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UNCOMMON FATHERLAND:
MEDIEVAL ENGLISH PERCEPTIONS OF ROME AND ITALY

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
The Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate
School of The Ohio State University

By

Joseph L. Grossi, Jr., B.A., M.A.

* * * * *

The Ohio State University
1999

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation argues that late medieval English literature depicts Rome and Italy with the same cultural anxieties found in works that imagine the Muslim world. Although partially Orientalizing Rome and Italy, however, the alliterative *Morte Arthure*, John Lydgate’s *Fall of Princes* and John Capgrave’s *Solace of Pilgrims* also acknowledge their centrality in the European cultural imagination.

The introduction explains the dissertation’s methodology and theoretical concerns. It then surveys familiar images of papal Rome and northern Italian bankers and merchants as they appear in literary and official texts. The first chapter focuses on the alliterative *Morte Arthure*’s aligning of imperial Rome and the medieval northern Italian communes with the “Saracen” East and Africa. In the second chapter Lydgate’s *Fall of Princes* is examined for its moralistic and highly critical assessment not only of ancient Roman history but also of the Anglophobic and untrustworthy Boccaccio. Finally, the third chapter shows how in the *Solace of Pilgrims* Capgrave celebrates Christian Rome’s triumph over its earlier pagan identity but also scorns the current barbarity, weak faith and confabulating tendencies of contemporary Romans. The chapter concludes by considering the two different ideas of Rome present in Capgrave’s pilgrimage manual and the *Book of Margery Kempe*. 
The English writers analyzed here at once acknowledge the cultural, historical and economic importance of Rome, Florence, Genoa, Venice, Milan and their surrounding regions, but at the same time suggest that ultimately it is English spiritual piety, cultural unity and the steadfastness of English kings and princes that make England superior to Italy. Although England forms, with the Italian city-states, part of the communis patria or common fatherland of imperial and papal Rome, the constant strife and violence in Italy and the subversive traits of Italians in England lead English writers to look beyond and even to question that commonality.
To my wife Marina
and my daughter Anna
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INTRODUCTION

Prefatory Remarks

My reason for undertaking this project is to explore the literary ways in which medieval England, long considered on the fringe of Europe by Italians, confronted Italy, at once the home of the universal Church and the southeastern frontier of Western Christendom. Although the peninsula is far from the exotic East of Marco Polo and Mandeville, its image in the works I consider suggests partial Orientalization, a tendency to highlight the fabulous or the monstrous in the form of demonized and Judaized Genoese and Lombards, Arabized Sicilians, semi-barbaric Sardinians, and Romans who still chafe at the bit of Christianity or actively seek alliances with Islamic forces. The image of Italy in late medieval English texts uncannily, and perhaps not coincidentally, resembles the one entertained by many inhabitants of the European Union today: a poorly guarded frontier, geographical and mental, separating Christendom from "heathenness."

I use the term "partial Orientalization," however, because Italy was not considered an unknown cipher like Ethiopia or India. From the twelfth century onward Florentine, Venetian and Genoese galleys and "carricks" plied the seas and
brought to England large merchant and banking communities, some of whose representatives served as the pope's tax collectors. To English subjects, especially denizens of important commercial and shipping centers like London and Southampton, Italian merchants and bankers were the most readily visible representatives of Italy in England. As I show later in this introduction, they simultaneously threatened England's sense of national, economic and cultural security as much as they aided English monarchs and provided goods for English people. Of course Italian "high culture," even if not perfectly understood, was known to some well-educated readers and writers thanks to the literary exports of Dante, Petrarch and Boccaccio, yet the proto-humanism they symbolized sparked English cultural antagonism as much as it inspired awe and the desire for imitation. Frequently called a humanist or proto-humanist English composition, Lydgate's translation of Boccaccio's *De casibus virorum illustrium* reveals both attraction and revulsion to the various meanings of Italy – its authoritarian and violent rulers and its authoritative but presumptuous authors. Although the level of cultural exchange seems lofty in the *Fall of Princes* and the *Solace of Pilgrims* in comparison to the outright warfare narrated in the more vigorously nationalistic *Morte Arthure*, Lydgate and Capgrave share the alliterating poet's desire to appropriate, to rival, to outdo, and sometimes finally to reject, the Roman and Italian cultural patrimony. The functionalist ethnography present in these works portrays Rome and Italy in terms of their usefulness to the homeland, but in revealing a desire for cultural one-upmanship it also suggests that Italian history is
incomplete without the superior piety of Britain and England. As the *Morte Arthure* makes especially clear, the former term “England” subsumes the larger and actually more problematic term “Britain.” The alliterative poem extends English identity back through time to the Celtic Arthurian age and extends it through geographical space over Wales, Scotland and Ireland; the *Fall of Princes* and the *Solace of Pilgrims* similarly grant English ethnicity to Arthur but obviously do so in an incidental way. Nevertheless in imagining ethnic homogeneity or at least harmony in Britain — a gesture that ignores the hostilities between England and its Celtic insular neighbors — these texts also construct spiritual purity for their actual English protagonists and/or audiences. The Italian or Roman “Other” is implicitly or explicitly imagined to be impure, deceitful, irreligious and/or tyrannical.

This study in no way asserts that English representations of Italy are intrinsically more interesting than English representations of France, Scotland, Wales, Ireland, Flanders, Jerusalem, Arabia or Africa. Although this project is incomplete in that it neglects to analyze the medieval English “meanings” of these places, it hopefully demonstrates the worth of a (for now) limited analysis of English views of Italy, which differs from its continental neighbors in possessing identities at once pagan and sacred, literary and commercial. Some of the texts I concentrate on here offer glimpses into perceptions of Italy that have little to do with the specifically “high cultural” reaction to Italian humanism that one expects after reading Chaucer (a reaction in itself mixed). And although I accord Chaucer relatively little space, the polyvalent image of Italy that
emerges from his works – whether of a city like Rome or a region like Lombardy – bears a general resemblance to the ambivalent, sometimes inconclusive views of Italy offered in the works I treat, works that have elicited scant or no sustained inquiry along these lines.

What can be said with certainty is that medieval views of Italy, or “the Other” generally, were not homogeneous. England did not regard Italy as a recalcitrant subject territory like Scotland, Wales and Ireland, nor did it view Italy as the ancestral colonizing power and, in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, hated dynastic enemy that France was. Certainly England engaged in trade with the cities of Italy, as it did with the Hanseatic League, Spain and Flanders, and thus English commentary on those Italian cities frequently engages economic and commercial concerns, but these are not the only concerns so addressed. Besides the individual communes (comuni) of Tuscany and Lombardy, Italy also included Rome, the communis patria,¹ and thus the peninsula taken as a whole symbolized the unity of Christendom as well as the dangerous divisiveness that threatened all realms. English attitudes toward Italy reveal

¹ For discussion of Rome – imperial and papal – as the communis patria, see Kantorowicz, King’s Two Bodies 233, n. 120 and 246-49; Post, “Two Notes on Nationalism” 292-93. “Lombardy” denoted northern Italy in the minds of most medieval Englishmen. Around 1600 Shakespeare could have Hamlet praise the “very choice Italian” of the bogus source of Hamlet’s “The Mouse-Trap,” but late medieval English writers identified “Lombard” as the language of all Italy. Thus “he can al langigis, Grew, Ebrewe, & latyne, Caldey, ffrensh, & lombard” (The Tale of Beryn [2662]); a late 15th-century travelers’ guide advises that “Good were to have ... sum faire faryng man that cowde good Lombard, Greke, sarasyne, and Turkesse” (cited in MED, parts L2-L6, p. 1179). Chaucer’s journeys to Italy in the 1370s made him, unlike most of his contemporaries, familiar with the regions of Piedmont and Emilia (see Clerk’s Tale, Prologue, ll. 43, 51).
themselves to be complex because of the complex identity of those particular European
parts. Far from being insufficiently known, Italy was known so well — or, rather, certain reports about Italy came to be repeated so often and in so many kinds of sources — that it admitted a number of sometimes contradictory “interpretations.”

Some of these interpretations are hostile enough to suggest, even to insist upon, a sharp discontinuity between the histories of England and Italy. The writers I examine at once concede their membership in the communis patria of Roman Empire and papacy but also explore aspects of these institutions and their agents that inspire a felt need to distance English culture from them. Although they acknowledge community and communion with Rome and Italy, the Morte-poet, Lydgate and Capgrave also conjure up images of an “uncommon fatherland,” one that is extraordinary because of its cultural, religious and economic powers, but also one whose literary self-importance and actual spiritual decay are not shared and ought to be reviled by English readers of these texts.

The English attitude toward Rome, for example, vacillated between awe of its majesty and distrust of its power. Rome was at once a site of corruption, home of pardon for sin, and headquarters of sanctity, and English observers were alive to all these images. The texts examined here show an unwillingness to approach Rome on bended knee without first exacting some cultural concessions. The author of the Morte Arthure, Lydgate and Capgrave concede the sanctity of papal Rome, or more specifically, the Rome of saints and shrines, but denounce the pagan past of imperial
Rome in tones alien to the English humanism of the sixteenth century. Not only does the pagan past come under scrutiny, but also its remnants in the “medieval present,” the tendency of Rome to ally itself with Muslim forces (in the *Morte Arthure*), the surviving pagan customs and resentment of Christianity apparent in fifteenth-century Rome (in the *Solace of Pilgrims*), and the seductive allure of heathen gods and goddesses and the spiritual dangers they continue to pose to English Christians (in the *Fall of Princes*). In drawing attention to these flaws, English writers implicitly or explicitly question the centrality of Rome and its environs and challenge the Italian conception of England as a cultural and historical backwater. Citing the familiar “fact” that the British rulers Belinus, Brennius and Arthur conquered Rome and its legions, these writers remind their readers that Britain, a former Roman colony, brightened the already lustrous glories of that ancient civilization.

A word needs to be said briefly (and more will be said later) about medieval English views of Rome as opposed to or in conjunction with medieval English views of Italy. There is no basis for assuming that people in England viewed papal Rome as synonymous with the Italian communes. Nevertheless, clear-cut cultural boundaries were not always visible. Up to 1309 and from 1378 onward, much of the central portion of Italy was identified with the Papacy as the Papal States. Papal ambassadors and nuncios to other parts of Europe frequently were Italians. Tuscan and Lombard bankers and merchants came to serve as the pope’s tax collectors abroad. In short, although Italy and papal Rome were not identical, they were closely linked. Eric
Hobsbawm notes that “the Papacy was de facto an Italian institution and indeed before 1860 the only properly all-Italian institution” (Nations and Nationalism 72). He has the modern period in mind, but his claim applies to much of the medieval era as well. Connections existed between papal Rome and the northern city-states, even if they encouraged no simple identification of the former with the latter. In general, though, the sanctity and cultural prestige of Rome were not believed to extend to all of Italy, in spite of northern Italian chroniclers’ propagandistic claims to the contrary. The peninsula as a whole was seen as a site of exemplary deeds (as in the Gesta Romanorum and Christine de Pizan’s treatise on chivalry), sometimes associated with one another, sometimes not, but united in their status as repositories of exempla that edify and entertain English audiences. When commenting on Rome and the Italian city-states, these works suggest that England can appropriate their glories and learn from their misfortunes. There is no simple-minded envy of Rome’s antiquity or of the prosperity of Tuscany or Lombardy: England can imitate and borrow the prestige of those places even while showing its own cultural satisfaction with itself.

England’s views of Rome and Italy are not easily separated from its perspectives on social and moral order and its visions of religious and historiographical truth. The social chaos prevailing during the founding of Rome and the falseness of that city’s pagan gods serve, in John Lydgate’s Fall of Princes, as cautionary tales for the Black Monk’s English audience. Lydgate also reports Boccaccio’s reflections on civil strife in contemporary Italy and so ensures that his readers will derive moral
lessons from recent experiences as well as from ancient texts. John Capgrave connects the moral confusion of ancient Rome with the unruly behavior and occasionally barbaric customs of the modern Romans he encounters. The author of the *Morte Arthure* most explicitly associates ancient Roman tyranny with modern "tyrauntz of Tuskan" and the lords of Lombardy, and envisions Arthur in his traditional role of dispenser of good laws with his work cut out for him throughout the peninsula. In all three texts, while the protagonists and/or authors engage in social or political commentary on Rome and Italy, they also wage historiographical warfare by foregrounding the rivalry between British and Italian accounts of the conquest of Britain by the Roman Empire (or vice-versa).

