, *The Siege of Thebes*, ed. Robert R. Edwards (Kalamazoo, Michigan: Medieval Institute Publications, 2001): <http://d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/text/edwards-lydgate-siege-of-thebes-introduction> - accessed 5th July 2018.

¹⁰³⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁰³¹ Erdmann, *Lydgate's Siege of Thebes, II*, p.47.

¹⁰³² A. I. Doyle and George B. Pace, "A New Chaucer Manuscript," in *PMLA* vol. 83 (1) (1968), pp.25-26.

¹⁰³³ *Ibid.*, pp.23-26.

¹⁰³⁴ *Ibid.* pp.32-34.

BL Additional 5140	c.1485	1) <i>The Canterbury Tales</i> ; 2) <i>Siege of Thebes</i> . ¹⁰³⁵	Copied by the same Suffolk scribe as for BL Egerton 2864. ¹⁰³⁶
BL Additional 18632	c.1450	Hoccleve, <i>De regimine principum</i> ; Lydgate, <i>The Siege of Thebes</i>	Associated with the Countess of Ulster (1356-1359) and “given to the monastery of Amesbury by Richard Wygnynton in 1508.” ¹⁰³⁷
BL Arundel 119	c.1421	1) <i>Siege of Thebes</i> . ¹⁰³⁸	Copied for William de la Pole, Duke of Suffolk (possibly at the request of Alice Chaucer). ¹⁰³⁹ In an

¹⁰³⁵ From Middle English Compendium HyperBibliography for “British Library Additional 5140”: <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/m/mec/hyp-idx?type=byte&size=First+100&byte=826675&byte=538305&byte=659171&byte=855745&byte=697621&byte=677315&byte=520261&byte=773254&byte=559293&byte=971628&byte=575153&byte=621548&byte=796028&byte=481305&byte=636573&byte=599904&byte=846728&byte=956373&byte=3245824&byte=890028&byte=873438&byte=742064&byte=915303&byte=811352&byte=939241&byte=507313&byte=724287&ms=%3CMS%20REF%3D%22London%2C%20British%20Library%2C%20Additional%22%3E%3CCITE%3E5140%3C%2FCITE%3E%3C%2FMS%3E> – accessed 6th July 2018.

¹⁰³⁶ “Scribal Profile, Egerton 2864 scribe,” *Late Medieval English Scribes*: <https://www.medievalscribes.com/index.php?browse=hands&id=64&navappellation=Egerton%202864%20scribe%20&msid=62&nav=off> – accessed 4th July 2018. The manuscript contains the *Canterbury Tales*, and it is M.C. Seymour who identifies the scribe as from Suffolk. See M.C. Seymour, *A Catalogue of Chaucer's Manuscripts, Volume II: the Canterbury Tales* (Hants: Scholar Press, 1997), p.116.

¹⁰³⁷ For the association of the manuscript with the Countess of Ulster the catalogue description states: “At the beginning and end are single leaves, formerly pasted to the covers of the volume, being fragments of a household account, apparently of Elizabeth de Burgh, Countess of Ulster, wife of Prince Lionel of England, in the years 30-33 Edw. III [1356-1359].” The description also describes the association of the manuscript with Richard Wygnynton. See “Add MS 18632: 14th century-15th century,” *British Library Explore Archives and Manuscripts*:

[http://searcharchives.bl.uk/primo_library/libweb/action/display.do?tabs=detailsTab&ct=display&fn=search&doc=IAMS032-002095220&indx=1&recIds=IAMS032-002095220&recIdxs=0&elementId=0&renderMode=poppedOut&displayMode=full&frbrVersion=&dscnt=0&frbg=&scp.scps=scope%3A%28BL%29&tab=local&dstmp=1530717136155&srt=rank&mode=Basic&&dum=true&vl\(freeText0\)=additional%2018632&vid=IAMS_VU2](http://searcharchives.bl.uk/primo_library/libweb/action/display.do?tabs=detailsTab&ct=display&fn=search&doc=IAMS032-002095220&indx=1&recIds=IAMS032-002095220&recIdxs=0&elementId=0&renderMode=poppedOut&displayMode=full&frbrVersion=&dscnt=0&frbg=&scp.scps=scope%3A%28BL%29&tab=local&dstmp=1530717136155&srt=rank&mode=Basic&&dum=true&vl(freeText0)=additional%2018632&vid=IAMS_VU2) – accessed 4th July 2018.

