'HER HEED THEY CASTE AWRY': THE TRANSMISSION AND RECEPTION OF THOMAS HOCCLEVE'S PERSONAL POETRY

BY RORY G. CRITTEN

Whereas most critics of Thomas Hoccleve's poetry have focused on elucidating the author's particular mode of self-presentation, this essay sets out to demonstrate that few fifteenth-century readers beyond the poet's initial addressees enjoyed his artful self-portraiture *per se*. Until now, Hoccleve Studies have been dominated by the texts preserved in the autograph manuscripts produced by the poet towards the end of his life. When we turn to the non-autograph traditions of his works, however, it becomes clear that Hoccleve's poems were preserved in a variety of forms and contexts and that medieval readers' experiences of these texts must have been considerably more varied than has typically been allowed. While Hoccleve's own exemplification of the link between self-fashioning and book production in the *Series* may have provided an important stimulus for the selective reception of this work, I explore the possibility that the highly unusual nature of the poet's most personal texts led to their sidelining in the reproduction of his corpus. Accordingly, I suggest, consideration of the fifteenth-century transmission and reception of Hoccleve's personal poetry can illuminate not only the often deeply self-serving nature of reading and textual reproduction in late medieval England; it can also provide a fresh indication of the extent to which some of Hoccleve's texts depart from the norms of the literary and codicological cultures in which their author participates.

Scholarship on the work of Thomas Hoccleve (*c.*1367–1426) has traditionally focused on those texts in which the poet dwells on the details of his closely related personal and professional lives: the *Male Regle* (1405–1406), the Prologue to the *Regiment of Princes* (1410–1413) and the *Complaint* and *Dialogue* sections of his *Series* (1419–1421). The medievalist approaching these works for the first time will undoubtedly be struck by the directness with which Hoccleve talks about who he is and what he has experienced, not least because this contrasts markedly with the deliberate manipulation of authorial personae typically felt to be at work in texts by fourteenth-century writers such as Chaucer and Langland. Indeed, as J. A. Burrow pointed out in a now much cited lecture on the poet, although this impression of directness is in many cases the result of a carefully weighed attempt on

Extracts from this essay were presented at the second biennial conference of the Swiss Association of Medieval and Early Modern English Studies in Geneva (2010) and at the XIII. Studientag zum englischen Mittelalter in Freiburg im Breisgau (2011). I am grateful for the feedback I received at these gatherings. Alasdair MacDonald and Sebastian Sobecki read versions of the longer text and the final piece is stronger for their thoughtful comments. Finally, I am greatly indebted to David Watt, who generously shared unpublished material with me and sent me a detailed response to a late draft of my argument that helped me to refine my conception of Hoccleve's reception in several important ways.

The Review of English Studies, New Series, Vol. 64, No. 265

doi:10.1093/res/hgs040 Advance Access published on 24 July 2012

Hoccleve's part to obtain some kind of favour from his addressee, the insistently personal nature of much of his verse nevertheless makes it exceedingly valuable as an early example of life writing in English.[1] The upsurge of interest in Hoccleve's work that has taken place since the closing decades of the twentieth century must be attributed in large part to Burrow's persuasive exposition of its autobiographical aspect, both in this lecture and in a series of studies published subsequently; for the vulnerable but oddly truculent authorial personality he delineates has proven particularly amenable to current critical approaches.[2] In this essay, however, it shall be my contention that few fifteenth-century readers beyond the author's initial addressees enjoyed the poet's artful self-portraiture *per se*. Instead, I will argue, the scribes, commissioners and owners of the extant Hoccleve manuscripts appear frequently to have selectively appropriated the poet's texts with a view to furthering their own individually motivated book projects. As I go on to discuss, Hoccleve's exemplification of the link between self-fashioning and manuscript compilation in the *Series* may have provided an important stimulus for the reception of this work in such a manner. When late medieval readers selected for reproduction those Hocclevean items which could most readily be incorporated into their own self-defining compilations, however, it seems that the acutely personalized texts that licensed this mode of transmission were the first to be sidelined. Accordingly, I suggest, consideration of the fifteenth-century reception of Hoccleve's personal poetry has the potential to illuminate not only the often deeply self-serving nature of reading and textual reproduction in late medieval England; it can also provide a fresh indication of the extent to which some of Hoccleve's texts depart from the norms of the literary and codicological cultures in which their author participates.

Medievalists with an interest in establishing the reception of the texts they study by their early readers have very little in the way of the diaries, literary letters and society reviews which scholars of later periods can use to reconstruct contemporary reactions to a given work or author. This must go some way to explaining the relative neglect of the Middle Ages in a range of recent cross-period studies of the history of reading: the Reading Experience Database based at the Open University, for instance, only collects evidence dating from 1450, and only two of the thirty-six extracts included in the new Routledge history of reading *Reader* deal directly with medieval topics; 'manuscripts' receives just one entry

1 J. A. Burrow, 'Autobiographical Poetry in the Middle Ages: The Case of Thomas Hoccleve', *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 68 (1982), 389–412.

2 See J. A. Burrow, 'Hoccleve's *Series*: Experience and Books', in Robert F. Yeager (ed.), *Fifteenth-Century Studies: Recent Essays* (Hamden, CT, 1984), 259–73, 'The Poet and the Book', in Piero Boitani and Anna Torti (eds), *Genres, Themes and Images in English Literature from the Fourteenth to the Fifteenth Century* (Tübingen, 1988), 230–45 and *Thomas Hoccleve* (Aldershot, 1994). For a useful overview of the broad variety of approaches that have been brought to bear on Hoccleve in recent years see Sarah Tolmie, 'The Professional: Thomas Hoccleve', *Studies in the Age of Chaucer*, 29 (2007), 341–73, at 341–2.

in its index.[3] Nevertheless, the past twenty years have seen an intensification of efforts on the part of palaeographers, codicologists and book historians to demonstrate that important aspects of the reception of a piece of medieval literature may often be gleaned by paying close attention to the material forms in which it is transmitted.[4] This is a function of a mode of literary production in which the author of a given work is often only distantly responsible for the shape in which it reaches its audiences: any number of 'professional readers'—to borrow Kathryn Kerby-Fulton's term—may potentially participate in the process whereby a text is transformed into a book produced with the needs of a specific recipient in mind; in so doing they provide scholars with valuable information regarding the ways in which particular works were felt to intersect with the interests of different groups of readers.[5] In Hoccleve's case, of course, we are fortunate to have the autograph manuscripts of the poet's verse that have dominated the field since their definitive identification as such by H. C. Schulz in 1937.[6] Composed by Hoccleve sometime during the last five years of his life, these manuscripts—Durham, University Library MS Cosin V. iii. 9, which contains a damaged copy of the *Series*, and San Marino, CA, Huntington Library MSS HM 111 and 744, which together contain copies of all the poet's extant short works—present an admittedly rare

3 Shafquat Towheed, Rosalind Crone and Katie Halsey (eds), *The History of Reading: A Reader* (London, 2010). On RED see Katie Halsey, 'Reading the Evidence of Reading: An Introduction to the Reading Experience Database 1450-1945', *Popular Narrative Media*, 2 (2008), 123–37. The Middle Ages also receives disproportionally short shrift in Martyn Lyons, *A History of Reading and Writing in the Western World* (Basingstoke, 2010), 18–25.

4 In 1990 Stephen Nichols announced the arrival of a New Philology that would take as its object of enquiry 'the important supplements that were part and parcel of medieval text production', among which he included 'visual images and annotation of various forms (rubrics, "captions", glosses, and interpolations)'. Stephen G. Nichols, 'Philology in a Manuscript Culture', *Speculum*, 65 (1990), 1–10, at 7. The list of potentially significant 'supplements' has since proliferated, as has the bibliography on this topic. For a recent review of scholarship on this theme which also discusses the problems manuscript scholars can have communicating with researchers outside their immediate field see Jessica Brantley, 'Modern and Medieval Books', *Philological Quarterly*, 87 (2008), 163–71. My essay sets out to demonstrate that by putting real readers at the centre of our critical focus we can arrive at a better understanding of the forces which governed the reproduction and survival of literary texts in the pre-print era.

5 'For us a professional reader is someone whose job it is to prepare a text for the reading public, someone whose job description (supervisory scribe, corrector, annotator, editor, illustrator) allows him to filter the text for presentation to the patron or reading community'. Kathryn Kerby-Fulton, 'Introduction', in Kathryn Kerby-Fulton and Maidie Hilmo (eds), *The Medieval Professional Reader at Work: Evidence from Manuscripts of Chaucer, Langland, Kempe, and Gower* (Victoria, BC, 2001), 7–13, at 8.