Just as English views of Rome and Italy are related to notions of social order, so too they vary according to the socio-economic positions of the writers who articulate them. Jutta Wurster argues that the author of the *Morte Arthure* wrote for an audience comprising landed gentry of Lincolnshire and, possibly if not probably, magnates or great lords ("The Audience"); his representation of Italy as a potential arena for proving knightly valor may well have catered to precisely this type of chivalry-inspired readership. Lydgate's monastic identity does not prevent him from dwelling on Roman and Italian wars, but it is certainly responsible, at least in part, for the more rarefied and bookish grappling with all of Romano-Italian history, from Tarquin the Proud to Boccaccio himself. Class differences become especially obvious in the views of Rome created by Capgrave and Margery Kempe, as we shall see in the
last chapter. The issue of class is an important one and I return to it occasionally in the course of this dissertation, but in exploring the differences among the representations of Italy seen in these texts I tend to concentrate on the different ideas of authorial identity that these writers had: how they conceived their literary works and their own identities as writers; how they responded to their source texts; and especially how they made use of the “text” of Anglo-Italian relations introduced into England in the twelfth century by Geoffrey of Monmouth.

In spite of their many differences — in literary genre and in socioeconomic provenance — the Morte Arthure, the Fall of Princes and the Solace of Pilgrims all incur a debt to Geoffrey of Monmouth’s Historia regum Britanniae by challenging imperial Rome’s claim to Britain as recounted in this seminal text. In Lydgate’s long poem, Arthur is content merely to maintain British independence from Rome without asserting territorial rights to it: Lydgate merely dismisses the Roman claim as “froward and outraious” (VIII, 2876). Although he does not suggest that Britain ought to take possession of Rome, Lydgate defends the valor of the English during the Hundred Years’ War and then pugnaciously attacks the scholarly credibility and masculinity of his auctor Boccaccio for having scorned English chivalry. Capgrave, though intending to offer English pilgrims a guide to the churches and shrines of Rome, is drawn by his historical researches into the dispute concerning Anglo-Roman relations and repeats approvingly Geoffrey’s claim that the British rulers Brennius and Belinus won the Roman Empire for Britain. The Morte Arthure launches all-out historiographical
warfare against the Romans and celebrates Arthur's conquest of Rome as his legal right, national duty and religious obligation. The Morte is "a tale that trewe es and nobyll" (I. 16) because its subjects, Arthur and Britain, possess true versions of religious faith and the historical record.

A further account of what this dissertation seeks to do must acknowledge its limited scope. I do not survey place-names and characters culled from all available literary and non-literary texts. Successful catalogue-like studies of literary representations of races and places abound and provide valuable insights into "normative" perceptions of the Other, but they do not necessarily undertake sustained critical analyses of individual texts as literary artefacts or place their investigations within the larger theoretical context of nation-building in the medieval period.\(^2\)

Having said this, I acknowledge a debt to these writers, particularly George Parks, who assembled and examined a wealth of medieval works compiled in England that took Italy as their object. Parks' survey of English travelers' tales and writings about Italy is a magisterially broad work, an encyclopedic compendium rather than a

\[^2\] E.g., Trachtenberg, Devil and the Jews; Parks, English Traveler to Italy; Metlitzki, Matter of Araby; Shaw, "Presence of Spain"; Burke, "Discreet Charm of Milan" and "Public and Private Spheres" in Varities of Cultural History. Peter Burke's essays on Renaissance Milan and Genoa ignore the medieval period but rely on the important claim that "In the early modern period northerners already tended to see Italy as the Other" ("Discreet Charm" 97). This was truer after the 1530s than before, however, when English travelers scorned the Italians' "Popery," love of display and lasciviousness (98-100) even as they praised the pleasure of travel through Italy, the opulence of certain aspects of Milan and the private wealth evident in Genoa. Texts written before England's break with Rome reveal a more complex view of Italy as a place akin to England in religious faith but alien in civic identity.
systematic or theoretical analysis. I accept his basic conclusion as an important starting point, that conceptions of Italy, Rome included, were not homogeneous: virulent anti-Rome propaganda competed for readers’ attention with expressions of deep reverence for the holy city. Among his primary texts appear the alliterative *Morte Arthure* and Capgrave’s *Solace of Pilgrims*, but Parks’ chief interest in the *Morte* is in determining the extent to which the author knew first-hand the pilgrimage route to Rome (*English Traveler* 357; “King Arthur and the Roads to Rome”). Analyzing the *Solace of Pilgrims*, Parks praises Capgrave’s rigorously analytical method, which offers “enlightenment at a much higher level than the mere unlearned traveler would reach”; the “critical mind” of Capgrave would have eagerly absorbed the newly rediscovered works of Sallust, Tacitus, Suetonius, Livy and others, if only he had known them (596, 599). I argue instead that Capgrave is not the budding classical humanist that Parks thinks he should have or would have been, and that he emphasized instead the importance of sacred, not classical, Rome in order to appeal to the “traditional religion” (the phrase is Eamon Duffy’s) of his English audience. Having signaled my own departure from Parks, however, I freely acknowledge a debt to his studies and depend on it for many of the remarks I make about English perceptions of Italy in other works.

My more immediate debts, however, are of two kinds. The first is to works of a literary-critical/ethnographic nature by Edward Said, Mary Campbell, Elisa van Narin
Court, Christine Chism, David Nirenberg and David Wallace. The second is to a quite heterogeneous group of authors who explore the idea of the nation in the medieval period, a group that includes Gaines Post, Ernst Kantorowicz, Jacques Le Goff, Thorlac Turville-Petre and Gabrielle Spiegel. I attempt to define my own views in alignment with theirs, and frequently in opposition to the writings of other scholars who claim that nationalism is purely a modern invention. A basic assumption of mine is that medieval England, particularly in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, possessed a sense of its own national identity. Not only did its participation in the universal Church of Rome not preclude nationalism, a view often argued by modern theorists, but this participation in Christendom also helped to make nationalism possible.

In perceiving Italy as a Christian land whose participation in that Church has been compromised by outbreaks of paganism or by alliance with Muslims and Jews, the three works considered here reveal, in Edward Said’s phrasing, “the dialectic between individual text or writer and the complex collective formation to which his work is a contribution” (Orientalism 24). Western Christendom’s idea of itself combined religion and ethnicity. As Robert Bartlett points out, this religious community existed side-by-side with national communities and often instilled in its

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4 Post; Kantorowicz; Le Goff, Medieval Imagination; Turville-Petre, England the Nation; Spiegel, The Past as Text.
members a sense of racial unification against Jews, Muslims and pagans: "Credal
difference and ethnic identity became inextricably entwined" (*Making of Europe* 251).
When describing the East, Western writers never left far behind this twin identity and
defined what they encountered according to its terms: "the Orient has helped to define
Europe (or the West) as its contrasting image, idea, personality, experience";
"European culture gained in strength and identity by setting itself off against the Orient
as a sort of surrogate and even underground self" (*Said* 2-3). The language and
images used in describing the Orient also came to be used by some European writers
when representing other European nations. This process of Western self-definition in
relation to an Eastern Other, or an Other only partly Orientalized, often took concrete
form, the most familiar of which being the Crusades and the long-lived "crusade

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5 Campbell argues along similar lines, affirming that medieval Western travel writing about the East
defines and reifies the familiar as much as it describes the unfamiliar. Cf. Windschuttle's counter-
argument in his unkind review of the revised edition of *Orientalism*: "Europeans do not primarily
draw their identity from comparisons with other cultures. Instead, identity comes from their own
heritage. Europeans identify themselves as joint heirs of classical Greece and Christianity, each
tempered by the fluxes of medieval scholasticism, the Renaissance, the Reformation and Counter-
Reformation, the Enlightenment, and modernism. In other words, Western identity is
overwhelmingly defined by historical references to its earlier selves, rather than by geographical
comparisons with others" ("Edward Said's 'Orientalism' Revisited" 36). Windschuttle's claim is
valid, but the medieval texts I explore here certainly define their place of origin "by geographical
comparisons with others." Recent studies of the ideological underpinnings of medieval European
government have done much to explain the complex art of European cultural self-definition; I have in
mind the recent collection of essays *Text and Territory: Geographical Imagination in the European
Middle Ages*, ed. Tomasch and Gilles (especially Chism's "Too Close for Comfort"), and the
"Making Contact: Natives, Strangers, and Barbarians" conference held at the University of Alberta,
ideology," to borrow Christopher Tyerman's phrase, which they spawned. The three texts I discuss fall short of declaring holy war on Italy (the *Morte Arthure* comes closest to doing so), but they submit to scrutiny the Christianity of Rome and Italy while remaining silent about the presence of Lollards in England.

Discussing England's representation of Italy along "Orientalist" lines may seem strange, in light of the Westernness of these two lands. Yet studies by Margaret Hodgen, Mary Campbell, Christian Delacampagne and Stephen Greenblatt, who trace the ancient Greek and Roman origins of medieval and early modern Western perceptions of non-Western races, have established the provenance of the ethnography of the Other in a specifically Greco-Roman and Western European textual tradition. Orientalist discourse was frequently brought "back home" to Europe to describe European peoples. Then again, this discourse never truly left Europe, in the sense that it was always fundamentally about Europe, about Europe's preconceptions and anxieties and its religious and ethnic norms. Such preconceptions, anxieties and meditations on norms appeared even in medieval European descriptions of European places. Grotesque, marvelous and exotic creatures and events abound in the pages of medieval English and British authors writing about England and Britain themselves:

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6 Tyerman, *England and the Crusades* 2. In late fifteenth-century England, for example, the author of the St. Albans Book explained nine orders of "gentilmen" (conforming to the nine orders of angels), one of which could be earned by killing a Muslim; see Thrupp, *Merchant Class* 297.

one thinks of sightings of dragons in Northumbria reported in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, Gerald of Wales’ stories of monsters in Ireland, and Osbern Bokenham’s enthusiastic but almost *pro forma* listing of the marvels of his homeland in the *Mappula Angliae*. I am not trying to re-claim a particularly Western European discourse for Western European authors, but I am suggesting that the terms of that discourse were used by some European authors to project connotations of the exotic, grotesque or marvelous upon some European lands, which were far more familiar than the China and India of Marco Polo and Mandeville.

As I noted earlier, Peter Burke has made the claim that “In the early modern period northerners already tended to see Italy as the Other” ("Discreet Charm of Milan" 97). This statement needs to be qualified for perceptions of Italy in medieval England because the two countries had not yet gone their separate ways in the matter of religion, but the statement need not be qualified heavily. Some English writers occasionally thought of Italy as something of a Muslim fifth column within Christendom: the reflections on Italy’s links with paganism and Islam in the *Morte Arthure* and, to a lesser extent, Lydgate’s and Capgrave’s texts make less surprising Parliament’s occasional fear, discussed below, that an Italian port like Genoa would launch a Turkish invasion of England. The alliterative poem imagines such an unholy alliance by drawing a parallel between ancient Roman paganism and the Islamic threat: the two forces unite to launch an attack on England, menacing its political and
religious autonomy. This two-pronged invasion is conceived in the Italian peninsula. One need not always venture beyond the frontiers of Europe to seek the Other.

As Said's study and other studies demonstrate, however, care needs to be used when writing about "the Other," for it is not homogeneous: different races, when encountered, are not necessarily portrayed with uniformity. George Parks, as has been noted, surveyed the different conceptions of Italy entertained by medieval English travel writers and encyclopedists, although his own work is more encyclopedic than theoretical. Elisa van Narin Court has devoted her recent University of California, Berkeley Ph.D. dissertation specifically to a theoretical consideration of the multivalent Middle English depiction of Jews. Pointing out the large number of scholarly works that posit one, homogeneous view of "the Jew" in the Middle Ages, she argues instead for multiple representations. In doing so she challenges both the modern notion of a universally hated Jewish community and the belief in a unified, static "medieval" mode of perceiving the Other. In her article on the fourteenth-century alliterative *Siege of Jerusalem*, she maintains that that poem "invites and deserves a full and nuanced reading which recognizes that what animates this narrative is not a univocal and monolithic anti-Judaism, but an ambivalent and, at times, profound confusion about Jews, and Christians, and violence" (248). I hope to follow in her footsteps by

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8 Although sympathetic to van Narin Court's interpretation of the poem, Christine Chism claims that the *Siege* initially humanizes and progressively demonizes the Jews and is informed by late
claiming that the depiction of Italy and Italians is similarly neither univocal nor monolithic, but nor does it necessarily reveal the “profound confusion” that van Narin Court sees in the Siege’s depiction of Jews. David Nirenberg does not rule out confused and conflicting views and even simple irrational hatred as motivating factors for persecution of Jews, Muslims and lepers in medieval Spain and France, but he does argue persuasively that such violence took on different natures in different socioeconomic contexts and polities, and that the desire of the Christian Spanish and French to both exploit and destroy their non-Christian neighbors rarely resulted from confusion. As van Court and Nirenberg show, postulating an undifferentiated “Other” assumes a teleological continuum of persecution, an attractive but foundationless continuity between past and present forms of racial hatred. Particular historical circumstances are overlooked in favor of universal, all-embracing theories: “The actions of groups or individuals are ignored in favor of structures of thought that are believed to govern those actions” (Communities of Violence 5).