¹⁰³⁸ Edwards, “Introduction,” *The Siege of Thebes*.

¹⁰³⁹ The arms of William de la Pole appear on f. 4, see “Arundel MS 119: 15th century” *British Library Explore Archives and Manuscripts*: [http://searcharchives.bl.uk/primo_library/libweb/action/display.do?tabs=detailsTab&ct=display&fn=search&doc=IAMS040-002039402&indx=1&recIds=IAMS040-002039402&recIdxs=0&elementId=0&renderMode=poppedOut&displayMode=full&frbrVersion=&dscnt=0&frbg=&scp.scps=scope%3A%28BL%29&tab=local&dstmp=1530718847106&srt=rank&mode=Basic&&dum=true&vl\(freeText0\)=arundel%20119&vid=IAMS_VU2](http://searcharchives.bl.uk/primo_library/libweb/action/display.do?tabs=detailsTab&ct=display&fn=search&doc=IAMS040-002039402&indx=1&recIds=IAMS040-002039402&recIdxs=0&elementId=0&renderMode=poppedOut&displayMode=full&frbrVersion=&dscnt=0&frbg=&scp.scps=scope%3A%28BL%29&tab=local&dstmp=1530718847106&srt=rank&mode=Basic&&dum=true&vl(freeText0)=arundel%20119&vid=IAMS_VU2) – accessed 4th July 2018. For the debate surrounding the commissioning of this manuscript see Meale, “The Case of Alice Chaucer,” pp. 81-101.

			Essex dialect but possibly copied at Bury St. Edmunds. ¹⁰⁴⁰
BL Egerton 2864 ¹⁰⁴¹	c.1470	1) <i>The Canterbury Tales</i> ; 2) <i>Siege of Thebes</i> ; 3) "brief chronological notes, from Brute to 1349"; 4) Note on the foundation of St. Gregory's Priory, Canterbury. ¹⁰⁴²	Copied by the same (Suffolk) scribe as BL Add. 5140. ¹⁰⁴³
BL Royal 18.D.2	c.1460	2) <i>Troy Book</i> ; 3) <i>Siege of Thebes</i> . Items 1, and 4-10 are sixteenth-century additions. ¹⁰⁴⁴	There are two phases to the copying of this manuscript. The first took place between 1457 and 1460 and was made for Sir William Herbert, Earl of Pembroke, and his wife Anne Devereux "as a gift to either Henry VI or Edward IV". ¹⁰⁴⁵
London, Lambeth Palace Library, MS. 742	c.1450	1) <i>Siege of Thebes</i> . ¹⁰⁴⁶	Belonged to a W. Griffith, M. R. James believed the note on f.2 might have been made by Griffith. F.42, "Francis Pigot is the Ryght owner herof for any thing I knowe to the contrary per amies semper." Given by Henry, Duke of Norfolk to

¹⁰⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p.92.

¹⁰⁴¹ Middle English Compendium HyperBibliography. Not listed in Erdmann.