6 H. C. Schulz, 'Thomas Hoccleve, Scribe', *Speculum*, 12 (1937), 71–81. Furnivall had previously asserted that San Marino, CA, Huntington Library MS HM 111 and the Durham codex were autographs, but he ultimately abandoned the idea. See Frederick J. Furnivall and I. Gollancz (eds), *Hoccleve's Works: The Minor Poems*, EETS ES 61 & 73, revised by Jerome Mitchell and A. I. Doyle, reprinted as one volume (1892, 1925; Oxford, 1970), xlix. London, British Library MS Royal 17 D. xviii has recently been identified as a Hoccleve autograph in Linne R. Mooney, 'A Holograph Copy of Thomas Hoccleve's *Regiment of Princes*', *Studies in the Age of Chaucer*, 33 (2011), 263-96. Unfortunately, this important article first came to my attention once the final draft of my essay had been submitted.

opportunity to read a Middle English author in his own hand. But consideration of the textual history of Hoccleve's verse suggests that the autographs played a relatively minor role in the establishment of the poet's reputation in the fifteenth century: Roger Ellis and Burrow both trace the extant non-autograph copies of the Hocclevean texts they edit to earlier, now lost, authorial copies of his work, not to the surviving autographs.[7] In order to achieve the best impression both of the forms in which Hoccleve's verse was encountered and of the ways in which it was interpreted by his late medieval readers, we must thus look to the non-autograph traditions of his texts. Where these can be traced, analysis of textual variants and of the different contexts in which the poems are reproduced has the potential to reveal instances of a highly active mode of reception in which the functions of interpretation and manuscript production overlap. This is the line of enquiry I propose to follow here, beginning with an analysis of the non-autograph transmission of Hoccleve's begging verse before proceeding to consider the more developed reception history of the *Series*. I shall close with a brief comparison between the late medieval transmission of this work and that of the *Regiment of Princes*, offering what I hope will be a convincing explanation for the clear disparity between the popularity of Hoccleve's two long texts among fifteenth-century readers.

The Begging Verse

Hoccleve's literary output is, as Burrow has aptly described it, 'above all a poetry of address'; in his overtly devotional as well as in his secular verse, Hoccleve is always asking someone for something.[8] The clearest manifestation of this particular stance is found in the poet's begging verse, and Hoccleve apparently felt sufficiently proud of his achievements in this genre to include four such works in the autograph manuscripts of his texts: Huntington Library MS HM 111 contains a copy of 'la male regle de .T. Hoccleue' (16^{v}-26^{r}) and three other poems requesting payment which are addressed to 'my lord the Chanceller' (38^{r-v}), Sir Henry Somer (38^{v}-39^{v}) and Henry V (40^{r-v}); a fifth balade written to 'my maister Carpenter' (41^{r-v}) asks the addressee to intercede with the poet's creditors on his behalf. As we might expect given the specific situations for which the begging poems were written, the transmission history of these texts is rather restricted. Indeed, only two of the poems listed here are known to survive independently of the autograph manuscripts: a short version of the *Male Regle* has been copied into the final leaves of Canterbury, Cathedral Archives Register O (ff. 406^{v}-407^{r}) and the balade addressed to Henry V is transmitted in the second booklet of Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Fairfax 16 (ff. 198^{v}-199^{r}). Analysis of the non-autograph transmission of these begging poems provides an indication of the aspects of the poet's work

7 Roger Ellis (ed.), '*My Compleinte' and Other Poems* (Exeter, 2001), 10–18 and J. A. Burrow (ed.), *Thomas Hoccleve's Complaint and Dialogue* (Oxford, 1999), xviii–xxviii.

8 Burrow, 'Autobiographical Poetry', 403.

which were valued by his early readers and will thus provide a useful point of departure for an examination of the more extensive reception history of the *Series*.

The Canterbury *Male Regle* differs markedly from the autograph version of the poem.[9] It is a good deal briefer than the autograph text, giving only stanzas 5, 6, 9, 10, 12, 14, 45, 44 and 51 (in that order) of the copy in HM 111; the local references to 'Poules Heed' (A 143), 'Westmynstre yate' (A 178) and the 'Priuee Seel' (A 188) are accordingly absent in the Canterbury version, as are the poet's much cited comments regarding his shyness around women (A 153–9), his 'manly cowardyse' (A 170–6), his experiences with the Thames boatmen (A 185–208), his excursus on the evils of flattery (A 209–88) and his closing appeal to Lord Furnivall (A 417–48). The topical and autobiographical information given in the autograph which Burrow identifies as integral to the work's function as a petition for payment is thus nowhere to be found in the Canterbury text.[10] Indeed, in the form in which it is reproduced in this manuscript the *Male Regle* is not a begging poem at all but a resolutely moral piece on the necessity of moderation in youth and the importance of accepting good counsel. The text's didactic aim is reflected in variant readings of two lines in which the highly individualized first-person speaker who overshadows the moralizing aspect of the autograph *Male Regle* does not feature. Where Hoccleve's copy of the poem reads 'I take haue of hem [food and drink] bothe outrageously' (A 109), the Canterbury text gives 'He [ȝouth] of hem bothe / hath take outrageously' (Ca 45) and the poet's self-naming in the autograph—'Bewaar, Hoccleue, I rede thee therfore' (A 351)—is likewise absent. In the Canterbury text, this line appears as 'Be war ther fore / y rede the //the\\ more' (Ca 63).

In this last example, the addition above the line of a second 'the' (to preserve the correct syllable count?) suggests to Marian Trudgill and Burrow that the Canterbury scribe was directly responsible for at least one of the depersonalizing readings we find in this version of the poem.[11] An example of self-correction occurring eight lines earlier appears similarly to support Trudgill and Burrow's proposition that the Canterbury redactor's exemplar contained some readings of the poem which were closer to those preserved in Hoccleve's personal version of the text than the ones ultimately recorded in Cathedral Archives Register O: the Canterbury scribe seems momentarily to forget his use of the plural form 'conceytys' in line 53 (cf. A 357, 'conceit') when he starts copying some form of 'hit' in line 55 (from his exemplar?) before subsequently correcting this to 'they'. The untidiness at these moments in the Canterbury copy of the *Male Regle* may well be a result of this redactor's attempts to adapt the text of the poem as he was copying

9 As the Canterbury *Male Regle* remains unpublished in its entirety I include my transcription of this text in an appendix to my essay. The following analysis of the Canterbury poem draws on Marian Trudgill and J. A. Burrow, 'A Hocclevean Balade', *Notes and Queries*, 45 (1998), 178–80. I cite from my transcription of the Canterbury version (Ca) and from the edition of the autograph (A) in Ellis, '*My Compleinte'*, 64–78.

10 Burrow, 'Autobiographical Poetry', 410–11.

11 Trudgill and Burrow, 'A Hocclevean Balade', 179.

it. In the final instance, however, we have no means of determining precisely to what degree the Canterbury scribe should be held accountable for the divergence of his text of the poem from that preserved in the author's personal manuscript. The examples of self-correction cited by Trudgill and Burrow do not necessarily prove that this redactor was engaged in active re-writing: he may have copied his line 63 from a version of the text which transmitted the 'the the' reading, for instance, and simply have missed the second 'the' due to eye-skip or some other confusion before returning to correct his error at a later stage. It is also possible that the Canterbury *Male Regle* attests to the circulation of an earlier authorial version of the poem which Hoccleve subsequently worked up into the text now preserved in HM 111.

Whatever its relation to the version of the *Male Regle* preserved in Hoccleve's autograph manuscript, the Canterbury copy of the poem is evidently complete. No leaves can have been lost between f. 406^{v} and f. 407^{r} of Register O because the first four lines of the fifth stanza of the poem are copied at the bottom of f. 406^{v} and the next four lines continue directly at the top of f. 407^{r}; ff. 407^{v}-408^{r} deal with the entirely different matter of the settlement of a community of Franciscan friars in Canterbury. Register O is the second part of a larger codex which was damaged in a fire at the Cathedral in 1670; the opening of the book has been rebound and is now Cathedral Archives Register P. Together, Registers P-O contain documents pertaining to the business affairs of Christ Church Monastery in the early fourteenth century, focusing particularly on the monks' properties in East Anglia and on the activities of the cellarer. It has accordingly been argued that the book in which the registers were originally bound was compiled for or by Walter de Norwich, monk warden of the East Anglian estates from around 1304 to 1329, and cellarer at the priory.[12] A. I. Doyle's dating of the Canterbury redaction of the *Male Regle* to the 1420s or 30s thus allows us to conclude that around one hundred years after the construction of Registers P-O, the final blank pages of the codex were used to record this moralizing version of the text, perhaps with the edification of young monks in mind.[13] That the poem was designed to be read in a monastic context may help to explain the Canterbury redactor's decision to represent the allegorical characters Youth and Reason as men where the autograph has feminine forms (Ca 9-12, 18; cf. A 41-4, 66). In any case, this scribe's taste for plainly moralizing matter is confirmed on f. 408^{v} of Register O, where he has also written in a list of Latin verse proverbs.[14]

12 See the in-house catalogue of the Canterbury Cathedral Archives which is accessible online via <http://www.kentarchives.org.uk/>.

13 Doyle's dating of the Canterbury redactor's script is reported in Trudgill and Burrow, 'A Hocclevean Balade', 178–9.

14 The list contains such sobering pearls of wisdom as 'Non pater aut mater nobis dant nobilitatem / Moribus et vita nobilitatur homo', 'Nos deus affligit quos vult deitate beari' and, perhaps with reference to the preceding poem, 'Si tibi deficiant medici, medici tibi fiant / Hec tria mens lenta, labor, et moderata dieta'. For a more complete list the proverbs added to f. 408^{v} of Register O see the description of this manuscript in the *Ninth Report of the Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts*, 2 vols (London, 1883), 1: 108.