When I use the term “the Other” to describe Italy and Italians in the medieval English imagination, I do not mean to suggest a static concept divorced from both history and individual texts. In fact, the “heterogeneous” and “cumulative” nature of Nirenberg’s study (in his own words) makes me a little less inclined to force an artificial, total homogeneity upon the images of Italy and Rome that appear in the fourteenth-century English anxieties about national identity, the Turkish threat to Eastern Europe, and
*Morte Arthure, Fall of Princes* and *Solace of Pilgrims*. I hope that the general statements I have made about their similarities indicate a basis for reading those works together.

In my attempt to shed light on "local or even individual opinions" that contribute to or challenge "collective images, representations, and stereotypes of the 'other,'" I depend both on literary texts and archival documents (chronicles, parliamentary proceedings, statutes). Recently two scholars have issued caveats against the kind of interpretation that presupposes a stable historical background against which the literary text can be shown to unfold itself. A book review by Steven Justice and David Wallace's *Chaucerian Polity* lay siege to this form of historicism. Wallace's remarks stand as useful signposts to guide my own wanderings: "The insularity of historicist criticism in its renditions of space is complemented by the inertness of its temporal imaginings. Hence we have been confronted with the paradoxical spectacle of synchronic historicism: attempts to generate historical explanation by making time, and hence history, stand still" (xiv). Denouncing "crablike criticism, moving sideways from archival fragment to contemporary text," Wallace calls for a "heightened awareness of simultaneous historiographical trajectories, often shortages of bullion. See her fine essay "The Siege of Jerusalem: Liquidating Assets."

9 These are the two poles of the debate over representation, as discussed by Nirenberg (5 ff).

running in different directions": for example, "[t]he history of the Iberian peninsula ... is written differently for Jews, for Muslims, and for Christians, with different denotations of advance and retreat, conquest and Golden Age" (xvi). Keeping in mind these "trajectories," however, one still must play the part of critical crab, running "from archival fragment to contemporary text." Wallace himself is forced to do so, as when he adduces guild records to fortify an already strong claim about John the Carpenter in Chaucer's *Miller's Tale*: "the charge of madness that is spread against him 'in al the toun' adumbrates his social death, his exile from the comforts of profession, guild and neighborhood" (129). Historicist criticism, regardless of its exact stripe, cannot avoid such scurrying entirely. In fact, scurrying to archival fragments may even lead to the discovery that "local or even individual opinions" (to quote Nirenberg again) resist or cancel out the "precisely evocative powers" with which certain place names, such as Florence and Lombardy, "come charged."11

Wallace's approach to Chaucer generally succeeds, however, because it embodies and enacts a sound principle about the relationship between literature and history. Susan Crane has given this principle a humane and non-doctrinaire formulation: "Even if the ways in which literature and history overlap and interact are

11 I agree in spirit with Wallace's contention that "Names such as Florence, Lombardy, Avignon, Paris, Hainault, Flanders, Bohemia, and Tartary come charged with precisely evocative powers that still await full critical recuperation" (*Chaucerian Polity* xiii), but I would offer the quibble that those powers did not evoke precisely the same response from all people at all times, even in the Middle Ages.
elusive, even if the past is only imperfectly accessible to us, the effort to reconnect literature to history is vital for those who believe that literary texts are social communications that played a part in the lives of their first audiences" (*Insular Romance* 1-2). Paul Strohm apparently agrees when he states that texts are "socially energetic – not simply reflective of an ideology but transformative of it, bending it to use" (*Social Chaucer* 150). Strohm has in mind medieval treatises on government, but his argument that "ideology" entails "reworking disparate social information in forms that can guide individual conduct and that permit its textual embodiment" (150) applies to medieval ethnographic literary texts as well. The fact that Wallace employs archival documents suggests that even "crablike criticism" can uncover the power of literary and non-literary texts to generate cultural meaning. As long as it does this, the work of reading and analyzing should yield abundant frutti di mare.

Gabrielle Spiegel, perhaps more than any other historian, has shown the extent to which medieval chronicle texts fashion “histories” that first and foremost meet social needs. Her definition of “the return to history” has much in common with Strohm’s approach in that it recognizes that texts comprise “social materials” (emphasis in the

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12 Crane presents a clear and useful working definition of “ideology”: “These broad political, religious, and cultural formations [of English feudalism, the church, and the Angevin court] generated belief systems that I term ideologies insofar as they sought to justify or alter their generating conditions. The English barony developed in its own defense an ideology of right rule, social order, and noble virtue” (11). See also n. 30 on the same page: “I do not use ‘ideology’ pejoratively but rather only to describe a set of interrelated beliefs that informs a particular way of life and works to validate that way of life in its attempts to win and maintain a place for itself in the world.”
original). In Spiegel’s view, Clifford Geertz and Claude Levi-Strauss contributed to “an aestheticizing of culture” that tended to ignore those materials:

For both, access to the processes at work in the construction of symbols came via the formal patterns that a culture employed in the creation of its social texts. Thus, although texts were described as imaginative works built out of social materials, it was the formal patterns, the modes of representation rather than the social conflicts whose symbolic expression and resolution they served, which tended to become the object of investigation. The result, inevitably, was an aestheticizing of culture and its absorption into the ever-widening category of “textuality” as poststructuralism came to view it.  

Texts, whether primarily historical, such as chronicles, or incidentally historical, such as the three works I analyze here, grant access not so much to the truth of reality but to the usefulness of its particular representation and commodification by writers who claim to serve larger social, even moral interests.

It is this notion of truth that guides Spiegel’s investigation: “It was, I sensed, precisely the ‘truth’ of the past that underwrote the utility of historiography to medieval rulers and political actors, whose interests, to be sure, lay not in recuperating an account of ‘what actually happened,’ but in the legitimation of their propagandistic


14 A theme also addressed by Hayden White, whose remarks deserve quotation at length: “The more historically self-conscious the writer of any form of historiography, the more the question of the social system and the law that sustains it, the authority of this law and its justification, and threats to the law occupy his attention. ... Where there is ambiguity or ambivalence regarding the status of the legal system, which is the form in which he is enjoined to achieve a full humanity, the ground on which any closure of a story one might wish to tell about a past, whether it be a public or a private past, is lacking. And this suggests that narrativity, certainly in factual storytelling and probably in fictional storytelling as well, is intimately related to, if not a function of, the impulse to moralize reality, that

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and political goals” (xii-xiii). These remarks prove applicable to the Middle English texts discussed here. No King Arthur ever battled a cannibalistic Genoese giant; no ghosts of bewhiskered Lombard tyrants ever pleaded with Boccaccio to record their histories (as in Lydgate’s *Fall of Princes*); St. Silvester waged no rhetorical battle with a demon who had made his home in a statue of Apollo ornamenting the Coliseum (in Capgrave’s *Solace of Pilgrims*). But certain English authors demonized their nations’ enemies, who occasionally included Italians; they glorified the high moral import of historical writing; and they explored and exposed the multi-layered, Christian-atop-pagan history of Rome as revealed in its myths and legends. In doing so, these writers implied or announced their own “propagandistic and political goals.” Not all of these goals were as sinister as this phrase suggests: they could include merely the shaping or refining of English popular piety, the celebration of English nationhood, the questioning of the glory of other nations, or the privileging of England’s traditions of historical writing over those of Italy, as I try to show in the body of this dissertation.

In general, historical writing was valued in the Middle Ages because it prescribed values and ideas as well as describing events. Often it aimed at spiritual transcendence. Lee Patterson observes that

As Augustine had learned through his own life and taught to his medieval heirs, history is a place of temptation and loss, a geography of estrangement, *a regio dissimilitudinis* or land of unlikeness (to cite an influential Augustinian phrase)

is, to identify it with the social system that is the source of any morality that we can imagine” (*Content of the Form* 13, 14).
in which *homo viator* finds nothing that is like either the heavenly home toward which he journeys or the ideal self he seeks to become. (*Chaucer and the Subject of History* 18)

The human being as traveler and wanderer ultimately defines his or her peregrination through history as a shadow of the real pilgrimage to Heaven. There is another view, however, what Patterson calls “the Renaissance humanist view,” in which “history does indeed allow for recuperation”:

The legitimizing origin is historically instantiated in the models of natural perfection provided by antiquity. By returning to this past the present can construct itself upon a secure foundation of absolute value, absolutes that allow it to escape entirely from the merely local determinations of its specific historical moment. (18-19)

Chaucer, Patterson believes, held both the Augustinian and humanist views. But I think that a third view, distinct from but indebted to both, is articulated in English literary works on Italy. The *Morte Arthure*, the *Fall of Princes* and the *Solace of Pilgrims* trace the history of the Italian peninsula from ancient Rome to the medieval *comuni* and suggest “loss” and “geographical estrangement” even as they hint at “recuperation.” Loss and estrangement characterize Italy’s past and present, while recuperation is held out for England’s future. The *Morte* again is the best example: it shows that in presuming to attempt a reconquest of Britain with the aid of forces hostile to Christianity, Imperial Rome overreaches itself, suffers a tremendous defeat, and must surrender the crown to Arthur, a move sanctioned by the pope. Arthur in turn has overreached himself in his conquests, but in vowing a crusading pilgrimage to Jerusalem, in dying while fighting “Saracens” in Britain and in being buried with
elaborate Roman Catholic funeral rites, the British king is shown to deserve the philosophers' praise of him as the worthiest knight in history, and English historiography is shown to supplant its Roman counterpart. The author valorizes England and a specifically English view of the relations between England and Rome: if he also hints at the theme of the "world grown old," as Patterson suggests ("Romance of History" 214-15), he suggests that Britain grows old more gracefully than the Roman Empire does.

The dual idea of Italian estrangement and English recuperation appears also in the *Fall of Princes* and the *Solace of Pilgrims*. In the former, Lydgate explicitly condemns the paganism of Rome and the folly of venerating pagan gods, a message of considerable interest to those of an antiquarian bent in fifteenth-century England, such as Lydgate's own patron, Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester, who showed an uncritical appreciation of classical values. In the latter, Capgrave explores the pagan errors enshrined in the ancient temples and monuments of Rome. These errors have been layered over by Christian edifices and rededications, but their symptoms still appear in the seemingly barbaric, if venerable, traditions and the occasional rancor of the Romans whom Capgrave meets. In these works, when England turns to classical Rome or its remnants in late medieval Italy, it is not to unearth absolute values on which to base its own history, but to draw attention to flaws in the Roman moral and spiritual foundation, and to build a more spiritually sound national self-image for itself. Italy is the site of political error with spiritual consequences and thus instructs English
audiences to beware lest similar consequences befall them. If this claim recalls the vague "collective image" which David Nirenberg warns against, it must be kept in mind that this image was sometimes intended by writers who, despite their individual, local existences, fabricated absolute-seeming representations that would assume the status of collective images. By now it is evident that medieval English images of Italy were shaped by a sense of national rivalry and were conveyed in certain ethnographically charged forms. A discussion of medieval ethnography and English views of the "historical" Italy now seems appropriate.

**Medieval English Views of Italy: Ethnography and Reality**

The ongoing debate over whether "nationalism" existed in the Middle Ages is too involved to explore here, but I agree with Thorlac Turville-Petre, who convincingly shows that a very real medieval nationalism existed before the early modern period however different it was from its later incarnations. To the authors of the *Morte Arthure*, the *Fall of Princes* and the *Solace of Pilgrims*, the English nation was a discrete cultural entity. It possessed its own didactic, legitimating narrative histories and revealed genuine anxieties about the effects of internal and external challenges on the well-being of all classes of English society. These texts insist on the relevance of such concerns to an English reading public and imply that they are crucial.
to that public’s formation of ideas about ancient and modern Italy and its customs, statesmen and writers.

The medieval English ethnography of Rome and Italy that emerges from the works I examine here is thus more complex than that of the traditionally conceived Other of Africa and the East that works such as Pliny’s *Natural History* and *Mandeville’s Travels* present to European readers. It is different partly because Italy is not radically different from England, an awareness that I suspect underlies John Capgrave’s description of his pilgrimage guide to Rome as a “smal pyping” in opposition to the “gret cryeris” of popular accounts of the fabulous East. And yet what Edward Said, in the first eighty pages of *Orientalism*, has said about medieval European uses of non-European cultures applies, despite differences, to medieval English perceptions of Rome and Italy. The various ethnographies that emerge in the works I examine do function to provide English readers with a sense of their own normativeness and centrality within Christian history even as they place Rome and Italy on the borders of Europe. Admittedly my use of the word “ethnography” becomes somewhat loose in the chapter on Lydgate’s *Fall of Princes*. I believe that Lydgate attempts to provide an anthropological understanding of *auctores* and the cultural conditions that make their authority possible. He is not necessarily trying to be an ethnographer, and this kind of literary effort differs markedly from the more traditional medieval ethnography epitomized in *Mandeville’s Travels* and ultimately made possible long before by Pliny. Nevertheless Lydgate produces a highly textual
ethnography by giving his readers a thick description of Roman and Italian tyrants and their downfalls. The sheer quantity of these unfortunate, but really evil and willful, rulers inevitably leads one to believe that Italy is a land of political chaos and incessant warfare. The fact that Lydgate's Boccaccio is as vulnerable to Fortune's influence as the Roman and Italian despots he describes extends this chaos to what ought to be, but turns out not to be, a serene world of scholarly textual production.