¹⁰⁴² "Egerton MS 2864," *British Library Explore Archives and Manuscripts*:

[http://searcharchives.bl.uk/primo_library/libweb/action/display.do?tabs=detailsTab&ct=display&fn=search&doc=IAMS032-001984923&indx=3&recIds=IAMS032-001984923&recIdxs=2&elementId=2&renderMode=poppedOut&displayMode=full&frbrVersion=&dscnt=0&frbg=&scps=scope%3A%28BL%29&tab=local&dstmp=1530874687476&srt=rank&mode=Basic&&dum=true&vl\(freeText0\)=egerton%202864&vid=IAMS_VU2](http://searcharchives.bl.uk/primo_library/libweb/action/display.do?tabs=detailsTab&ct=display&fn=search&doc=IAMS032-001984923&indx=3&recIds=IAMS032-001984923&recIdxs=2&elementId=2&renderMode=poppedOut&displayMode=full&frbrVersion=&dscnt=0&frbg=&scps=scope%3A%28BL%29&tab=local&dstmp=1530874687476&srt=rank&mode=Basic&&dum=true&vl(freeText0)=egerton%202864&vid=IAMS_VU2) – accessed 6th July 2018.

¹⁰⁴³ "Scribal Profile, Egerton 2864 scribe," *Late Medieval English Scribes*. The identification of this scribe as coming from Suffolk is in Seymour's work on Egerton 2864 in Seymour, *Catalogue of Chaucer Manuscripts II*, p.116.

¹⁰⁴⁴ George Warner and Julius P. Gilson, *Catalogue of Western MSS. In the Old Royal and King's Collections* vol. II, (London: British Museum, 1921), p.308.

¹⁰⁴⁵ "The manuscript was copied in two phases: between 1457 and 1460, when Sir William Herbert was supporting Henry VI (see Drimmer in McKendrick and others, 2011) (ff. 6r-162r), and between c. 1516 and 1527 (the dates suggested by the composition of the William Peiris's chronicle and the death of Henry Algernon Percy, for whom the content of the manuscript was expanded) (ff. 1v-5r and 163r-211v)." See "Royal MS 18 D II," *Digitised Manuscripts*:

http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=Royal_MS_18_D_II – accessed 4th July 2018. Quotation from Edwards, "Introduction," *The Siege of Thebes*.

¹⁰⁴⁶ Edwards, "Introduction," *The Siege of Thebes*.

			the Royal Society before 1681. ¹⁰⁴⁷
Longleat, Marquess of Bath MS 257	c.1460	Part I: 1) <i>Siege of Thebes</i> ; 2) <i>Arcite and Palamon</i> ; 3) "Grisilde"; 4) <i>Ipomedon</i> ; 5) Doggerel verse; 6) <i>Rules of Conduct for a Gentleman Usher</i> ; 7) <i>How to serve in a nobleman's household</i> . Part II: 8) <i>A Middle English Metrical Paraphrase of the Old Testament</i> ; 9) Latin number; 10) <i>A medicine for the axes</i> . ¹⁰⁴⁸	Richard III's autograph appears on f.98v, "tant le desieree/R Goucestre". ¹⁰⁴⁹ Manly and Rickert suggested "on the basis of some scribbled names on fly-leaves that the MS was produced [...] for Anthony Woodville, [...] who was [Hempton] Priory's patron at the time of his death in 1483." ¹⁰⁵⁰ A tenuous argument has been built for this MS being produced at the Priory at Hempton in Norfolk. ¹⁰⁵¹ Although, Jordi Sanchez Marti argues that it was "copied and illuminated by members of the book-trade community in York, from whom Richard or its earlier owner obtained this volume." ¹⁰⁵²
New Haven, Yale University, Beinecke Library 661 (<i>olim</i> Mostyn 258)	c.1500	1) <i>Siege of Thebes</i> . ¹⁰⁵³	Written by Stephen Dodesham.
Bodleian, Bodley MS. 776 (SC. 2559)	1430 – 1440	1) <i>Siege of Thebes</i> . ¹⁰⁵⁴	F.72, "R. P. howth thes booke" in a sixteenth-century hand. F.71 "Antho:

¹⁰⁴⁷ M. R. James, *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Manuscripts in the Library of Lambeth Palace*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, originally printed 1932, digitally printed 2011), pp.800-801.

¹⁰⁴⁸ Jordi Sánchez Marti, "Longleat House MS 257: a Description," in *Atlantis* vol. 27.1 (2005), pp.82-3.