The two most recent commentators on the *Male Regle*, Ethan Knapp and Nicholas Perkins, both allude to the Canterbury text in the course of their analyses.[15] Understandably, however, these critics are keen to focus on the author's strategies of self-representation in the autograph version of this poem; this, after all, is what makes Hoccleve's text both unusual and entertaining from the perspective of a twenty-first-century reader.[16] Such an approach may be historically justified, moreover. The autograph *Male Regle* is clearly designed to spotlight its author's persona and there is circumstantial evidence to suggest that Hoccleve's tongue-in-cheek rehearsal of his misspent youth helped to secure the resumption of his suspended annuity on 26 March 1406; in this case it would seem that the poet's self-portraiture in the work was appreciated at least by the addressee named in HM 111, Lord Furnivall (A 417), Henry IV's treasurer for this period.[17] Still, the Canterbury *Male Regle* survives as a potent reminder of the fact that modern and medieval reading priorities can differ substantially. Beyond the immediate situation alluded to in the autograph manuscript it appears that the poem was felt to be worth reproducing not on account of the idiosyncratic authorial personality which distinguishes Hoccleve's personal copy of the work but for the conservative moral precepts it transmits. Whether the Canterbury redactor suppressed the poet's rendition of his previous misdemeanours which is present in the autograph *Male Regle* or whether this was not a part of the text as he encountered it, it seems clear that Hoccleve's equivocal presentation of his misspent youth would not have been to his purpose.

In comparison with the textual tradition of the *Male Regle* it is pertinent to note that neither the non-autograph nor the autograph copy of the begging balade addressed to Henry V is distinguished by an individualized authorial persona of the kind which narrates Hoccleve's copy of the poem dedicated to Lord Furnival; the petitioning voice staged in both copies of the royal balade is a pluralized 'We, humble lige men to your hynesse' (2).[18] There are familiar Hocclevean echoes here—in the complaint that payment for services rendered is overdue (13–16), for example—but the poem's speakers are not named and, while the text is clearly occasional, it thus retains an air of impersonality. For this reason it could easily be

15 Ethan Knapp, *The Bureaucratic Muse: Thomas Hoccleve and the Literature of Late Medieval England* (University Park, PA, 2001), 36–43, at 37 n. 55 and Nicholas Perkins, 'Thomas Hoccleve, *La Male Regle*', in Peter Brown (ed.), *A Companion to Medieval English Literature and Culture c.1350-1500* (Malden, MA, 2007), 585–603, at 600–2.

16 Perkins, for instance, writes that the Canterbury poem 'demonstrates in negative how Hoccleve's insistent tugging at the sleeve of his reader—to confess, nudge or complain—gives his writing an edge that critics have traditionally found lacking in fifteenth-century poetry' ('*La Male Regle*', 601).

17 See Burrow, *Thomas Hoccleve*, 14–15. Burrow's dating of the *Male Regle* implicitly takes this possibility into account.

18 The Fairfax copy of the balade addressed to Henry V is textually much closer to Hoccleve's personal copy of the poem than is the Canterbury *Male Regle*. It is reproduced in facsimile in John Norton-Smith (ed.), *Bodleian Library Fairfax 16* (London, 1979). I cite this balade from the edition of the autograph copy in Furnivall and Gollancz, *Minor Poems*, 62.

appropriated by the scribe of the second booklet of Fairfax 16 (or its exemplar), who presents it alongside a selection of popular Chaucerian and Lydgatean pieces which seem to have been anthologized with a view to recalling the tradition of poetic exchange and royal address at the late fourteenth- and early fifteenth-century English court. Fairfax 16 is the earliest in a group of fifteenth-century manuscripts whose compilation appears to have been motivated by a similarly nostalgic impulse.[19] The description of Hoccleve's balade as 'the supplicacion to þe kyng in balayd wise' in Fairfax's fifteenth-century table of contents (f. 2^{v}) indicates that his text could be appreciated for its exemplary qualities in such a context.

Of the numerous begging verses written by Hoccleve, the two which survive outside the autograph collection thus appear to have been reproduced either on the grounds of their moralizing potential or for their connections with the royal court. While the scope of this sample is of course exceedingly narrow, I would like to suggest that the reading priorities and preferences pointed to by this miniature transmission history are part of a larger trend in the reception of Hoccleve's work that will become clearer upon consideration of the transmission history of the *Series*, a work which would seem to owe a good part of its somewhat limited popularity to its most morally conservative moments and to its author's strong Lancastrian associations.[20]

The *Series*

The *Series* is a collection of interlinked verse and prose texts that shifts through a variety of genres and styles, encompassing lyrical complaint, directly reported dialogue, a treatise on the art of dying and two tales translated from the *Gesta Romanorum* tradition. It opens with two poems, the *Complaint* and the *Dialogue with a Friend*, in which Hoccleve repeats the claim that he has definitively recovered from a 'wilde infirmite' with which he was afflicted five years before the time at which he began writing his collection (1. 40, 50–6).[21] When we turn from

19 On these manuscripts see Julia Boffey and John J. Thompson, 'Anthologies and Miscellanies: Production and Choice of Texts,' in Jeremy Griffiths and Derek Pearsall (eds), *Book Production and Publishing in Britain 1375-1475* (Cambridge, 1989), 279–315, at 280–3.

20 By analogy with Paul Strohm's work on the early reception of Chaucer we might refer to this tendency as a 'narrowing of the Hoccleve tradition'. See Paul Strohm, 'Chaucer's Fifteenth-Century Audience and the Narrowing of the "Chaucer Tradition"', *Studies in the Age of Chaucer*, 4 (1982), 3–32. Where Strohm interpreted fifteenth-century readers' preference for the more overtly moralizing texts in Chaucer's corpus as a reaction to a variety of negative social and economic forces prevalent during this period, however, I argue that the relatively narrow circulation of Hoccleve's most personal poetry has more to do with the difficulty inherent in attempts to shape these works to fit a self-defining compilatory project of the kind in which Hoccleve's less insistently individuated works were on occasion preserved.

21 Citations of the *Series* are given by section and line number from Ellis, *'My Compleinte'*, 113–260.

the first to the second section of the work, it becomes clear that the *Complaint* has been composed in order to combat reports casting doubt on this recovery and the poet's decision to publish his text becomes the subject of a five-hundred line debate with a visiting friend at the beginning of the ensuing *Dialogue*. Once the friend has been persuaded of the utility of the poet's self-publicatory project, Hoccleve asks him to 'shoue at the cart' (2. 616) and to help him decide which works should be prepared to accompany the *Complaint* in the book he wishes it to preface. As a result of their conversation, the two *Gesta* translations and an English version of the *ars moriendi* section of Henry Suso's *Horologium Sapientiae* are added to the *Complaint* and *Dialogue*, completing the full copies of the work.

While critical estimation of the *Series* has risen considerably since Derek Pearsall described the collection as 'an attempt to make a longish poem out of nothing', modern readers of the work are united in observing that Hoccleve's text thematizes its own production with an unusual insistence.[22] Burrow, for example, comments on the dependence of the text's rhetorical impact on its material realization in manuscript form and David Watt has argued that Hoccleve's intimate familiarity with the practice of late medieval book production both inspired and structured his self-publicatory project.[23] Fifteenth-century readers also appear to have been sensitive to the poet's modelling of compilatory behaviour in the *Dialogue* section of the *Series*, for they frequently appropriate Hoccleve's collection to build their own, longer books.[24] The five extant non-autograph copies of the complete *Series* are accordingly preserved alongside the poet's earlier *Regiment of Princes* and Lydgate's *Dance of Death* in Oxford, Bodleian Library MSS Laud Misc. 735 (ff. 1^{r}-52^{r}), Selden Supra 53 (ff. 76^{r}-148^{r}) and Bodl. 221 (ff. 1^{r}-53^{v}), New Haven, CT, Yale Beinecke Library MS 493 (ff. 1^{r} 51^{v}) and Coventry, Herbert MS PA325/1 (ff. 40^{r}-70^{r}).[25] As a small number of critics has noted, this is a textual environment in which readers are encouraged to view the *Series* as part of an argument that is larger in scope than that pertaining solely to the

22 Derek Pearsall, *Old English and Middle English Poetry* (London, 1977), 237.

23 See J. A. Burrow, 'The Poet and the Book', 241-5 and David Watt, ' "I this book shal make": Thomas Hoccleve's Self-Publication and Book Production', *Leeds Studies in English*, 34 (2003), 133–60.

24 On this point see Nicholas Perkins, *Hoccleve's* Regiment of Princes*: Counsel and Constraint* (Cambridge, 2001), 165. An important precedent for Perkins's argument is Seth Lerer's observation that fifteenth-century Chaucerians often appear to have modelled their reactions to Chaucer's texts on the relationships between speakers and audiences elaborated in the poet's own work. See Seth Lerer, *Chaucer and his Readers: Imagining the Author in Late-Medieval England* (Princeton, NJ, 1993).