Middle English writers took great interest in political and cultural happenings on the Italian peninsular. Much of that interest focused on ancient Rome, a storehouse of culture for Europe generally (Childs, "Anglo-Italian Contacts"), but there was plenty to engage English imaginations in fourteenth- and fifteenth-century Italy. John Hawkwood, the infamous English mercenary, not only witnessed the legendary strife between Italian city-states but participated in it, fostered it, and in fact depended on it for his livelihood. And David Wallace's recent book *Chaucerian Polity* explores the rich body of social and political ideas that Italy generated in the mind of Geoffrey Chaucer.

With its vast reserves of easily moralized exemplary tales Italy is a more concrete teaching tool for medieval English readers than Said's East, because ancient

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15 On Hawkwood, see Keen, *Chivalry* passim but esp. 227; the same author's *English Society in the Later Middle Ages* 143; McKisack, *Fourteenth Century* 346; Patterson, *Chaucer and the Subject of History* 173; Wallace, *Chaucerian Polity* passim, but the rich discussion on 33-40 merits special attention.
Rome furnished English readers with models of political tyranny that affected ancient Britain and could shape English thinking about modern-day tyranny. Papal Rome helped to bring that same ancient Britain into the fold of European Christendom, and, as the *Morte Arthure* and *Solace of Pilgrims* suggest in different ways, was responsible for giving Britain an opportunity to contribute to the history and political development of Italy. In the *Morte*, the pope's cardinal crowns Arthur emperor and gives him the power to exert rule in Italy and "lay down law" on Lombardy, a seemingly lawless land to English medieval eyes. In the *Solace of Pilgrims*, Capgrave paints portraits of the British-born Constantine the Great and the honorarily-Anglicized St. George that suggest that native British ideas of just and pious rule and anti-Muslim piety give back to the model of Roman virtue almost as much as they received.

One could ask, recalling our earlier question, whether these authors saw Rome and Italy as identical. To ancient Roman writers and medieval communal Italian chroniclers, their histories were and ought to be deeply interwoven. To the *Morte*-poet, Lydgate, Capgrave and their readers, there was no facile one-to-one correspondence between Rome and Italy, but enough relations existed between them to suggest commonalities of culture, political outlook, expansionist interest and attitudes toward England. In the chapters that follow I suggest that several Middle English works respond to Rome and Italy and reject the "humanism" that they came to represent in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Whereas well-educated English subjects in the last decades of the fifteenth century and first decades of the sixteenth
came to appreciate fully the Italian contributions to humanistic scholarship, they
remained apathetic or skeptical to these developments in earlier periods. A fuller
examination of this issue must wait, however, until we have considered the most
pervasive English reactions to Italy in the late medieval period: responses to Italy’s
incessant warfare and, within England, to its merchants, particularly the Lombards.

Merchants from Italy may have entered England before the twelfth century, but the
great Tuscan banking firms became part of England’s economic life only during
the reign of Edward I. The Bardi, Peruzzi, Medici, Spini, Frescobaldì, Alberti and
others vied with English merchants and artisans throughout the late medieval period,
frequently earning royal patronage and consequent popular resentment. Sometimes

16 Weiss, Humanism in England; Pearsall, John Lydgate; Hay, Italian Renaissance; Kraye, ed.,
Cambridge Companion to Renaissance Humanism; and, on medieval English reactions (especially
Chaucer’s) to tyranny in Italy, Hardman, “Chaucer’s Tyrants of Lombardy”; Wallace, Chaucerian
Polity. English appreciation of Italy in the sixteenth century came to be replaced in the seventeenth
century by harsh criticism and de-mystification: see Parks, “Decline and Fall.” Biddick, “Becoming
Collection,” points out that the late fifteenth-century German humanist Hartmann Schledel boasted of
the heterosexual virility of his fellow German scholars in opposition to the Italian humanists’
supposed practice of sodomy.

17 Lloyd so speculates but finds solid evidence of the presence of Italian merchants dating to only the
early thirteenth century: Alien Merchants 157. In documents preserved in the Calendar of Patent
Rolls for 1225-1232 – the earliest I have seen – there exists a patent letter written on behalf of a
merchant, one “Ansoldus Mallonus Soldani de Genue, homo noster ligius,” who had come to England
“pro agendis nostris” as early as 1228 (p.180). Thrupp, however, reports W. Page’s belief that two
important London families of the 12th and 13th centuries, the Bucoites and the Buckereis, were
descendants of Italian merchants who settled in London in the late 11th century, following a pattern of
Italian mercantile immigration that centered first on France but spread to England when the sphere of
the spice trade was enlarged. See Thrupp, Merchant Class 220, citing W. Page, London, Its Origin
and Early Development (1929), 236-42.

18 Relevant studies include the following: Childs, “Anglo-Italian Contacts”; Larner, “Chaucer’s Italy”;
Lloyd; Postan, Medieval Trade and Finance 335-41; Ruddock, Italian Merchants; and Thrupp.
English observers were aware of the different “nations” within the Italian peninsula because its bankers defined themselves as Tuscans, Venetians, Lombards, and so on. Occasionally, however, late medieval English decrees and grants evoke a “unified” Italy by employing a geophysical figure of speech as a form of shorthand. Thus when referring to Italian merchants, Edward I in 1301 could request those “ultramontanis ... of whatsoever society they may be” to bear patiently the king’s seizure of their property in a time of need. Edward names no specific community of merchants but rather addresses their foreignness, their status as merchants from “beyond the [Alpine] mountains,” and their ability to furnish the king, voluntarily or not, with ready moneys for his military campaigns.

A little over a century later, with greater attention to regional particularity (and of course with very different motives), Adam of Usk traced his journey from “Bellinzona in Lombardy ... through Como, Milan, Piacenza, Borgo-San-Donnino, Pontremoli, Carrara, Pietrasanta, Pisa, Siena, and Viterbo,” registering their political autonomy by referring to the occasional wars among them. He nevertheless reports the longing of some for larger unity. Giangaleazzo Visconti, Duke of Milan, was “the delight of the world and the glory of Italy, a man before whom all the earth was quiet,”

Postan in particular argues that the Italian bankers and merchants aided the king rather than the national economy: “Indeed, it may well be that where the impact of the Italians was most effective was neither in their direct investment nor in their lessons of higher technique, but in the part they played in helping the kings to unsettle the economic life of the country” (341).

19 Calendar of Close Rolls, 1296-1302, 418.
a leader of great ability whose untimely death came "to the great sorrow of strangers" because "surely it was believed that, had he but lived another year, he had reigned over Germany and Italy as one kingdom" (Chronicon Adae de Usk 242-43, 244). Adam’s remarks convey a longing, perhaps not Adam’s but that of the people whom he met on his journey, for real unity in the Holy Roman Empire. And yet "the great sorrow of strangers" seems to include Adam himself, an English stranger in Italy. Given his own harrowing experiences in that country, particularly among what he calls "the viper race of Lombardy" (Chronicon 269), he may well have desired the peace and order that real unity under a strong leader would have provided. Would Adam have been pleased if the strong leadership demonstrated by Giangaleazzo had become tyranny? The non-censorious tone of his remarks, unlike that of the famous Chaucerian line "Be nat lyk tyrauntz o f Lumbardye," suggests that Adam would not have been opposed to tyranny in Italy if it had resulted in order and safety for English travelers. The Morte Arthure signals clear English outrage at the tyranny and lawlessness of both the ancient Roman emperor Lucius and his medieval Tuscan and Lombard descendants, but it offers no objection to tyrannical Italian rule imposed by Arthur, if he were to successfully gain the imperial crown. Unlike his vanquished Italian predecessors, Arthur presumably would impose law and order on Italy. Perhaps in Adam’s view Giangaleazzo would have provided a similar stability in Italian affairs, unlike that imposed (or not imposed) by other princes. In the wake of Chaucer’s anti-Lombard-tyrant remark in the Legend of Good Women it is curious to hear what sounds like English sympathy for a Visconti.
As we shall see in Chapter 3, however, Adam’s sympathetic voice is not the only one, for John Capgrave, in his *Book of the Illustrious Henries*, paints a flattering portrait of Giangaleazzo for the hospitality he showed to Henry Bolingbroke when the future English king sojourned in Milan and Pavia. Diplomatic relations between a Lombard tyrant and the grandfather of Capgrave’s patron for that work, Henry VI, suggest the necessity for Capgrave’s prudence when describing Giangaleazzo. Interestingly, the relation between Bolingbroke and Giangaleazzo will become more strikingly identical in retrospect after the completion of Capgrave’s *Abbreviacyon of Cronicles*, which in its prologue portrays Henry IV as a usurper who took the throne by force and ruled badly – in short, as a tyrant. The web of ideological connections between England and Italy in the fifteenth century seems every bit as tangled and dense as that of the fourteenth century as reconstructed by David Wallace in his recent study.

The criticism of Lombardy’s “viper race” and strife-torn conditions by Adam of Usk derives from firsthand experience of life in Italy. The official Parliamentarian reaction to Italy’s most visible representatives in England, on the other hand, frequently differed in kind from Adam of Usk’s because it focused on potential threats to England itself. Parliaments’ complaints grew more shrill with the increase in price of Italian wares, but their heightened tone of urgency also responds to the tendency of Italian merchants to form commercial associations that exclude participation by English subjects and seem designed to evade English scrutiny. The Commons in the mid-fifteenth century complained of the “outrageouse encrece in price of the Merchandises”
sold in England by “Venitians, Janueys, Lumbardes, and other Merchantes of Itaille,” but complaints against the Lombards in particular already had already become near-proverbial. An example of alleged perfidy by the Lombards which, when taken with reports of other early incidents, contributed specifically to their later ill-starred fame, merits attention.

In 1269, a group of Lombard merchants was alleged to have broken an English law stipulating that all commodities should be measured with official English balances. In violation of custom, and presumably in an attempt to conceal the nature and quantity of their wares, the Lombards “declined to be harboured in the hostels of the citizens, but built houses in the City, and abode therein by themselves, housing there their goods.” It was then discovered that the Lombards were weighing their goods using their own balances, “to the prejudice of his lordship the King, and to the loss and subtraction of his pesage”; they were consequently arrested and imprisoned in the Tower, their weights and balances finding their final home in a public bonfire in Cheapside. They were then ordered to pay an enormous fine of 1,000 pounds Sterling (which the authorities seem to have assumed they could afford), “and this under compulsion, as it were, they being in dread of being thrust into a most noisome

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20 Rotuli Parliamentorum, vol. 5, p. 31b (1439).
prison.

It is impossible to know now whether the Lombard bankers had really defrauded London citizens or had aroused their wrath simply because they had chosen to live together as a community apart from mainstream English society. That they had attempted to escape surveillance by Londoners, had accumulated enough money to build houses within the City and then had transformed them into Italian enclaves where they could conduct unsupervised business may have furnished the authorities with enough motivation to investigate their affairs. One need not question the veracity of Parliament’s accusations or the Lombards’ motives: what is important here is the suspicion that these foreign merchants aroused simply by forming their own community.

As late as the reign of Richard III, Parliament heard a complaint against Italian merchants which appears to have been based as much on fear of foreigners working together as on the economic hardships that they allegedly created for Englishmen. This complaint targeted the great numbers of “Merchauntes Straungiers of the Nacion of Italie, as Venicians Janueys Florentynes Apuleyns Cicilians Lucaners Cateloyns [sic] and other of the same Nacion” who “wilnot take uppon theym any laborious occupation as Cartying and Plowynge and other like besynes, but use makyng of

21 Chronicles of the Mayors and Sheriffs of London 123-24. In 1364 the Lombard merchants were accused of fraud (“de magna infîdelitate in mercimoniis suis”) for which they were locked up again in the Tower; see Adam of Murimuth’s Chronica sui temporis, ed. Hog, 200; Walsingham, Historia Anglicana, ed. Riley, I, 300.
Clothe and other handcraftis and easy occupacions." The accusation sounds like a pretext, although one detects sincerity in this wish by some Englishmen to see these "Merchauntes Straungiers of the Nacion of Italie" reduced to toiling at the most menial occupations in English society. (This appearance of "nacion," incidentally, suggests the very real nationalistic rancor possible in Middle English usage). In contrasting "laborious" carting or plowing with the "easy occupacions" of clothweaving and "other handicraftis," the petitioners to Parliament imply that the Italians are slothful and perhaps even effeminate in their choice of trades, if Chaucer’s Wife of Bath may be taken as a "representative" clothweaver in the late medieval period. But underlying this petition is the desire to isolate the Italians: to deny them the opportunity to form trade guilds of their own, to place them at the very lowest socioeconomic level of society, and to preclude their competition with native English clothweavers.