¹⁰⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p.79.

¹⁰⁵⁰ Manly and Rickert's argument is paraphrased by Meale in Carol Meale in "The Middle English Romance of *Ipomedon*: A Late Medieval 'Mirror' of Princes and Merchants," in *Reading Medieval Studies* 10 (1984), p.139.

¹⁰⁵¹ This location was suggested by Manly and Rickert and the merits of their argument are debated by Carol Meale in *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁵² Marti, "Longleat House MS 257," p.82.

¹⁰⁵³ Edwards, "Introduction," *The Siege of Thebes*.

¹⁰⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

			Turpyne" in a late sixteenth-century hand. ¹⁰⁵⁵
Bodleian, Digby 230 (SC 1831)	c.1450	1) <i>Siege of Thebes</i> ; 2) <i>Troy Book</i> ; 3) <i>Titus and Vespasian</i> . ¹⁰⁵⁶	"On a fly-leaf at the end, "Fran. Richarde," and in the same hand (of sixteenth cent.), "If happ helpe not Hope is hindered. William Gresley." In the upper margin of f.39 ^b is written "The trwyffe (?) of wmenne quod Fynderne." ¹⁰⁵⁷
Bodleian, Laud. Misc. 416 (SC 1479)	c.1460	1) Peter Idley, <i>Instructions to his Son</i> (bk. li); 2) <i>Cursor Mundi</i> ; 3) <i>De Re Militari</i> (English translation by John Walton); 4) <i>Siege of Thebes</i> ; 5) Lydgate and Burgh, <i>Secreta Secretorum</i> ; 6) <i>The Parliament of Fowls</i> . ¹⁰⁵⁸	"On the end pastedown are "syster Anne colvyll" and below, "of your charyte prey for systyr [clement tyrs (?)] burght" [...] Anne Colville and Clemencia Thasebrough are in the 1518 Syon list." ¹⁰⁵⁹
Bodleian, Laud. Misc. 557 (SC 1124)	c.1500	1) <i>Siege of Thebes</i> . ¹⁰⁶⁰	First fly-leaf, "Constat Rogero Thorney mercer" and "Laud 557. This is John Stowes boke." ¹⁰⁶¹
Bodleian, Rawlinson C.48 (SC 11914)	c.1475	1) Bernard Silvestris, <i>Epistola re familiaris</i> ; 2) <i>Siege of Thebes</i> ; 3) Chronicle; 4) Lydgate, poems; 5) Burgh, <i>Cato Major</i> ; 6) Latin and English poems (including <i>Horse, Goose, and Sheep</i>). ¹⁰⁶²	f.82 "Iste liber pertinent ad me Gulielmum Robins, 1554". ¹⁰⁶³

¹⁰⁵⁵ Falconer Madan and H.H.E. Craster, *A Summary Catalogue of Western Manuscripts in the Bodleian Library at Oxford*, vol. 2, part 1, (Oxford: Clarendon, 1922) p.427.

¹⁰⁵⁶ W.D. Macray, *Bodleian Library Quarto Catalogues IX: Digby Manuscripts*, repr. with addenda by R.W. Hund and A.G. Watson, (Oxford: OUP, 1999), p. 242 (addenda on p.99).

¹⁰⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁵⁸ Summary description by Elizabeth Solopova and Matthew Holford, based on the Quarto Catalogue, H. O. Coxe, *Laudian Manuscripts*, Quarto Catalogues II, (repr. with corrections, 1969, from the original ed. Of 1858-1885), p.305.

¹⁰⁵⁹ Coxe, *Laudian Manuscripts*, Quarto Catalogues II, p.561.

¹⁰⁶⁰ Edwards, "Introduction," *The Siege of Thebes*.

¹⁰⁶¹ Coxe, *Laudian Manuscripts*, Quarto Catalogues II, p.400 and Erdmann, *Lydgate's Siege of Thebes, part II*, p.49.