25 On the relationship between these manuscripts see Burrow, *Complaint and Dialogue*, xxii–xxv. As well as containing the *Regiment-Series-Dance* collocation, the Coventry codex (formerly Coventry, Record Office MS Accession 325/1) also preserves a collection of short verse by Chaucer (ff. 75^{r}-77^{r}), the metrical version of *The Book of John Mandeville* (ff. 77^{v}-95^{v}) and two romances: the anonymous *Titus and Vespasian* (ff. 98^{r}-129^{v}) and Lydgate's *Siege of Thebes* (137^{r}-67^{r}). Signatures in this manuscript suggest that there were originally another 180 leaves before the *Regiment* which are now lost.

author's recovery.[26] David Lorenzo Boyd highlights the stress on the theme of good governance which emerges when the *Regiment*, the *Series* and the *Dance of Death* are read in combination, for example, and Christina von Nolcken suggests that the collocation of the *Series* with Lydgate's poem in these manuscripts shifts the focus of readers' attention to the *Series*'s natural centre, which is the Suso translation on the art of dying.[27] A phenomenon that has received less attention is the transmission of partial copies of the *Series* entirely independently of the personalizing frame provided by the *Complaint* and *Dialogue* in a handful of manuscripts dating from the same period. The complete copies of the *Series* comprise five basic sections: the *Complaint* (1), the *Dialogue with a Friend* (2), the tale, translated from the *Gesta Romanorum*, of the emperor Iereslaus's wife (3), the Suso translation (4) and the second *Gesta* translation, which gives the story of Jonathas, his repeated betrayals by Felicula, and her eventual demise (5). In what follows I consider four manuscripts that transmit the final three sections of the complete *Series* in a variety of combinations.

I begin here with an examination of London, British Library MS Royal 17 D. vi and Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Digby 185, which both preserve copies of the moralizing translations compiled as sections three to five of the complete *Series* in conjunction with the *Regiment*. I argue that the producers of the these codices included the most overtly moralizing texts from the *Series* in this fashion in order to draw on the political charge which had accrued to them over the course of the fifteenth century. I then move to consider somewhat more briefly the independent transmission of Hoccleve's Suso translation in Huntington MS HM 744 and London, British Library MS Harley 172. The anthologization of Hoccleve's text on the art of dying in these manuscripts, I posit, goes some way to demonstrating its versatility and, in the case of the Harley codex, suggests a potential reading context for Hoccleve's poetry that remains to be explored.[28]

26 Burrow has argued persuasively that Hoccleve wrote the *Series* in order at once to demonstrate and to effect 'his reassumption (albeit hesitant) of a social role proper to a man of fifty-three' ('Experience and Books', 268). In what follows I consider a range of alternative readings of the collection to which its extraction and recontextualization in a variety of manuscript contexts may have given rise.

27 David Lorenzo Boyd, 'Reading Through the *Regiment of Princes*: Hoccleve's *Series* and Lydgate's *Dance of Death* in Yale Beinecke MS 493', *Fifteenth-Century Studies*, 20 (1993), 15–34 and Christina von Nolcken, '"O, why ne had y lerned for to dye?" *Lerne for to Dye* and the Author's Death in Thomas Hoccleve's *Series*', *Essays in Medieval Studies*, 10 (1993), 27–51, at 42–3. More recently see too David Watt, 'Compilation and Contemplation: Beholding Thomas Hoccleve's *Series* in Oxford Bodleian Library, MS Selden Supra 53', *Journal of the Early Book Society*, 14 (2011), 1-39. A central claim of my essay is that the richly contradictory quality of Hoccleve's self-presentation that has made the *Series* so attractive to modern criticism may have limited the appeal of the collection among fifteenth-century readers. In the context of this argument, Watt's article is noteworthy for its suggestion that one manuscript, at least, contains evidence of a positive reception of the modes of contemplative and compilatory behaviour modelled by Hoccleve in this work.

28 Burrow lists five manuscripts preserving partial copies of the *Series* (*Thomas Hoccleve*, 51–2). Since the last of these, Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Eng. poet. d. 4, is badly damaged, I have not included it in my survey of these codices. In its current state, MS Eng. poet. d. 4 contains fragmentary and imperfect copies of the third (ff. 4^{r}-18^{r}) and fifth

London, British Library MS Royal 17 D. vi and Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Digby 185

Two manuscripts containing partial copies of the *Series* appear to be related. In London, British Library MS Royal 17 D. vi and Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Digby 185, copies of the translated works with which the autograph *Series* closes follow texts of the *Regiment*, and M. C. Seymour and Marcia Smith Marzec agree on the likelihood that the Royal codex served as an exemplar for the scribe of Digby 185.[29] Neither manuscript emphasizes the transition between the *Regiment* and the *Series* extracts, which are presented here as continuations of the longer text without the discussions between Hoccleve and his friend that punctuate their presentation in the autograph (cf. *Series*, 3. 953–980 and 5. 1–84): in Royal, the beginning of the tale of Iereslaus's wife on f. 102^{r} is marked by an illuminated initial which resembles those used throughout the codex to introduce the various subsections of the *Regiment*; in Digby the movement from the *Regiment* to the Iereslaus text is somewhat more clearly marked by a blue and red bar that extends down the left-hand side of the text's opening stanza on f. 145^{r}, but the main division here must have been felt to lie between the Iereslaus and Jonathas translations since this is emphasized by the large, intricately executed heraldic initial with which the latter text begins on f. 157^{v} (the survival of catchwords in Royal and leaf signatures in Digby allows us to rule out the possibility that the absence of the *Complaint* and *Dialogue* sections in these manuscripts is the result of a loss of leaves). As well as having these features in common, the manuscripts also differ in two important ways. Where Royal includes the Iereslaus (ff. 102^{r}-120^{r}), Suso (ff. 120^{v}-138^{r}) and Jonathas (ff. 138^{v}-149^{v}) sections of the complete *Series* after its copy of the *Regiment* (ff. 4^{r}-101^{v}), the scribe of the Digby codex has added only the tales of Iereslaus's wife (ff. 145^{r}-157^{r}) and Jonathas (ff. 157^{v}-165^{r}) after his copy of Hoccleve's *Fürstenspiegel* (ff. 80^{r}-144^{v}), and where in the Royal codex the *Regiment* and the selections from the *Series* are presented in isolation, Digby anthologizes its Hocclevean texts alongside two other Middle English works: Digby opens with a version of the highly popular prose *Brut* (ff. 1^{r}-79^{r}) and closes with a translation of the French romance *Ponthus et Sidoine* (ff. 166^{r}-203^{r}).

(ff. 21^{r}-30^{v}) sections of the *Series*. The Iereslaus text appears have been reproduced here without the moralization which the friend brings Hoccleve to copy (the text of the tale concludes at the bottom of f. 18^{r} and f. 18^{v} is blank) and the Jonathas translation is introduced by an imperfect version of the discussion between Hoccleve and the friend given in the full texts of the *Series* (ff. 21^{r}-22^{r}). Eng. poet. d. 4 cannot descend from either the Royal or Digby codices discussed below because they do not contain this last portion of text (cf. *Series*, 5. 1–84). It is a shame that more of this manuscript has not survived as it may bear witness to an independent reading and partial reconstruction of a more complete copy of the *Series*.

29 See M. C. Seymour, 'The Manuscripts of Hoccleve's *Regiment of Princes*', *Edinburgh Bibliographical Society Transactions*, 4 (1974), 255–97, at 277. Marzec's stemma of the *Regiment* manuscripts is reproduced in D. C. Greetham, 'Challenges of Theory and Practice in the Editing of Hoccleve's *Regement of Princes*', in Derek Pearsall (ed.), *Manuscripts and Texts: Editorial Problems in Later Middle English Literature* (Cambridge, 1987), 60–86, at 66–7.