As in the case of the 1269 complaint against the Lombards, here too Parliament was expected to take action against the Venetians, Genoese, Florentines and other Italians for employing persons from their own "countries":

[The Italian merchants] in no wise woll suffre nor take any of youre subgietts to werk with theym, but they onely take in to their s[er]vice people born in their owne Countreis, wherby your said subgietts for lacke of Occupacion fall to Idlenesse and been Theves Beggers Vagabundes and people of vicious lyving, to the greate trouble of your said Highnesse and of all youre said Realme.\(^23\)

\(^{22}\) Statutes of the Realm, 1 Richard III, c.9 (1483-84), vol. 2, 489-90.

\(^{23}\) Statutes of the Realm, ibid., 490.
The catalogue "Venicians Janueys Florentynes Apuleyns" conjures up a host of outsiders who may or may not have worked together but certainly excluded Englishmen, thus diminishing English earning power. This act of economic and social exclusion, implies the wording of the petition, creates another, distorted, mirror-image category of Englishmen as "Theves Beggers Vagabundes and people of vicious lyvyng." Italian industry promotes English idleness and crime, and poses a threat to the very stability of the realm. By simply preferring to establish local Venetian or Florentine or Sicilian merchant companies, these Italians transform their potential English employees into outcasts and dangers to society. The cause of English poverty and crime has been found, unsurprisingly, to lie with the foreigners. What England as a nation stood to gain from the rectifying of this problem were a greater share in Italian mercantile wealth and also, I suspect, greater opportunity to monitor these merchants' activities more closely.

These texts suggest that David Nirenberg's thesis in his *Communities of Violence*, which examines Muslims and Jews in Aragon and southern France, may pertain to Italian merchant groups living in England. Late medieval English apprehensions of Italians reveal deep distrust but also a desire to make the best possible use of these outsiders as a catalyst for English national unity. The wording of the 1483 statute implies that "vicious lyvyng" among English citizens will diminish if the Italian merchants will simply hire them. The departure of these various Italian
groups may well have pleased those who petitioned against them, but then the convenient scapegoat would have disappeared, and the Italian merchants in England had functioned remarkably well as scapegoats long before the reign of Richard III.

The fact that some Italians actually thrived under the patronage of certain English kings only suggests the ambivalent reception they found in England and English literature. At the apex of society, Edward I and his regal descendants borrowed heavily from Tuscan and Lombard bankers and frequently employed Genoese and Venetian galleys for military and commercial services. Consequently, some Italians were treated well at court. One Davynus de Nigarllis of Lucca was trusted and esteemed enough to serve as Henry IV’s physician; he was furthermore granted, for life, the office of Warden of the Mint in the Tower of London.24 Men from all over the peninsula were granted permanent residency, or “denization,” in England, usually for service done to king or country. Thus one of many Patent Roll documents from the reign of Henry IV records a “Grant of denization to the king’s servant John de Riche, esquire, born in Lombardy, who has done homage to the king.”25

At the increasingly expanding middle tier of English society, however, and at that society’s always vast base, the Italians met with a cooler response. Merchants,

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24 Calendar of Patent Rolls, 1408-1413, 28. The names of “de Nigarllis” and other Italians are as they appear in the English documents of the period.

25 Calendar of Patent Rolls, 1408-1413, 163.
artisans and commoners generally looked with suspicion upon these particular foreigners who had succeeded so impressively, and often with the king’s aid, in competing with English tradesmen and tradeswomen and accumulating vast sums of wealth in the process (Thrupp 220-21). A nobleman in the retinue of a Venetian ambassador who journeyed to England around 1497 informed his lord that “[the English] have an antipathy to foreigners, and imagine that they never come into their island, but to make themselves masters of it, and to usurp their goods.” This is exaggeration, but such fear did exist. In 1409, a certain Nicholas Flory of Venice, carrying a large amount of money with which to buy merchandise in Kent and Essex, was arrested by London port authorities “because they found him crossing with so much money without the king’s license, charging him with proposing to cross beyond the sea with money contrary to the statutes.” It seems that the charge was unfounded, as “the king pardons to him the trespass in this, if any, and grants to him the money.” Fifty years earlier, in 1359, a Florentine merchant had actually done what the customs officials accused the Venetian of doing, absconding with fifty-five pounds of the king’s

26 In the original, “Sono inimici de forestieri, e pensano che non passi in quell’ Isola alcuno, se non per farsi patrono, et usurpare i loro beni.” Relation, or Rather a True Account, ed. Sneyd, 23-24. On English distrust of foreigners in this period, du Boulay, “Fifteenth Century” 198, has written that “When the more articulate Englishmen, like monastic chroniclers, expressed themselves on the subject of foreigners it was usually in insular terms. ... to the monks of St. Albans the Picards were ‘the falsest kind of men’ and the Scots, allies of France, ‘enemies of the human race.’” See below, Chapter 2, for a further discussion of the ethnographic vision of England in the Middle English Brut.

money, as punishment for which his goods and chattels in London were ordered seized. After this incident Westminster began to grow suspicious of foreign merchants and neatly categorized them as “both Lombards and other aliens” who might render assistance to the king’s enemies; consequently, the papers of all foreign merchants were to be checked in the port cities. Even friendly Italian merchants were capable of harboring enemies of the English realm, so they too were warned that their good standing within the kingdom depended on the wholesome intentions of all the persons on board their galleys and carracks. Sometimes suspicion of Italians could erupt into violence, as during the Uprising of 1381 when the rebels targeted, among others, the wealthy Lombard bankers dwelling in the city.

Moving from the anonymity of Parliamentary documents to texts whose authors’ names have come down to us, we see that both forms of text conjure up the same image of the Lombard “bogeyman” (to use Philippa Hardman’s term) and imply a similar response from their readers. John Gower is perhaps the best example of a

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28 Calendar of Close Rolls, 1354-1360, 587.

29 Calendar of Close Rolls, 1354-1360, 662-63 (January, 1360).

30 Calendar of Patent Rolls, 1358-1361, 228.

31 See, e.g., Anonimale Chronicle, ed. Galbraith: “[L]es comunes fesoient crier qu chescune qu purroit prendre ascune Flemmynge ou ascune maner des aliens de quel nacione qil fuist, qils deveroient couper leur testes ... et puis pristrent lour viage a toutz les places des Lumbardes et des aliens et debriseront lour measons et les robberont de toutz lour biens qils purroient trover par tute le iour e la noet ensuamnt od hidous crye et horrible noyce” (145-46).
writer whose authorial voice straddles the line between poetry and Parliamentary text; the self-styled *vox populi* appealed to common everyday complaints of Lombard merchants but also gestured in the direction of Chaucer’s literary writings by evoking the figure of the Lombard tyrant:

Falssemblant hath ben and is
Most comunly ...
With hem that duelle among ous here,
Of suche as we Lombardes call         (*Confessio Amantis*, 2, 2098-2101)

Ascuns diont q’en Lombardie
Sont les seigneurs de tirandie,
Qui vivont tout au volenté
Sanz loy tenir d’oneste vie.         (*Mirour de l’Homme*, 23233-36)

(Some say that in Lombardy
Are lords of tyranny,
Who live wholly according to their will,
Lawlessly taking on the appearance of an honest life.)

One wonders who the “some people” (*Ascuns*) were who spread this report of Lombard tyrants who live according to will rather than law. Such a report could have been made by someone like the English mercenary John Hawkwood, but it would be counterproductive to inquire too deeply into the identity of the nameless, faceless informants who provided Gower with this insight on Lombard tyranny. Gower’s

32 Quoted by Hardman, “Chaucer’s Tyrants” 173. Hardman also notes (174) the opposition between tyranny and pity made in Gower’s *Confessio Amantis*: “Pite may noght be conterpeised/ Of tirannie with no peise” (VII, 3118-19), and Chaucer’s statement in the “Complaint unto Pity” that “men shulde not, lo, know hir tirannye” (57-70), referring to Cruelty.
judgments take on force precisely because they seem to originate with "the people'';
Gower himself functions merely as a mouthpiece, or so he would have us believe.33

Yet the intended conventionality of his Lombardophobic rumor-mongering
nevertheless recalls one authoritative Englishman who had strongly implied "q'en
Lombardie/ Sont les seignours de tirandie." In appealing to the tyrannical God of
Love to show mercy on the hapless Chaucer, the character Alcestis in The Legend of
Good Women momentarily sounds like a living "mirror for princes'' treatise:

This shulde a ryghtwys lord han in his thought,
And not ben lyk tyraunts of Lumbardye,
That usen wilfulhed and tyrannye. (G 353-55)34

In her petitioning Alceste attempts to mold Cupid into a gentler and more civil ruling
deity, and by doing so she points the way out of this dream vision and towards a
specific region in the world of reality. Lombardy and tyranny are linked together, and
clearly not merely for the sake of rhyme. The Legend of Good Women's opposition of
righteous rule to Lombard authoritarian "wilfulhed'' already has a proverbial ring to it,

33 In fact the MED defines "Lombard'' as follows: "A native of Lombardy,'' "a Lombard banker,'' "? a
banker of any nationality,'' the last entry remaining speculative (MED, parts L2-L6, p. 1179). See the
discussion of Gower as a self-conscious voice of the people in Coleman 126-56.

34 All quotations from Chaucer's works are from L. Benson, gen. ed., The Riverside Chaucer.
Chaucer's Monk famously "cast in the mould of a tyrant of Lombardy'' Duke Bernabô Visconi: "Off
Melan grete Barnabo Viscounte/ God of delit, and scourge of Lumbardye'' (Canterbury Tales VII
2399-2402). The identification of Bernabô with Lombard tyranny has been made by Hardman 174.
Froissart confirms the Monk's pronouncements: "Sir Bernabo in his time had done so many cruel and
horrible deeds and [inflicted] unreasonable pitiful judgments.'' Quoted by Hardman 173: "messires
Bernabo avoit fait en son tamps tant de cruels et oribles fais et de piteuses justices sans raison,'' from

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and it seems that Gower wishes to solemnify that bond yet further by setting it down in French. David Wallace’s recent statements about the role of Lombardy in Chaucer’s works merits attention in this context:

Lombardy ... comes to represent for Chaucer a spatial metaphor for the tyrannical cast of mind: a place where the unbridled desires of masculine authority, “wilfulhede,” become the chief instrument of state. Lombardy for Chaucer is both a real foreign territory, a place to which he had traveled on the king’s business, and an imaginary place close to home. (Chaucerian Polity 213-14)

As Wallace ably demonstrates in his book, Chaucer’s meditations on Lombardy are not restricted to those Canterbury tales, such as the tales of the Clerk and Merchant, which are set in Lombardy. This Italian locale breeds anxieties about authoritarian rule that, in Wallace’s reading, find expression in the Knight’s Tale, the tale of Apollo and the crow and the Legend of Good Women among other texts, which are not set in Lombardy. Narrative examinations of despotism or uncontrollable, specifically male power suggest that “tyrauntz of Lombardie” number among Italy’s most prominent exports and may be found at uncomfortably close range.

Gower instead keeps Lombardy and its tyranny away from England; its ideological boundaries are clearly set off from English territory. He never urges his English readers to avoid acting like Lombards, because for Gower their behavior and manners are clearly foreign. The problems besetting England are externalized in the writings of this “moral” author more so than they are in Chaucer. Even Langland, whose Piers Plowman anatomizes specifically English social woes, identifies
mercantile duplicity not with Englishmen but with Lombards and Jews. His Coveitouse reveals to Repentaunce:

I lemed among Lombardes a lesson, and of Jewes –
To weye pense with a peis, and pare the hevyeste,
And lene it for love of the cros, to legge a wed and lese it.

(Piers Plowman, B-text, ed. Schmidt, V. 238-40)\(^{35}\)

While alliterative convenience certainly counts for something, Langland’s placing of “Lumbardes” before the “Jewes” highlights the former and recalls their prominent position as moneylenders in England following the expulsion of the Jews in 1291. The suggestion that clipping coins is “a lesson” taught primarily by Lombards indicates that by the late fourteenth century the Lombard dishonesty revealed in earlier chronicle reports has made the big move from historical “fact” to literary topos and consequent proverbiality. The conflating of deception with piety (“for love of the cros”) far predates this instance in Langland, but the concreteness of the image, with all its commercial associations, makes it a particularly apt choice in which to embed English apprehensions of Lombards. This illusory character of Lombardy and Italy generally will appear again in the works dealt with at length here.