¹⁰⁶² W.D. Macray, *Catalogi codicum manuscriptorum Bibliothecae...viri munificentissimi Ricardi Rawlinson, J.C.D., codicum...complectens*, Quarto Catalogues V, 5 fascicles, (Oxford: Clarendon, 1862-1900), pp.14-15.

¹⁰⁶³ *Ibid.*

Oxford, Christ Church 152 ¹⁰⁶⁴	c.1465	1) <i>The Canterbury Tales</i> ; 2) Hoccleve, <i>The Story of the Monk who clad the Virgin</i> ; 3) <i>The Churl and the Bird</i> ; 4) <i>Siege of Thebes</i> . ¹⁰⁶⁵	F.72, "Thomas vause", "perhaps the scribe of the additions (items 1, 4 and 5), whom Manly-Rickert identify with an attorney for Winchester College". Ff.1 and 151v, an expansion of the motto of Winchester College is added. ¹⁰⁶⁶
Oxford, St. John's College 266 and St. John's College printed book b.2.21	c.1480?	MS copy of <i>Siege of Thebes</i> bound with "Caxton's 1483 edition of <i>Troilus and Cressida</i> (STC 5094), his second edition, 1483, of <i>The Canterbury Tales</i> (STC 5083), and his first edition, 1483, of John Mirk's <i>Quatuor Sermones</i> (STC 17957)." ¹⁰⁶⁷	"All four booklets in [this MS] were certainly owned by William Middleton, inheritor through his wife of Roger Thorney's books, for he wrote his name or initials at the beginnings and sometimes also at the ends of each printed booklet and the manuscript; and at the end of the volume, on the vellum flyleaf that may have been part of the original cover, is the monogram and the name "Roger Thorney, mercer of London".[...] [this manuscript] was used as copy text for de Worde's printed edition of 1497 [...]." ¹⁰⁶⁸
Prince Frederick Duleep Singh's MS (Old Buckenham Hall) ¹⁰⁶⁹	c.1500	1) <i>Siege of Thebes</i> . ¹⁰⁷⁰	Unknown

¹⁰⁶⁴ Middle English Compendium HyperBibliography.

¹⁰⁶⁵ Ralph Hanna III and David Rundle, *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Western Manuscripts, to c.1600, in Christ Church, Oxford* (Oxford: Oxford Bibliographical Society, 2017).

¹⁰⁶⁶ Hanna and Rundle, *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Western Manuscripts, in Christ Church, Oxford*.

¹⁰⁶⁷ Linne R. Mooney, "Scribes and Booklets of Trinity College, Cambridge, MSS R.3.19 and R.3.20," *Middle English Poetry: Text and Traditions. Essays in Honour of Derek Pearsall*, ed. A.J. Minnis, (Woodbridge: York Medieval Press in association with Boydell and Brewer, 2001), p.263.

¹⁰⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁶⁹ In his 1911 survey of the extant manuscripts of the *Siege of Thebes* Erdmann locates the manuscript to Old Buckenham Hall however the Middle English Compendium HyperBibliography labels the manuscript as "whereabouts unknown. See Erdmann, *Lydgate's Siege of Thebes*, pp. ix-x.

¹⁰⁷⁰ Edwards, "Introduction," *The Siege of Thebes*.

Harry Ransom Centre, University of Texas MS 143	c.1450	1) <i>The Canterbury Tales</i> ; 2) <i>Brut Chronicle</i> ; 3) <i>Siege of Thebes</i> ; 4) <i>The Churl and the Bird</i> . ¹⁰⁷¹	The original owners are unknown but it was in the possession of the Mantell family of Horton, near Canterbury (16 th century); Brudenell family of Deene Park, Northamptonshire, Earls of Cardigan from the early 17 th century. ¹⁰⁷²
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¹⁰⁷¹ "University of Texas MS 143," *Harry Ransom Center*:
<http://norman.hrc.utexas.edu/pubMnEM/details.cfm?id=143> – accessed 6th July 2018.

¹⁰⁷² *Ibid.*

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