Digby 185 has been studied in detail by Carol Meale, whose examination of the heraldic devices reproduced at several key junctures in the codex leads her to view this book as a carefully designed assertion of its patron's position within a variety of interlocking regional and national power networks.[30] Specifically, Meale demonstrates that these arms record the relationships between the Hopton family from West Yorkshire and a group of northern families with whom the Hoptons shared a close affiliation to the Lancastrian party over the course of the fifteenth century. The Lancastrian bias Meale detects in the codex's heraldic scheme is reflected in the choice of texts preserved in Digby since both the Hoccleve works and the version of the *Brut* included here recall the dynasty's most successful phase under Henry V: the *Regiment* was dedicated to Henry sometime between 1410 and his accession on 9 April 1413, and the Digby copy of the *Brut* ends in January 1419 with an account of the English victory at Rouen. Indeed, the collection's Lancastrianism plays a significant role in Meale's re-dating of the codex's execution to the late 1480s and her assertion that it was most likely commissioned not by Sir William Hopton, as has generally been assumed, but by his son, George. The decorative style of the manuscript supports a dating to this period and the consistent emphasis on the Hopton family's Lancastrian history would appear to reflect a desire on the part of this younger Hopton to represent himself as a faithful and deserving retainer of the new king, Henry VII (reigned 1485–1509), whose hereditary claim to the throne relied on his descent from the father of Henry IV, John of Gaunt.[31]

I would like to suggest that the anthologization of Hoccleve's texts in Royal 17 D. vi was motivated by a similar desire on the part of a manuscript commissioner to assert an interest in the Lancastrian cause, albeit for different reasons. The Royal codex predates Digby 185 by some forty or fifty years: as Seymour notes, the coat of arms reproduced on f. 4^{r} belongs to Joan Nevill, Countess of Salisbury, after her marriage to William FitzAllan, Earl of Arundel, on 17 August 1438, suggesting that the book must have been owned either by Joan or by her husband, whose arms appear on f. 40^{r}, sometime between Joan's marriage and her death on 9 September 1462.[32] The fact that both these sets of arms are superimposed on the border work framing f. 4^{r} and f. 40^{r} indicates that the manuscript was produced somewhat earlier, although probably not during Hoccleve's lifetime.[33] Since Royal 17 D. vi only contains texts by Hoccleve, D. C. Greetham suggests that the

30 Carol M. Meale, 'The Politics of Book Ownership: The Hopton Family and Bodleian Library, Digby MS 185', in Felicity Riddy (ed.), *Prestige, Authority and Power in Late-Medieval Manuscripts and Texts* (York, 2000), 103–31.

31 Meale, 'The Politics of Book Ownership', 119–20.

32 Seymour, 'Manuscripts of Hoccleve's *Regiment*', 272.

33 While George F. Warner and Julius P. Gilson date Royal 17 D. vi to the first quarter of the fifteenth century, its position on Marzec's stemma (fifth tier) argues against such an early date of production; Burrow dates the codex to 1425–1450. See George F. Warner and Julius P. Gilson, *Catalogue of Western Manuscripts in the Old Royal and King's Collections*, 4 vols (London, 1921), 2: 251–2 and Burrow, *Thomas Hoccleve*, 51.

manuscript is an early attempt at a 'Hoccleve "complete works"'.[34] As A. S. G. Edwards has pointed out, however, single-author collections are rare in Middle English manuscript culture and it is accordingly not surprising that the codex's fifteenth-century producers and owners appear to have focused less clearly on this aspect of the book than on its contents' historical connections with Henry V.[35]

The tone is set here by the presentation miniature on Royal's f. 40^{r}, which is immediately striking for its disproportionate representation of prince and poet: the former towers over the latter here, whom he almost doubles in height.[36] Neither this miniature nor the Chaucer portrait which occurs subsequently on f. 93^{v} have proven popular with scholars, who tend to view these illustrations as degenerative derivatives of the more famous images reproduced in two early *Regiment* manuscripts, London, British Library MSS Arundel 38 and Harley 4866.[37] Still, if the presentation miniature and Chaucer portrait survive in Royal it seems that this must have been for an especially good reason: unlike the Arundel and Harley manuscripts, Royal does not appear to have been produced under Hoccleve's supervision and, as Perkins notes, the illustration scheme shared by these earlier codices passed out of the transmission history of the *Regiment* quite rapidly once its author was no longer directly involved in the reproduction of his text.[38] It thus appears sensible to consider the possibility that the disproportionate representation of prince and poet in the Royal presentation miniature was the result not of a lack of artistic skill on the part of the manuscript's illustrator but of his or his commissioner's desire to glorify the memory of the original dedicatee of the *Regiment*, Henry V. An early addition to the Royal codex suggests that one of the book's first owners shared this intention. On the back flyleaf of the codex (f. 150^{r}) a fifteenth-century hand which is not that of the manuscript's main scribe has copied in a version of the Letter of Defiance sent from Henry V to Charles VI of France on the eve of the siege of Caen in August 1417.[39] The inclusion of the Letter appears to have postdated the original execution of the manuscript but it shows some signs of premeditation and seems likely to have been commissioned, however informally: the flyleaf has been ruled and, although the writing here

34 Greetham, 'Challenges of Theory and Practice', 62.

35 A. S. G. Edwards, 'Fifteenth-Century Middle English Verse Author Collections', in A. S. G. Edwards, Vincent Gillespie and Ralph Hanna (eds), *The English Medieval Book: Studies in Memory of Jeremy Griffiths* (London, 2000), 101–12, at 109.

36 The Royal presentation miniature is reproduced in M. C. Seymour, 'Manuscript Portraits of Chaucer and Hoccleve', *The Burlington Magazine*, 124 (1982), 618–23, at 620.

37 On the Royal Chaucer portrait see David R. Carlson, 'Thomas Hoccleve and the Chaucer Portrait', *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 54 (1991), 283–300, at 287 and Lois Bragg, 'Chaucer's Monogram and the "Hoccleve Portrait" Tradition', *Word & Image*, 12 (1996), 127–42, at 135–6. On this image and on the Royal presentation miniature see Seymour, 'Manuscript Portraits', 621–3.

38 Perkins, *Hoccleve's* Regiment of Princes, 155–9.

39 The letter is dated to 13 August 1417. It is reproduced, though not from this manuscript, in Thomas Rymer (ed.), *Foedera, conventiones, literæ, et cujuscunque generis acta publica, inter reges Angliæ* . . . , 20 vols (London, 1704–1717), 9: 482–3.

extends into what would have been the right margin, some attempt has been made to fit the text to the standard page layout of the codex insofar as the margins respected at the bottom and on the left edge are comparable to those given throughout the rest of the manuscript.

Henry's victory at Caen was the first of many during his highly successful second invasion of France and the interest in recalling the Lancastrian glory days which must have motivated the Letter's inclusion in Royal may be read as a positive response to and expansion upon the larger-than-life representation of the young prince in the presentation miniature. Indeed, the opening years of Henry VI's reign which saw the genesis and early ownership history of Royal were a period during which the memory of the late king loomed particularly large. Interest in Henry V seems to have reached a peak in the late 1430s about the time when his son's personal rule began. These years saw the composition of two important biographies, the anonymous *Vita et Gesta Henrici Quinti* (*c*. 1435–1438) and Tito Livio Frulovisi's humanist adaptation and abridgement of the same work, the *Vita Henrici Quinti* (*c*. 1438–1439); they also saw the beginning of a project to build a chantry chapel around Henry V's tomb at Westminster Abbey.[40] By imposing their arms on f. 4^{r} and f. 40^{r} of the Royal manuscript it thus seems probable that the Nevill-FitzAllans wanted openly to mark their commitment to this public culture of remembering Henry V. They or the manuscript's subsequent owners were in any case keen to show the book around. As A. I. Doyle notes, the flurry of short verses and signatures on the opening flyleaves of Royal (ff. 1^{r}-3^{v}) suggests that the book came to serve 'as a sort of *album amicorum* for members of a number of noble and gentle families in the later fifteenth century'.[41]

To a patron or compiler reflecting upon the challenges facing Henry VI at the dawn of his personal rule, the insistence on the importance of looking after one's rightful inheritance which marks the tale of Jonathas must have made this seem a particularly apt text with which to conclude the Royal codex. In combination with the tale of Iereslaus's wife and the Suso translation, the Jonathas translation also serves to underscore the religious orthodoxy of the *Regiment*. This is a preoccupation which is clearly in evidence earlier in the codex, where in a departure from the 'Hoccleve Portrait' tradition Chaucer's image on f. 93^{v} is made to point not only at the lines in which his likeness is announced (4992–8), but also to the lines in the next stanza where Hoccleve reiterates the utility of devotional images

40 On the two biographies see David Rundle, 'The Unoriginality of Tito Livio Frulovisi's *Vita Henrici Quinti*', *English Historical Review*, 123 (2008), 1109–31. On the chantry chapel, see W. H. St John Hope, 'The Funeral, Monument and Chantry Chapel of King Henry the Fifth', *Archaeologia*, 15 (1914), 129–86, at 153–83. Rundle contests the older school of thought which holds that adulation of Henry V around this time was fuelled by the war party at Henry VI's court, suggesting instead that public veneration of the late king at this crucial moment in his son's reign constituted an affirmation of a set of basic ideals about which there could be a consensus of opinion ('The Unoriginality', 1128).

41 A. I. Doyle, 'English Books In and Out of Court from Edward III to Henry VII', in V. J. Scattergood and J. W. Sherborne (eds), *English Court Culture in the Later Middle Ages* (London, 1983), 163–81, at 176.