\(^{35}\) The difficult lines 239-40 may be translated as follows: “To weigh pennies with a balance and to clip the heaviest (coin), and lend it for love of the cross, (for the borrower) to give me a pledge and lose it.” With a pun designed to expose the false piety of the Lombards, Langland uses the image of the cross to refer both to Christ’s crucifix and, as Skeat points out, to “the cross on the back of old coins” (vol. II of his edition, 86, n. to l. 243). Skeat continues: “It is clear what Avarice did: he first clipped coins and then lent them, taking a pledge which he hoped would not be redeemed.” As Kirk and Anderson note in their edition of Donaldson’s translation of the poem, the pledge would have been of higher value than the amount that the Lombard would have lent to the borrower (46, n. 2).
Langland's association of Lombards with Jews and the *Morte Arthur*’s dubbing of a Genoese giant as "that errawnt Jewe" suggest a tendency to conceive of the Italians as the Other, in spite of their Christianity. In fact, not all English writers were so sure even of the Catholicity of the Italians. Susan Powell notes the repeated presence of the word "Lombard" in John Mirk’s *Festial* (c. 1350-90) where one expects to find "Lollard":

The secunde skyll why thys fest was ordeynet ys: yn confondyng heretykes, and forto destroye the fals oppynyons that thay holden a3eynes the holy Trinite, as Lombardys dothe now ... thys Lombardes wyth hor smethe wordes and plesyng to the pepull ben aboute forto draw the pepull from the faythe of holy chyrche ... thys Lombardes pursuen men of holy chirche, and ben about forto vndo hom in all that thay mow ...

Powell argues that “unless ‘lombardys’ is a mere slip for ‘lollardes’ (and, if so, it is a consistent one), it seems reasonable to assume that ‘lollardes’ in his copy-text meant less to the Gough MS scribe than ‘lombardes’, the latter being at least familiar bogey-men who might reasonably be blamed for a multitude of sins” (136). It is not that this confusion would have been terribly off the mark to a fourteenth-century English person’s way of thinking. As I point out in Chapter 1, below, in 1346 England was placed on the alert for a possible Turkish invasion launched from Italy (Genoa, in fact), and many people still condemned usury as a great sin. And if some clerics thought that “merchant time” threatened to put a stop to the influence of “Church time,” to recall

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Jacques Le Goff’s well-known categories, then it makes sense that the Lombards, the most deceitful and often the most successful of merchants, would have struck them as heretics.

It is not surprising that certain foreign merchants and bankers who were thought to endanger the well-being of the realm were also represented as threats to the unity of Christendom. But such an association need not have been made and perhaps was not made in London or Southampton, which saw more Lombards than did Staffordshire, where the Gough MS scribe copied the *Festial* in the mid-fifteenth century (Powell 136). John Lydgate, whose far-ranging pen touched on many subjects, seems not to have thought of Lombards as enemies of Christendom, but he does tell an amusing story of a Lombard who used sorcery to transform himself into a goose:

> “And semblaiby nat longe here-to-forn,  
> (I telle this tale as for my partie)  
> Ther was a man, in Lumbardy born,  
> To a goos turned bi craft of sorcerye,  
> A-bood so seuene yeer (me list nat lye);  
> His writ fill of tho stood he vp a man,  
> A-bood with the duke in seruyce of Melan.” (267-73)\(^{37}\)

\(^{37}\) “Disputation between a Horse, a Sheep and a Goose,” in *Political, Religious, and Love Poems*, ed. Furnivall, pp. 15-42. As far as I know, the Lombards were never accused of using sorcery to poison the wells during outbreaks of the Plague, but in 1427 they were accused of poisoning the wine in London; the news of their “violent wickedness” (“violenta corum nequitia”) eventually reached John Reynewell, Mayor of London, and a conspiracy to poison the English was suspected (“illorum conspiratio, et Anglicorum potionatio”). As a result, the authorities broke 150 of their casks: John Amundesham, *Annales monasterii S. Albani*, ed. Riley, 18-19.
The Goose then explains that because this man was “of hih degre,/ Born of good blood & notable in substaunce,” his relatives adopted the goose on their livery “The seide merveile to put in remembraunce” (274-77). This story is not meant by the Goose as a disparagement of Lombards, for he is attempting to demonstrate the superiority of his fellow geese to horses and sheep. Whether Lydgate intended an ironic meaning is a different question: there is something obviously silly in a goose’s claim to pre-eminence over other animals, and this silliness in the natural order may have been intentionally paralleled in the social order, unless Lydgate seriously thought that his readers would accept without a chuckle the idea of a gentle-born inhabitant of a land infamous for moneylenders, mercenaries and an aristocracy tainted by associations with commerce. The idea of a Lombard employing sorcery to turn himself into a goose might have struck English readers as appropriate enough for one of his ilk. Whether in a serious work like Mirk’s *Festial* or a lighthearted poem like Lydgate’s “Disputation,” a religious coloring occasionally characterizes depictions of Lombards and Italians; it appears in various degrees in portraits of Italy in the *Morte Arthure*, the *Fall of Princes* and the *Solace of Pilgrims*.

If the view of Italians in England was generally negative, at least in the minds of English merchants, members of Parliament and writers who appealed to them, the English perception of Italy was fragmentary. To his own question, “Did ‘Italy’ then in fact exist?” John Larner poses an answer, which, in light of the conflict among the various city-states, is easy to accept at face value: “From compatriots with experience
of the peninsula, men of action like Edward Despencer or John Hawkwood, Chaucer
would no doubt have learnt that [Italy] was a word without meaning.” Yet even Larner
concedes that “There was a sense in which the peregrinations of men like Dante and
Petrarch and Boccaccio had produced from the diversity of Italy something like an
‘Italian’ culture” (“Chaucer’s Italy” 9). The age-old economic gulf separating the
North from the South, while noticeable in the late Middle Ages, should not distract us
from the fact that the Mezzogiorno too saw an efflorescence of high culture at this
time under the aegis of the Kingdom of Naples.\(^{38}\) But strife frequently erupted in the
northern and central parts of the peninsula. Wars pitting the Tuscan city-states of
Florence, Pisa, Lucca and Siena against one another were infamous and common;
Sienese hostility toward Florence has not yet disappeared. Genoa and Venice were the
bitterest of economic rivals, and the northernmost regions of Italy saw themselves as
distinct from the north-central areas, as they do today.\(^{39}\) Having acknowledged that
\textit{auctores} like Dante, Boccaccio and Petrarch envisioned an Italy unified at the level of
the idea, I would concede the near-truism that “Italy” as a term did not signify a unified

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38 On the prestige and power of Naples during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, see Wallace, “Chaucer and Boccaccio’s Early Writings,” in Boitani, ed., \textit{Chaucer and the Italian Trecento} 144-47; Bentley, \textit{Politics and Culture in Renaissance Naples}.

39 Still-current proverbs attest to the longevity of this divisiveness: “da Firenze e lassù non si fiducia più” (“from Florence downward, one can no longer trust [anybody]”); “meglio un morto nella casa che un pisano alla porta” (“better a corpse in the house than a Pisan at the door”); “gente di Riviera, gente di galera” (“[Ligurian] Riviera people, prison people,” which harks back to the age of Genoese piracy; “piemontesi, falsi cortesi” (“the feignedly courteous Piedmontese”).
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realm. This is not to suggest, however, that it "was a word without meaning": on the contrary, in England the term "Italy" meant precisely the incessant divisiveness and unrest that militated against peaceful national unity.

Several writers and commentators remarked in various ways on the kinds of division and divisiveness in Italy. Isidore of Seville had long before pointed out the differentiation of the people of Italy into Thusci, Umbri, Marsi and other tribes. In light of the multiplicity of these peoples, the larger category *gens Italiae* possessed meaning only as an abstraction. Paul the Deacon's *Gesta Langobardorum* also pointed out the existence of various races within Italy but posed the question "Why is Italy so called?" (*Quare Italia sic vocitatur?*) The answer does not suggest interest in political consensus or cultural difference, but rather leads us to the realm of what we would consider myth:

*Italia quoque quae has provincias continet, ab Italo, Siculorum duce, qui eam antiquitus invasit, nomen accepit. Sive ob hoc Italia dicitur, quia magni in ea boves, hoc est, itali habentur.*

The name "Italy" is used to denote the collection of provinces within the peninsula, and originated either with Italus, a (legendary) leader of the Sicilians who invaded the mainland, or with the famed excellence of its bulls (*boves; hoi italoi* in Greek). What emerges from both Isidore and Paul is the understanding that Italy, for all practical

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41 *Gesta Langobardorum*, in Migne, *Patrologia Latina* XCV, 1861, col. 496.
purposes, is less a cohesive nation than a name used to conceal or to draw attention to
different races. Higden’s *Polychronicon* makes more strongly the point of geographical
diversity: “In this Italia beeth many prowines and londes, that beeth cleped Calabria,
Apulia, Campania, Beneventana, Tuscia, Emilia, Liguria, Lombardia” (I, 201). The
name *Italia* smoothes a thin layer of nominal unity over geographical and cultural
plurality.

Even to some Italians, the terms “Italy” and “Italian” stood for diversity as
much as unity. Christine de Pizan, reflecting on her shared blood heritage with
Minerva, reveals a clear pride in the venerable history of her “nacyon”:

> And in so moche it may plaise the to be to me fauorable/ that I may be
> somewhat consonaunt in the nacyon where thou was born whiche as thenne was
> named the grete grece / the contree beyond the alpes or montaygnes / whiche
> now is sayd puylle & calabre in ytalye where thu were born / & I am as thu
> were / a woman ytalien

Remarkably, Christine thinks of her birthplace in Tuscany (her father was Bolognese,
however) as part of a single “nacyon” including Apulia and Calabria. It seems that she
has an Italian readership in mind: she petitions Minerva to show favor to her, i.e. to

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42 Caxton’s translation, printed in 1488-89, of Christine de Pizan’s *Boke of Fayttes of Armes and of Chyualrye* (1404-5). Christine’s original reads as follows:

> et en tant te plaise moy estre &uourable que je puisse estre aucunement consonante en la
> naction dont tu fus nee, qui comme adonc feust nommee la grant grece le pais doult les alpes
> qui ores est dit puille et Calabre en ytalie ou tu nasquis, et je suis comme toy femme
> ytalienne.

The idea of Italy as Magna Graecia appears also in Higden, *Polychronicon*: “Italia, a Graecis
quondam occupata, Magna Graecia dicebatur,” and, in Trevisa’s translation, “Grees wonede somtyme
in Italia, an cleped the lond the Grete Grecia” (I, 198-99). Higden’s source is Isidore.

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grant her wisdom, so that she will be “somwhat consonaunt” in Italy – so that her words will strike audiences there as agreeable and in harmony with traditional, wise notions of chivalry. Her notion of Italian nationhood – whether real or fictive – need not have waited until Caxton’s translation to enter English minds, for John Amundesham, a chronicler of St. Alban’s, observed that in 1423 a papal council was transferred from plague-infested Cremona to Siena “in natione Italica consisten
tem” ([Annales Monasterii S. Albani I, 139]). But Christine’s dissection of Magna Graecia into the two components of Apulia and Calabria does signal the indisputable medieval composition of Italy as but an aggregate of different regions. The hostility between these same two Southern Italian regions is revealed in the fourteenth-century romance *Sir Beues of Hamtoun*, which differs from its Anglo-Norman source in that, as Susan Crane points out, it already shows “a wider perception of national identity and the importance of national interests”:

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Thar was a king in Poyle londe,
   And another in Calabre, Ich vnderstonde:
This twe kinge foughte i-fere
   More than foure and twenti yere,
That hii neuer pes nolde
   Naither for seluer ne for golde,
And al the contre, saundoute,
That distreude hit al aboute:  (2435-42)43
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43 *Sir Beues of Hamtoun* (Auchinleck version), ed. Turnbull. The poem’s interest in national affairs is discussed by Crane, *Insular Romance* 59-62, 86-91, quoted passage at 59. Crane observes that Middle English romances like *Sir Bevis of Hamtoun* and *Guy of Warwick* and the Anglo-Norman romance *Fouke le Fitz Waryn* enhance the individual knight’s (or baron’s) adventures by showing the
The poem suggests that war comes so naturally to the two southern Italian kings that they not even riches can induce them to make peace and persuade them to spare the countryside. This image of warring Calabrian and Apulian regents corresponds with the reality of violent strife in southern Italy even before the Norman invasions of the late eleventh century. Sir Beues of Hamtoun then recounts that the kings’ hatred for one another caused them to be transformed into dragons, which pursue their hatred even after death. Christine’s account of early Italian history, on the other hand, sidesteps the reality of incessant warfare and instead tells the story of a land built on consensus and affirmation. In The Book of the City of Ladies, she contrives an etymological basis for cultural and linguistic differences within Italy, differences that can be transcended by language:

Moreover, because ita, which means oui in French, is the strongest affirmation in Latin, [the future Italians] were not satisfied calling this country the “Latin land,” but rather they wished that all the country beyond the mountains, which is quite large and contains many diverse countries and dominions, be called Italy (72).

Italians themselves were more likely than not to voice strong agreement with the idea that the “many diverse countries and dominions” should remain that way. Christine’s anecdote resembles and may derive from Dante’s description of Italy as the bel paese protagonists as defenders and benefactors of the nation, yet they also suggest that nationalism matters less than the individualistic spirit of those adventures.

44 See Kreutz, Before the Normans.
là dove 'l si suona ("the beautiful land where the si sounds"; *Inferno* xxx, 80).

Underlying Dante's nostalgic linguistic conjuration of Italy as a land of unifying affirmation — and a land distinguished from France and Spain by its univocal use of *si* as opposed to Spanish *oc* or French *oil*\(^{45}\) — is his awareness that his land has consistently refused and negated all appeals for unity. Christine's story and Higden's phrase "many prouinces and londes" signal a similar if muted realization of the differences characterizing the Italian peninsula.

Dante's lament for this peninsula's ceaseless tyranny and strife warrants extended consideration:

Ah, servile Italy, hostel of grief; ship without pilot in great tempest, no mistress of provinces, but brothel!

[Translation]

Chè le città d'Italia tutte piene
Son di tiranni, e un Marcel diventa
Ogne villan che parteggiando viene. (*Purgatorio*, vi, 124-26)

For all the cities of Italy are full of tyrants, and every yokel who comes to play the partisan becomes a Marcellus. (ed. and trans. Singleton; II, part 1, *Purgatorio*, pp. 58-59, 62-63)

Dante presents Italy as a passive land overwhelmed by natural forces but then considers it as the willful object of political oppression figured as sexual bondage. It

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\(^{45}\) Dante, *De vulgari eloquentia* I, viii, 6, as quoted and discussed by Singleton (*Inferno* 2: Commentary 618).
would like to be a noble lady, a _donna_, but it reveals itself to be a prostitute — and not just one prostitute but an entire brothel-ful. The tyrannical rulers of the individual city-states similarly delude themselves and attempt to fashion themselves into something they are not: the _villano_, the lowest on the social scale, pretends to be a noble civic leader.

The history of the Italian communes makes it impossible for outsiders who knew anything of Italy not to have shared this impression. The opinions of Chaucer, Gower and Froissart have been noted already. "Contemporaries realised well enough," notes J.K. Hyde, "that tyranny was the consequence of disunity within and discord between cities" (_Society and Politics in Medieval Italy_ 151). In his _Summa Predicantium_ (before 1354), John Bromyard perceives Italy as a particular example of the kind of nation, or aggregate of nations, whose chronic disorder generates an unhealthy political climate. He remarks on the constant warfare amongst the city-states "in Italy, in the war-torn lands" ("in Italia in terris guerrarum") and the plight of merchants and pilgrims in Lombardy constrained to protect themselves against marauders by hiring mercenaries ("sic ut patet in Lombardia, ubi mercatores et peregrini conducunt stipendarios pro se tuendo contra spoliatores"; Owst 174).

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46 See Hyde, _Society and Politics in Medieval Italy_ 48-141 on the perpetual tensions within and among central and northern Italian city-states.

47 So dated by A.B. Emden, _Biographical Register of the University of Oxford_, vol. 1, 278, as cited by Owst, _Literature and Pulpit_ 224.
Bromyard’s view, Italy was “held up as a warning of what happens where a healthy feudal dominatio does not exist” (Owst 174).

Armed with similar knowledge of both Northern Italian strife and the particular infamy of the bellicose Lombards, Adam of Usk recounts that on his journey to Rome he had to “[turn] aside from Bologna, Florence, and Perugia, on account of the raging wars and sieges of the duke of Milan” (“Bolonie, Florencie et Perisii, propter frementes ducis Mediolani ... guerras ac obsidiones et earum discrimina, declinando vias”).48 Adam’s portrait of the “viper race of Lombardy” has been noted already, but the context deserves fuller treatment because of the memorably apocalyptic, even Dantean tones of his account of the strife between Guelphs and Ghibellines there in 1404:

The viper race of Lombardy, split up into Guelphs and Ghibellines, with plundering and fire and slaughter, and even eating the flesh of the dead and dashing against rocks their own offspring if they took the opposite side, destroyed each other and certain of their cities at this time.49

48 Chronicon Adae de Usk 75 (Latin), 243 (English).

49 “Gens Lumbardie viperina, in Guelfos et Gibilinos divisa, in spolio et incendio mutuaque clade ac mortuorum carnes rodendo, prolesque proprias, si ex adversa parcialitate productas, ad petras elidendo, se et eorum civitates nonnullas hoc tempore extinguerunt.” Ibid., 94 (Latin), 269 (English). The Lombards’ dubious reputation was acknowledged earlier. In The Story of the Grail (Perceval) Chrétien de Troyes highlighted the cowardice of the mob seeking to assault Gawain by claiming that “even during a snail hunt in Lombardy they do not make that much racket!” See The Story of the Grail (Perceval), in Kibler, trans., 454. Kibler (519, n. 23) writes: “A mocking allusion to the Lombards for their proverbial cowardice. ‘Snail fighting’ – attacking an enemy incapable of defending himself – was the sign of a coward.” Le Goff, “Warriors and Bourgeois,” in The Medieval Imagination 166-67, sees Percival’s reference to Lombardy, along with the rebellion of the townspeople and the contrast between them and the knights, as signs of a heightened sensitivity to the many aspects of urban culture. John of Salisbury thought of the Lombards as a race given over to flattery and the Romans as the great teachers of that art: see Polieraticus, trans. Nederman, 21, 22.
Crazed Lombard lawlessness mingled with despair will elicit the lawgiving impulses of the *Morte Arthure* poet, the moralistic criticism and disgust of Lydgate, as we shall see. This picture of general strife remains valid well into the sixteenth century: it emerges in the *Anglica Chronica* of the Italian Polydore Vergil, then residing in England. Writing of the foreign invasions of Italy in 1492-94, Vergil excoriates the princes of the various republics for their complicity in bringing the peninsula to ruin:

> Not that this torrent of misfortune overwhelmed Italy of its own force: Italians themselves opened the floodgates. For the princes of Italy, while their affairs prospered, led unadventurous and almost effeminate lives, wrangling between themselves, starting to busy themselves not (as had once been their habit) with foreign enemies, but with domestic quarrels, disputes and feuds. ... [the Italian princes], moved by folly, eagerly assisted [the foreign invaders], all striving each to ruin the other, so that all were involved in destruction. (*Anglica Historia* 60-61)

Although Vergil wrote during the reign of Henry VIII, his remarks stand as the most eloquent and impassioned complaint against age-old petty struggles among the Italian communes, a perennial characteristic of intra-peninsular relations throughout the medieval period. The tone is similar to Adam’s vitriolic complaint and, to a lesser extent, the poetized report of the Calabrian and Apulian kings in *Sir Beues of Hamtoun*. Italian princes expend a great deal of energy to no good or noble purpose, and in seeking to topple one another they merely devastate the countryside and dehumanize themselves.

To some English minds of the time, “Italy” and especially “Lombardy” conjured up images of the strife and violence that characterize an expanse of land unguided by a
single monarch. This northern Italian region, sometimes used to refer to Italy generally, had other reputations, of course: a London merchant of the 1330's could appeal to his customers' love for luxury fabrics by displaying imported coverchiefs "de lumbard" and "dalemaign" and from other countries. The Parisian Schoolman Petrus Lombardus - Peter the Lombard - was praised throughout the later medieval period by ecclesiastics awed by the achievement of the Sententiae (Wenzel, "Academic Sermons" 317-20), but he was the exception to the rule, just as Jacobus de Voragine, author of the Legenda Aurea and Archbishop of Genoa, seems to have been among the few admired Genoese in a sea of cutthroat merchants and mercenaries.

Exceptions like this aside, however, Lombards and Lombardy were infamous, the former as potential sowers of social and economic disorder in England, the latter as a metaphor for violence and warfare out of it. Such are the English responses to

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51 In his Legendis of Hooly Wummen (ed. Serjeantson) Bokenham, when quoting Jacobus, repeatedly refers to him as "lanuence," "lanuencis," "lanuensys," etc.; e.g. "Nowe I haue shewyd, aftyr the gospel, / O this Maryis lyf a greth party/ O f the remnaunht furth now wyl I tel,/ Lych as lanuence yt doth dyscry" (5731-34; cp. 5748, 5753, 6320 ["As in the goldene legende seyth lanuence"], 8544, etc.). Respect at least for the Legenda is hinted at in the Latin rubric (either Chaucer's or a scribe's) that appears in the Second Nun's Prologue: "Interpretacio nominis Cecihe quam ponit Prater Jacobus Januensis in Legenda" (between ll. 84 and 85).

Italian political life or rumors thereof; alternately crude and sophisticated, they offer perceptions, or at least “imaginative reconstructions,” of the peninsular comuni.

England’s dread of the Italian political scene parallels longstanding fears of internal strife and factionalism within England itself. John of Salisbury gave voice to them in the twelfth century; and it will be noted that the source of this edifying wisdom was a nobleman of Piacenza, then located in Lombardy:

I recall that my host at Placentia, a man who possessed the most noble blood as well as a worldly prudence founded in the fear of God, had said that it was famous from the recurrent experiences of the Italian cities that so long as they cherished peace and cultivated justice and refrained from perjury, they enjoyed fully and rejoiced in such liberty and peace that there was nothing at all, or very little, which disturbed their calm. Yet when they fell into fraudulence and were divided in themselves by the unstable paths of injustice, immediately the Lord called upon them either the arrogance of the Romans or the furore of the Germans or some other punishment, and His hand remained extended until the time when they withdrew themselves from their iniquity by means of penitence; by this remedy alone do all disturbances in their vicinity cease. (Policraticus 60)

Even in John’s time Italy was well known for its “disturbances,” and the lesson to be learned from them — cultivate peace and justice and avoid perjury and fraudulence — applies to England as well. John Bromyard, as we have seen, would have agreed both with the moral and with the characterization of the land that prompted it. Higden and

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53 The phrase is in Southern, Western Views of Islam 33. The medieval West’s idea of Islam was based not on empirical knowledge, but “imaginative reconstructions” whose “authors luxuriated in the ignorance of triumphant imagination” (28).
Trevisa kept both circulating in the fourteenth century and cite this very passage in John of Salisbury:

While the citees of Italia loueth pees and worschippeth ri3twisnesse and leueth false othes, than they haueth likynge and welthe in here owne lond. But whan they 3eueth hem to falshede and to stryf, anon the pride of Romayns, other the woodnesse of Duches men, other some other wrecche of God all my3ti falleth vpon hem for to they amende her lyf by penaunce of contricioun. For trespas of that peple putteth awey al principalte, other maketh here pryncle more mylde. (Polychronicon I, 253)

The exemplary utility of the Italian city-states to John of Salisbury, Ranulf Higden and John Bromyard occasioned the meditation on a theme familiar to the Arthurian romancers, that of “dear England, a demi-paradise, able to resist all conquests except a shameful conquest of itself.” What Lydgate called “the serpent of division” left many marks on late medieval English history, and Italy time and again seemed to be a concrete example of England’s worst political fears realized.

One occasional cause of strife in England was the influence of papal Rome, despite the sanctity of the Church. Papal Rome, or more specifically the Curia or papal

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54 Turville-Petre 4, discussing Matthew Paris’ lament in the Flores Historiarum over the internal chaos caused by the Barons’ Wars in 1265, and John of Gaunt’s speech in Shakespeare’s Richard II (II.i.31-68, especially the lines “That England, that was wont to conquer others./ Hath made a shameful conquest of itself,” ll. 65-66). Lydgate struck a proverbial chord when in the Troy Book he warned: “For whan discord and false discencioun/ Allied ben in hertis for to strive/ Among lordis, that kyngdam may nat thryve” (III, 2350-52). In these lines Pearsall has found nothing more than “a public expression of private morality – which is what the medieval ‘Mirror for Princes’ always is – and far too commonplace to have any particular topical import” (John Lydgate 139). George Gascoigne complained of “strifes, quarrels, dissensions” in English parishes caused by “these lawyers, jurists, advocates and defenders of evil”; see Loci e Libro Veritatum, ed. J. Rogers (Oxford, 1881), 109, quoted in York and Lancaster, ed. Jones, 70.
court, was notorious for its seemingly timeless corruption. Hostility to its bureaucratic inscrutability and hunger for lucre prompted many a complaint poem, written particularly by professional satirists and by suitors at the Curia, from the early twelfth century onward.55 Walter Map, who had attended the Lateran Council of 1179, offered the following amusing acronym: "the name Roma ... is made up of the letters R and O and M and A, and the definition, along with the word itself, is Radix omnium malorum avaricia (greed is the root of all evil)."56 A "Song on the Times" poem dating from the reign of King John depicts the Eternal City thus: "Rome receives all, and the goods of all; the court of the Romans is but a market. There are offered for sale the rights of the senators, and abundance of money dissolves all differences of opinion."