(4999–5005).[42] Sebastian Langdell has highlighted the extent to which the prose passages appended to Hoccleve's *Gesta* translations appear designed to divest these sections of the *Series* of their subversive potential, stressing their orthodox Christian meaning and thus making them more attractive to politically cautious book commissioners and owners.[43] It seems possible, then, that the tale of Iereslaus's wife and Hoccleve's partial translation of the already popular Suso text were included in Royal alongside the tale of Jonathas in order to advertise the commitment of the manuscript's commissioner to an orthodox piety of the kind for which Henry V was celebrated both during his reign and after his death.[44] In this connection it is worth noting that at least one reader of the codex appears to have been sensitive to the tenor of the advice given here and to the text's modelling of good counsel: on f. 2^{r} a fifteenth-century hand has added some dedicatory verses to the book, perhaps intended for William FitzAllan, in which the addressee is called upon to emulate Hoccleve's example.[45]

Huntington, MS HM 744 and London, British Library MS Harley 172

The inclusion of the translated tales in the Digby manuscript was most probably motivated by a desire akin to that of the Royal compiler to underline the conservative aspect of the *Regiment*, a decision that takes on a new resonance when considered in the light of Meale's suggestion that Digby 185 may have been deployed in a domestic learning context.[46] But if, as Perkins has suggested, the compiler of this codex neglected to include the Suso translation because Hoccleve's text on the art of dying would have cast too dark a shadow over the family book he had been engaged to produce, it is nevertheless notable that the poet's Englished *ars moriendi* appears to have enjoyed a modest success outside the *Series*.[47] Hoccleve himself seems to have shared the conviction that this was a work which could function in a variety of manuscript situations since he copied it into

42 The Royal Chaucer portrait is reproduced in Lois Bragg, 'Chaucer's Monogram', 136. I cite the *Regiment* from Charles R. Blyth (ed.), *The Regiment of Princes* (Kalamazoo, MI, 1999).

43 Sebastian James Langdell, '"What World is this? How Vndirstande Am I?": A Reappraisal of Poetic Authority in Thomas Hoccleve's *Series*', *Medium Ævum*, 78 (2009), 281–99, at 291.

44 For a general discussion of the ways Suso's work was appropriated in order to bolster traditional religious practices in late medieval England see Roger Lovatt, 'Henry Suso and the Medieval Mystical Tradition in England', in Marion Glasscoe (ed.), *The Medieval Mystical Tradition in England: Papers Read at Dartington Hall, July 1982* (Exeter, 1982), 47–62. Hoccleve celebrates Henry V's defence of orthodox religion in the *Address to Sir John Oldcastle* preserved in Huntington MS HM 111 (ff. 1^{r}-2^{v}, 8^{r}-16^{v}).

45 These verses are reproduced in Rossell Hope Robbins (ed.), *Secular Lyrics of the XIVth and XVth Centuries* (Oxford, 1952), 93.

46 Meale, 'The Politics of Book Ownership', 129–30.

47 Perkins, *Hoccleve's* Regiment of Princes, 173.

his autographs twice. In Durham, University Library MS Cosin V. iii. 9 (ff. 52^{v}-74^{r}), it plays an important role in Hoccleve's attempt to effect his social rehabilitation.[48] In what are now quires three to eight of Huntington MS HM 744 (ff. 53^{r}-68^{v}), however, an imperfect copy of the poet's text on the art of dying survives in a quite different context. Once a free standing autograph anthology of Hoccleve's works, these quires contain a diverse selection of the poet's writings, ranging from Marian verses (ff. 31^{v}-39^{r}) to the poet's Englishing of Christine de Pizan's *Epistre au dieu d'amours* (ff. 39^{v}-50^{v}) and a satirical roundel in praise of an ugly lady (f. 52^{v}).[49] These texts are furnished with a set of incipits, explicits and other notes to the reader which appear designed to establish the overarching presence of their author-compiler as the guarantor of the codex's unity. To Hoccleve's mind, the didactic content of the Suso translation was thus probably less important *per se* in this context than what the text could reveal about the depth and breadth of his abilities as a poet. Indeed, both the Huntington autographs appear to have been designed to emphasize the diversity not only of the poet's talent but also of the important personalities with whom he had come into contact throughout his literary career: as John Thompson's analysis of the Huntington books has shown, the paratextual apparatus Hoccleve provides for MSS HM 111 and HM 744 explicitly links the poet with an impressive range of aristocrats and high-ranking London officials.[50]

When the book which is now MS HM 744 was compiled, probably in the third quarter of the fifteenth century, the Hoccleve material preserved in this manuscript was combined with two quires containing a selection of mid-fifteenth-century Wycliffite works, including a commentary on the Ten Commandments (ff. 13^{v}-23^{v}) and *The Seven Works of Mercy Bodily* (ff. 23^{v}-24^{r}). The reading environment for Hoccleve's Suso translation was thus altered significantly and the decision to bring these two groups of texts together may be interpreted in a variety of ways: the maker of HM 744 may have seen a reformist potential in the intense, personal discussion staged in the Suso translation between Hoccleve's disciple and the Christ-like Sapience, for instance, or perhaps he was intrigued by the ideological tensions created by the juxtaposition of Hoccleve's poems and the later texts. Alternatively—and arguably more likely—the collection may have been the product of a decision to bring together a selection of miscellaneous texts

48 See Burrow, 'Experience and Books', 266 and Steven Rozenski, 'Your Ensaumple and Your Mirour': Hoccleve's Amplification of the Imagery and Intimacy of Henry Suso's *Ars Moriendi*', *Parergon*, 25 (2008), 1–16, at 9–16.

49 John M. Bowers's suggestion that Huntington MSS HM 111 and HM 744 originally constituted a single-volume anthology of Hoccleve's shorter works has recently been challenged by Burrow and Doyle. See John M. Bowers, 'Hoccleve's Huntington Holographs: The First "Collected Poems" in English', *Fifteenth Century Studies,* 15 (1989), 27–51 and J. A. Burrow and A. I. Doyle (eds), *Thomas Hoccleve: A Facsimile of the Autograph Verse Manuscripts* (Oxford, 2002), xxvii–xxviii.

50 John J. Tompson, 'A Poet's Contacts with the Great and the Good: Further Consideration of Thomas Hoccleve's Texts and Manuscripts', in Riddy, *Prestige, Authority and Power*, 77–101, at 86–97.

belonging to one household. HM 744 shows signs of having been in the possession of a late medieval family, the Filers: the name 'Thomas Fyler' occurs three times on the front flyleaf and the death notices of various family members have been written into the first item in the codex, which is a table for determining Easter Day 1387–1527 (f. 1^{r}-3^{v}).[51] This item and the household inventory recorded on the back flyleaf suggest that the book served as a repository for important information pertaining to the family life of its owners and the texts it contains may thus have been bound together not on the grounds of any particular critical argument but in response to the practical requirements of preservation and access.

Lastly, Hoccleve's translation on the art of dying also makes an appearance in London, British Library MS Harley 172 (ff. 73^{r}-88^{r}), where it is unaccompanied by any other Hocclevean items. Instead, the Suso translation is presented here alongside copies of such popular works as a Middle English version of the *Fifteen Oes* (ff. 3^{v}-10^{v}), the first book of Peter Idley's *Instructions to his Son* (21^{r}-51^{v}) and Benedict Burgh's translation of the *Cato Major* (ff. 52^{r}-71^{r}). The Harley manuscript is rather small (15 × 11cm) and in the first instance it appears most probable that the book was used primarily for the purposes of private devotional reading. Doyle's identification of the hand of Harley 172 as that of the principal scribe of London, British Library MS Additional 60577 provides an additional clue regarding the book's potential audience, however.[52] Edward Wilson asserts that the scribe of the Additional codex was probably a monk at St Swithun's Priory who was active mainly in the last quarter of the fifteenth century; given the pedagogic interest of a number of the items in the codex he also suggests that this monk was at one time schoolmaster either to the priory's novices or to the boys at the nearby almonry school.[53] If this is the case, it is possible that Hoccleve's Suso translation at one point featured among the texts read to the young men under this monk's instruction. Hoccleve's poem, which relates the discussion between Sapience and a younger 'disciple' (*Series*, 4. 87), would seem to lend itself well to a pedagogic context. In this connection it is pertinent finally to recall Kate Harris's observation that the insertion of lines 365–71 of the Suso translation into the version of Chaucer's Tale of Melibee preserved in Huntington MS HM 144 (f. 97^{v}), another manuscript with monastic associations, appears to bear witness to an intense rote learning of the same text.[54]

51 For a detailed description of this manuscript including more information on the possible identity of the Filers see C. W. Dutschke et al., *Guide to Medieval and Renaissance Manuscripts in the Huntington Library*, 2 vols (San Marino, 1989), 1: 247–51.

52 Reported in Edward Wilson (ed.), *The Winchester Anthology: A Facsimile of British Library Additional Manuscript 60577* (Cambridge, 1981), 4.

53 Wilson, *The Winchester Anthology*, 13–14.

54 See Kate Harris, 'Unnoticed Extracts from Chaucer and Hoccleve: Huntington MS HM 144, Trinity College, Oxford MS D 29 and *The Canterbury Tales*', *Studies in the Age of Chaucer*, 20 (1998), 167–99, at 199.

Negative Selection and the Survival of Hoccleve's Personal Poetry

This account of Harley 172 brings to a close my survey of the manuscripts containing partial copies of the *Series*. Regardless of what Hoccleve's final intent for the collection may have been, it should now be clear that the work's three translated texts could be appreciated in a variety of combinations outside the narrative frame provided for them by the *Complaint* and *Dialogue*. It is impossible to determine the extent to which the underrepresentation of the *Complaint* and *Dialogue* in the non-autograph transmission history of the collection was a product of self-conscious editing on the part of the compilers whose work is analysed here. Although in the complete copies of the *Series* Hoccleve and his friend discuss the translations as new productions, some or all of these works may have been composed and circulated before their inclusion in the longer work.[55] In this case the compiler of a codex like MS Royal 17 D. vi could have encountered the three translated poems he appends to his copy of the *Regiment* independently of the autobiographical frame into which they are slotted in the complete copies of the collection; the absence of the opening sections of the *Series* from his book cannot be taken as evidence that he deliberately decided not to reproduce these texts.

Nevertheless, it seems useful to consider whether qualities intrinsic to the opening sections of the complete *Series* may have led to their relatively narrow circulation and to the somewhat limited transmission history of the collection as a whole. The contrast between the afterlives of the *Regiment* and the later collection is striking in this regard: although the *Regiment* employs the same structural conceit as the *Series*, whereby self-portraiture moves into translations of advice literature, the earlier text is extant in forty-three manuscripts, making it one of the most popular English poems of the century, whereas, as we have seen, there exist only five complete copies of the *Series* besides Hoccleve's autograph. What is more, the *Regiment*-proper is circulated without the personalizing frame provided by its 2000-line Prologue only in exceptional cases. As Perkins's masterful study of the transmission and reception histories of the *Regiment* has shown, although late medieval readers responded to the work's opening section in a variety of ways, suggesting that they did not often encounter works like it, the manuscript evidence thus argues for an early awareness of the integrity of the *Regiment* among its fifteenth-century readers.[56] This observation lends weight to more recent criticism of *Series* that has begun to uncover a set of internal complexities and contradictions in the work's opening sections which may have jeopardized its chances of survival. Lee Patterson, for example, has concluded that narratives of the collection such as

55 On this eventuality see J. A. Burrow, 'Thomas Hoccleve: Some Redatings,' *Review of English Studies*, 46 (1995), 366–72, at 371. Watt argues that the Suso translation now in HM 744 at one point circulated independently of the other Hoccleve material preserved in this codex ('Self-Publication and Book Production', 134–8).

56 Perkins, *Hoccleve's* Regiment of Princes, 151–91, at 153. Perkins also notes here that the *Regiment* is extant in at least eighteen stand-alone copies.

that elaborated by Burrow 'are persuasive to the extent that they describe not the text Hoccleve wrote but the text he tried to write', adding that the *Series* is a work which 'approaches but finally evades coherence.'[57] Mathew Boyd Goldie's assessment of the author's self-presentation in the opening texts of Hoccleve's collection is more pointed still. His analysis of the temporal inconsistencies in these poems leads him to conclude that at the time of writing '[Hoccleve] is not well'.[58]

The argument which Hoccleve makes in the *Complaint* in favour of his recovery relies on his ability to prove that 'alþouȝ the substaunce of my memorie / Wente to pleie as for a certein space', God

> Made it for to retourne into the place
> Whens it cam, wiche at Alle Halwemesse
> Was fiue ȝeere, neither more ne lesse. (1. 50–1; 54–6)[59]

However, as Goldie points out, the confused chronology of the collection's opening section works to undermine the integrity of this claim; indeed, the very first mention the poet makes of his illness – 'sithin I with siknesse *last* / was scourgid . . .' (1. 22–3, my emphasis) is indicative of his failure to consign his madness to the past definitively: does 'last' here mean that he has been ill before and may thus fall ill again?[60] This blurring of the temporal distinctions on which Hoccleve's argument depends is a characteristic feature of the *Complaint*. Depending on how we read the finite verb form 'ȝelde' in line 49, for example, the poet's description of the pilgrimages his friends have undertaken on his account may be understood either as a record of their effectiveness in securing his cure or as a prayer that this cure might be meted out on some future occasion: 'They [the friends] for myn helþe pilgrimages hiȝt', Hoccleve writes, 'And souȝte hem, somme on hors and somme on foote / God ȝelde it hem to gete me my boote' (1. 47–9, editorial punctuation omitted). Is the verb to be read as a simple past form—i.e. 'God granted that they might thereby achieve my recovery'—or is it a present subjunctive—'May God grant . . .'? How certain can we be that the

57 Lee Patterson, '"What is me?:" Self and Society in the Poetry of Thomas Hoccleve', *Studies in the Age of Chaucer*, 23 (2001), 437–70, at 443–4. Elsewhere Patterson has expanded on these claims, suggesting that the anthologization of the non-autograph copies of the *Series* with the *Regiment* and Lydgate's *Dance of Death* constitutes an act of 'cultural rescue' designed to make the strangeness of Hoccleve's unusually intimate *Complaint* and *Dialogue* more palatable for late medieval readers and thus increase the likelihood of its survival. See Lee Patterson, 'Beinecke MS 493 and the Survival of Hoccleve's *Series*', in Robert G. Babcock and Lee Patterson (eds), *Old Books, New Learning: Essays on Medieval and Renaissance Books at Yale* (New Haven, CT, 2001), 80–92, at 90. Burrow's account of the *Series* is briefly outlined above at my note 26.

58 Mathew Boyd Goldie, 'Psychosomatic Illness and Identity in London, 1416–1421: Hoccleve's *Complaint* and *Dialogue with a Friend*', *Exemplaria*, 11 (1999), 23–52, at 48.

59 When an author gives his narrator his own name, as Hoccleve does in the *Series* (2. 3, 10), it becomes difficult to distinguish between narratorial and authorial voices in his text. For this reason I refer to both the author and his textual self-representation as 'Hoccleve' here, although, as I will go on to suggest, the poet's self-inscription in the *Series* may be more calculatedly ironic than has sometimes been allowed.

60 See Goldie, 'Psychosomatic Illness', 43–4.

poet's final recovery has taken place? This is a question which returns repeatedly, often at those very moments where Hoccleve appears most desperate to clarify that he has been definitively healed. At l. 215–6 the proof of recovery offered is curiously timeless truism: 'Thouȝ a man harde haue oones been betid, / God shilde it shulde on him contynue alway'; at l. 225–31 the poet engages in a comparison which has the effect of making his sanity seem as provisional as the next man's sobriety, and at the close of the poem he appears to situate his final recuperation in the future, even going so far as to anticipate the return of his old affliction. Commenting on the lesson his sickness has taught him, Hoccleve writes:

> With pacience I hensforþe thinke vnpike
> Of suche þouȝtful dissese and woo the lok,
> And lete hem out þat han me made to sike.
> Hereafter oure Lorde God may, if him like,
> Make al myn oolde affeccioun resorte,
> And in hope of þat wole I me comforte. (l. 387–92)

That these subtle gestures problematize but never completely undo the guiding argument established in lines l. 50–6 suggests to me that Hoccleve possesses a degree of poetic skill with which he is not usually credited. We cannot, after all, rule out the possibility that the author is pretending to be mad. Might Hoccleve's self-presentation as a sufferer from mental illness perhaps best be understood as an innovative if particularly desperate (and ultimately misguided) manifestation of the post-Chaucerian humility topos?

Leaving aside the tricky issue of Hoccleve's intentions, for my current purpose it will be sufficient to remark that the authorial personality which emerges over the course of the *Complaint* and *Dialogue* is a good deal more conflicted than the dismal but otherwise competent author-figure who narrates the *Regiment* and whose rehabilitation is quite deliberately staged within his own text: whereas in the *Series* the only formal dedicatory gesture preserved occurs in the autograph manuscript's closing stanza directing the collection to Joan Beaufort (5. 733–40), in the *Regiment*, the poet's dedication of his work to Prince Hal is afforded a central position in the text and Hoccleve goes to much greater lengths to prefigure the acceptance of his book and the effect of its presentation on his career.[61] If the extended petitionary prologue which frames the earlier text appears to have presented an interpretative challenge to Hoccleve's medieval readers, it thus seems that the more idiosyncratic aspects of the poet's self-presentation in the *Complaint* and *Dialogue* sections of the *Series* may have rendered these parts of his collection illegible for a significant part of his audience. It now goes without saying that the

61 See *Regiment* lines 2017–2156 and the comments on the unusual positioning of the presentation miniature in the *Regiment* manuscripts in Dhira B. Mahoney, 'Courtly Presentation and Authorial Self-Fashioning: Frontispiece Miniatures in Late Medieval French and English Manuscripts', *Mediaevalia*, 21 (1996), 97–160, at 115–21.

'idea of the individual' existed long before Hoccleve's time.[62] What the reception history of the *Series* suggests, however, is that, then as now, a character who is as publically at odds with his own existence as Hoccleve appears to be risks making himself invisible. Indeed, the transmission history of the *Series* that I have traced fits uncannily well alongside the social experience of madness that the poet himself describes in the *Complaint*:

> For ofte whanne I in Westmynstyr Halle,
> And eke in Londoun, amonge the prees went,
> I sy the chere abaten and apalle
> Of hem þat weren wont me for to calle
> To companie. Her heed they caste awry,
> Whanne I hem mette, as they not me sy. (1. 72–7)

Whereas modern readers have dwelled on Hoccleve's artful self-portraiture in the *Series* and in his begging verses, the late medieval readers represented by the manuscripts I have analyzed reproduced and highlighted those elements of Hoccleve's corpus that they could already recognize and most easily turn to their own purposes. These were the texts whose moral conservatism and historical connections with the glory days of Henry V were the clearest: despite the ease with which it may be detached from the larger work—as the growing number of undergraduate anthologies featuring Hoccleve's text demonstrates—there is no hard evidence to indicate that the *Complaint*, for example, ever circulated alone.[63] If we are surprised by medieval readers' apparent lack of interest in the personal drama narrated in the poet's works, it is worth recalling that Hoccleve's anxious persona has only recently found its modern audience. Furnivall, for instance, although generally sympathetic to his author's character, famously described the poet as a 'weak, sensitive, look-on-the-worst side kind of man',

62 Those with lingering doubts may be referred to two landmark essays from the 1990s: David Aers, 'A Whisper in the Ear of Early Modernists; or, Reflections on Literary Critics Writing the "History of the Subject" ', in David Aers (ed.), *Culture and History, 1350-1600: Essays on English Communities, Identities, and Writing* (Detroit, MI, 1992), 177–202 and Lee Patterson, 'On the Margin: Postmodernism, Ironic History, and Medieval Studies', *Speculum*, 65 (1990), 87–108.

63 At the end of her list of the extant copies of the *Series*, Eleanor Hammond notes that 'The MS formerly Phillipps 8267 (present owner unknown) has fragments of the Complaint' (*English Verse Between Chaucer and Surrey* [Durham, NC, 1927], 57). Burrow makes no mention of this manuscript. In the facsimile edition of the Philipps collection catalogue, A. N. L. Munby (ed.), *Catalogus Librorum Manuscriptorum in Bibliotheca D. Thomæ Philipps, BT.* (London, 1968), the codex Hammond cites is grouped with the Heber manuscripts bought by Phillipps in 1836. The entry reads 'Occleve's Complaint, *inedited? One leaf lost. Incip.* "And whan this stormy nygt was overgone." *f. v.* s. xv'. I am currently attempting to locate this manuscript. However, given that the line cited as the incipit of the poem occurs not in the *Complaint* but in the Prologue to the *Regiment of Princes* (at line 113), it seems likely that this is the same manuscript listed by Seymour as *Regiment* MS 38a which begins imperfectly at this line and which was offered for sale by Quaritch in 1899 ('Manuscripts of the *Regiment of Princes*', 289). I am grateful to the anonymous reviewer at *RES* for pointing out this connection and for many other helpful comments.

adding that 'we wish he had been a better poet and a manlier fellow'.[64] Recent research on authors such as Margery Kempe and Charles d'Orléans likewise indicates that many late medieval readers found the autobiographical element in these writers' texts less intrinsically engaging than have some of their twentieth- and twenty-first-century readers.[65] As I hope I have demonstrated, however, consideration of Hoccleve's late medieval reception serves not only to put the current critical preoccupation with the marginal and the aberrant into historical perspective; it also illuminates the dynamic mix of creativity and pragmatism which characterizes the practices of book production and ownership in the fifteenth century and, perhaps more clearly still, it highlights the extraordinary achievement of one the first writers to fictionalize these processes in English.

University of Groningen

64 Furnivall and Gollancz, *Minor Poems*, xxxviii.

65 On the deployment of *The Book of Margery Kempe* in lay teaching see Kelly Parsons, 'The Red Ink Annotator of *The Book of Margery Kempe* and His Lay Audience', in Kerby-Fulton and Hilmo, *The Medieval Reader at Work*, 143–216. On the excision of autobiographical material in an early printed edition of Charles's poems see Jean-Claude Mühlethaler, 'Charles d'Orléans, une prison en porte-à-faux: les ballades de la captivité dans l'édition d'Antoine Vérard', in *Charles d'Orléans, un lyrisme entre Moyen Âge et modernité* (Paris, 2010), 193–210.

Appendix: The *Male Regle* in Canterbury, Cathedral Archives, Register O (ff. 406^{v}-407^{r})

The Canterbury version of the *Male Regle* deserves closer attention than I have been able to give it in the foregoing essay. Besides the question of what this copy of Hoccleve's text can reveal about the early reception of his work, future researchers may wish to consider in more depth what the appearance of the poem in Register O can tell us about the reading habits of the monks at Canterbury, for example, or their connections with Westminster in the early fifteenth century: by what channels did the *Male Regle* reach Christ Church Monastery? What might the inclusion of this text in Register O be able to tell us about the monks' attitude towards the history of their institution and its administration in the fifteenth century? How does this poem compare with contemporaneous additions to the monastery's records? I hope researchers with interests in these areas and related topics will find the following transcription helpful.

Register O was badly damaged during a fire at the Cathedral in 1670. Illegible portions of the manuscript are marked with an ellipsis (. . .). I have preserved the word divisions given in the manuscript. Where the scribe has added extra words above a line, I have indicated this with double slashes (// \\). Otherwise I follow the conventions outlined in M. B. Parkes, *English Cursive Book Hands, 1250–1500*, 2nd edn (London, 1979), xxviii–xxx. I am grateful to Canterbury Cathedral Archives for granting me permission to reproduce my transcription of this poem here.

[406v] Balade

Y haue h . . . / of men ful . . . ago
That p*ros* . . . blynd / ande se ne may
And ver . . . / y may wel hit is so
. . . myself / haue put hit in a say
. . . / cowde y co*n*syder hit · nay
. . . gyd aftyr nouelrye
. . . / ȝerny*n* day be day
. . . smert / . . . syth me my folye

autograph stanza 5

. . . / . . . knew noȝt what he wroghte
. . . ot y wel / whan fro the twymyd he
. . . his ignoraunce / him self he soghte
. . . not / that he dwellyng was wyth the
. . . / were to gret nycete
. . . frend / wytyngly for to offende
. . . that the wyghte / of his adu*er*syte
. . . ffool opp*re*sse / and make of hym an ende

autograph stanza 6

. . . ȝyt for the more part / ȝowth ys rebel
Vn to reson / and hatyth his doct*ri*ne
And re . . . yng that /hit may noȝt stonde wel
Wyth ȝouthe as fer/ as wyt can ymagyne
O · ȝowthe a las / why wolt thow noȝt enclyne
And to rewlyd resoun / bowyn the
. . . resoun / ys the verry streghte lyne
That ledyth folk / yn to felycite

autograph stanza 9

Correspondence with order of stanzas in HM 111 (ff. 16^{v}-26^{r})

25	Ful selde ys seyn / that youthe takyth hede	autograph stanza 10
	Of p*er*ils / that ben emynent to falle	
	. . . haue //he\\ take a po*ur*pos / he wol nede	
	. . . hit / and no conseyl to hym calle	
	. . . owyn wit / he demyth best of alle	
30	. . . ther wyth / he rennyth Brydilles	
	. . . he / that no3ght be twyxt hony and galle	
	. . . iuge / ne the werre fro the pees	
	. . . ffrendes / seyde to me ful ofte	autograph stanza 12
	. . . mysrewle / wolde me cause a ffyt	
35	. . . reddyn . . . / in esywyse and softe	
	. . . / and . . . withdrawe hit	
[407r]	But that no3t / myghte synke in to my wit	
	So was the lust / rotyd in to my*n* herte	
	And y am so rype / vn to my pyt	
40	That scarsly / y may no3t hit a sterte	
¶	Resoun me bad and redde / as for the best	autograph stanza 14
	To ete and drynke / in tyme and temprely	
	But wylful 3outh / nat obeye lest	
	Vn to hys red / he sette no3t ther by	
45	He of hem bothe / hath take outrageously	
	Ant out of tyme / not two or thre	
	But xx^{ti} 3eres / passyd contynuelly	
	Excesse at borde / hys knyf hath leyd wyth me	
¶	Who so that passyng mesure desyryth	autograph stanza 45
50	As that wytnessyn / olde clerkys wyse	
	Hym self encombryth / ofte sythe and myryth	
	And therfore / let the mene the suffyse	
	Yf such conceytys / in thyn herte ryse	
	As thy profyt / mowe hyndre or thy renoun	
55	Yf ~~þ~~ they were execut / in any wyse	
	Wyth manly resoun / thryst thow hem a dowun	
¶	And al so despensez large / en haunce a mannes loos	autograph stanza 44
	Whyl they endure / and whan ther is more	
	Hys name ys ded / me*n* kepe her mowthis cloos	
60	As no3t a peny / hadde be spent a fore	
	My thank ys queynt / my purs his stuf hath lore	
	And myn karkeys / replet of heuynesse	
	Be war ther fore / y rede the //the\\ more	
	And to a mene rewle / now dresse the	
¶	O · god / o · helthe / vn to thyn ordynaunce	autograph stanza 51
	Thow weleful lord / lowly su*m*mytty me	
	Y am contryt / and of ful repentaunce	
	That euyr y swam / in swych nycete	
	As was dysplesaunt / to thy deyte	
70	Now scew on me / thy m*er*cy and thy grace	
	Hyt syttyth a god / to be of g*ra*ce free	
	For yeue me lord / and y no more wole t*re*space	