During the time of the papal interdict of England in the early thirteenth century, mordant satire frequently drew connections between Rome's power and the corruption that accompanied it:

Roma mundi caput est, sed nil capit mundum:
Quod pendet a capite totum est inmundum;
Transit enim vitium primum in secundum,

55 Parks, English Traveler 242. See 230-268 for an impressive list of hostile accounts of Rome from the twelfth to thirteenth centuries.


57 Roma capit singulos et res singulorum;
Romanorum curia non est nisi forum.
Ibi sunt venalia jura senatorum,
Et solvit contraria copia nummorum.
This poem appears in Wright, ed. and trans., Political Songs 15.
Et de fundo redolet quod est juxta fundum.

Rome is the head of the world; but it receives nothing clean; all that depends from the head is unclean: for the first vice passes on into the second, and that which is near the bottom smells of the bottom.  

England attempted to combat papal granting of benefices, long considered a form of foreign intervention in affairs of the state. The Statute of Provisors (1350-51) stipulated that if any “reservation, collation, or provision [of benefices] be made by the Court of Rome and any archbishopric, bishopric, dignity, or benefice, in disturbance of free elections, collations, or presentations aforenamed, that at the same time of voidance ... our Lord the King and his heirs shall have and enjoy for the same time the collations, etc., which be of his advowry, such as his progenitors had before that free election was granted.”

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58 *Invectio contra avaritiam*, MS Harleian 978, folio 108, recto, in Wright 14-18. The untranslatable pun “fundo”/“fundum” is particularly scathing.

59 *Statutes of the Realm*, 25 Edward III, Statute VI, quoted in War and Misrule, ed. Locke, 47. For background on provisions, particularly their general acceptance in England despite frequent criticism, see Holmes, *Later Middle Ages* 48; Southern, *Western Society and the Church* 151-69. For a fuller treatment, see Pantin, *English Church* 35-102. If anything, English relations with the Papacy actually improved after the Great Schism of 1378, when “the English felt a certain proprietary pride in ‘our Urban’” (Pantin 91). The end of the fourteenth century saw renewals of the Statute of Provisors, their annullment by the Pope, England’s reply in the form of the Statute of Praemunire (which declared England immune to papal bulls), the concordat of 1398, and the general diminishment of provisions for aliens after 1400. Pantin concedes the existence of tension between the church of England and the Papacy but maintains that it was not as high as has been supposed. See also his article “The Fourteenth Century,” in Lawrence 157-94; and du Boulay’s in the same volume. Cp. Thomson, “‘Well of Grace’” 101, 110.
Rome's fame for concerning itself with decidedly non-holy matters nevertheless grew, appearing in sometimes surprising places. By the mid-fourteenth century, Mandeville could enlist the age-old image of the corrupt Church in his portrayal of papal authority; in his *Travels*, the universal Church is not only tainted with vice but apparently no longer universal. "Now is simony crowned like a king in Holy Church," Mandeville observes, having noted that "beyond the Greek Sea [the Greeks'] Patriarch has as much power as our Pope has on his side of it." *The* Pope has been reduced to a pope, his temporal authority de-centralized and measured as supreme not throughout the entire globe but only on his side of the Adriatic. Mandeville drives the point home by recording the words of the Greek Orthodox community to John XXII, following that pope's appeal to them for Christian unity: "We well believe your power is great over your subjects; we cannot support your great pride; we do not purpose to slake your great avarice. God be with you, for God is with us. Farewell."\(^6\) Papal avarice was condemned later by John Gower, who, unsurprisingly, associated it with the Lombards. He imagined a past golden age of the Church when "The Lumbard made

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\(^6\) *Travels of Sir John Mandeville*, trans. Moseley 50-51. This epistle may well be fictitious, though its appearance in Latin in the original confers on it a certain (mock?) authority, even in its attempt to keep at a distance the authority of Papal Rome itself. This apparent attempt to destabilize the primacy of the Catholic Church accorded with the temper of the fourteenth century, when, as Southern phrases it, "indifference and fantasy flourished once more" (*Western Views* 74). Southern repeats Frederick II's saying, that "the world had seen three great imposters, Moses, Christ, and Mahomet," adding that, since it was "[s]poken in the kingdom of Sicily, the traditional home of indifference and cynicism, this saying might cause us no surprise. But in 1340 it was reported in Lisbon, and in the 1380s in Aragon. A mere straw in the wind, but a significant one" (75).
non eschange/ The bisschopriches forto change."\(^6\) Typical of Gower, this remark places the burden of responsibility for social and ecclesiastical problems in England squarely on the shoulders of the Lombard outsiders.

George Parks is right to claim that the fourteenth rather than the fifteenth century was the time of profound anti-papal sentiment in England,\(^6^2\) but English criticism, if in a lower key, can be heard well into the fifteenth century. In the *Loci e Libro Veritatum*, George Gascoigne complained of, among many other things, the injustice of papal provisions and taxes:

> For Rome, like a singular and principal wild beast, hath laid waste the vineyards of the church, reserving to herself the elections of bishops, that none may confer an episcopal church on anyone unless they first pay the annates or first-fruits and rent of the vacant church. Also she hath destroyed the vineyard of God's church in many places, by annulling the elections of all the bishops in England. Also she destroys the church by promoting wicked men according as the King and the Pope agree.\(^6^3\)

In 1473, Sir John Paston, eager to procure a dispensation from his engagement to Anne Hault, writes wryly that he has received an answer ageyn fro Roome that there is the welle of grace and salve sufficiant for suche a soore, and that I may be dyspenyed with; neverthelesse my proctore there axith a m docatys, as he demythe. But master Lacy, another Rome renner heer, whyche knowyth my seyde proctor theer, as he seythe, as weell as

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\(^6^2\) "To return to the political context, we should note two serious anti-papal movements in the fourteenth century, though not in the fifteenth" (*English Traveler* 610 ff). Parks discusses Ockham's and Wyclif's treatises.

Bernard knewe hys sheeld, seyth that he menyth but an C. docates or CC. at the most; wherffor afiftre thys comythe moor. He wrote to me also, *quod Papa hoc facit hodiernis diebus multociens*.64

The commercialization run rampant in the Roman Curia to which Paston delicately alludes in Latin sits oddly with his metaphorical description of a papal dispensation as a “welle of grace and salve sufficiaunt.” Paston is far from condemning curial materialism and unjust stewardship in the vein of Wyclif or even Gascoigne, but his practical view of Rome’s “grace,” demystified and stripped of its theological virtues, reveals something like the businessman’s savvy understanding of marketing strategies. Curial preoccupations with the inflow of money seem to be nothing more than business as usual: as the Latin has it, “in these days the Pope does this very often.”

Paston’s allusion to “Rome runners” seems light-hearted enough, even if tinged with frustration; John Wyclif’s use of it a century earlier (apparently he coined the phrase) carries with it the serious zeal of the reformer. To him the presence of “Rome runners” signals not only the Church’s fall from grace but England’s vulnerability to chaos: “thus thes rome renneris beren the kyngys gold out of oure lond & bryngen agen deed leed and heresie and symonye and goddis curse.”65 Wyclif and Gower, at least in this respect, seem to have thought along similar lines: for the English philosopher and theologian, those who seek to circumvent English law by heading for


Rome commit a sort of alchemical treason, overturning both the political and natural order by exchanging England’s rightful wealth for the lead of the papal seal, which promises only an abhorrent social disorder and "goddis curse."

Generally, Rome-running created much divisiveness and unrest. In 1347, one William, abbot of Chester, was accused of procuring from Rome an exemption "from all jurisdiction of his bishop and metropolitan, and has, in contravention of divers proclamations, caused great sums of gold and silver to be taken out of the realm in order to obtain the said exemption," "to the perpetual confusion of the house and the disherson and prejudice of the king and the prince."^66 Again Wyclif puts the case dramatically: "Sumtyme," he observes in *Of Prelates*,

the court of rome his worldly aduersarie to oure lond, & namely in fauour of oure enemys; but more harme is of gostly ennemyte, whanne their enuenymen oure peple with cursed symonye and meyntenynge & consent of synne bi blynde obedience.67

No less scathing is his attack in *De Officio Pastorali*: "bullis of the court of rome blynden many men heere, for it semeth the hed of errour & propre nest of anticrist" (Matthew, ed. 446). Rome served as England’s spiritual anchor, but it could also


67 In Matthew, ed., 92. A similar sentiment is found in the Lollard work *The Lanterne of Li3t* (c. 1409-15): "The well, the begynnynge, and the cause of all ruine and myschyfe is the courte of Rome" (quoted in Aston, "Lollardy and the Reformation: Survival or Revival?" 228).
threaten to bring her dangerously close to political shipwreck — at least in the minds of some English writers.

A continuity can be glimpsed even from the time of Augustine, who wished to dissociate the young Church from the legacy of imperial Rome in order to guard the purity of the faith from the taint of worldly glory. Eusebius, however, thought it necessary for the Church to appropriate the former glory of imperial Rome and put it to better use, and Eusebius' view won the day. Had Augustine been able to foresee the development of the Church, a history punctuated by the necessary spiritual reforms from the time of Gregory to that of the Council of Trent, he might have observed that the decision of the Church to appropriate the secular heritage of Rome made inevitable the recurring theme of *ecclesia semper reformanda*. The Reformation of course would focus primarily, if not exclusively, upon the materialism run rampant at the center of the faith, Luther affirming that the pope “redeems innumerable souls for money, a most perishable thing, with which to build St. Peter's church, a very minor purpose.” Even before that cataclysmic event, however, criticism was directed at Roman, and by

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extension Italian, greed: “Italici quae non sacra sunt et quae sacra vendunt.” In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries “We are aware of that general western renovatio of the antique world which began as a sense of the greatness of Rome, and continued in a renaissance” (Parks, English Traveler 269), but an awareness of Roman corruption similarly prevailed. Attempts by Ranulf Higden, his translator John Trevisa, and, later, John Capgrave to emphasize the layer of Christian churches over the underlying stratum of pagan temples and monuments – “There, as Pantheon the temple of all mawmetrie was, is now a chirche of al halwen,” as Trevisa puts it – conceal the spiritual corruption of the papal Curia that has superseded the spiritual corruption of the ancient empire.

These sinister portraits and vitriolic criticisms tell only part of the story of Rome, however. Rome remained the historical center of western Christendom even when the Church itself lay in its “Babylonian Captivity” in Avignon and wallowed in corruption there and, later, back in Rome. The proverbial phrase “from here to Rome” (or a variant thereof) typically conjured up much of the world as known to late

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71 Polychronicon, I, 215, translating with a greater moral thrust than Higden's neutral observation “Apud templum Pantheon, quod fuit omnium deorum, modo est ecclesia omnium sanctorum” (214). This supercessive layering effect is the dominant impression that one takes away from the Polychronicon's treatment of Rome, as well as from Capgrave's Solace of Pilgrims, discussed below.
medieval England. Spiritual roads still led there, as the frequency of pilgrimages tells us (Parks, *English Traveler* 337-82). In the literary realm, the way to Rome is still illuminated in the fourteenth century by the popularity of the “Constance” romance motif – in the romance *Emaré*, in Chaucer’s *Man of Law’s Tale*, and Gower’s *Tale of Constance*. In *the Treatise on the Astrolabe* Chaucer could remark casually to “lyte Lowys” that many diverse languages are capable of conveying the same truth, “right as diverse pathes leden diverse folk the righte way to Rome” (ll. 39-40). Not only was Rome the center of the faith, it was also the preserve of much that came to be regarded as the common cultural property of all Christendom:

Visits to Rome, the writings of the early Church Fathers and the works of classical Latin authors provided the oldest and strongest cultural links with Italy; they were by now so well integrated into European cultural life that they might be considered more a common European heritage than peculiarly Italian. Nonetheless, they meant that educated Englishmen were conversant with the history, the people and the places of classical and early medieval Italy, and even the uneducated would have heard some stories through the *exempla* of preachers. (Childs, “Anglo-Italian Contacts” 77)

The universal cultural valence of Rome, or at least ancient Rome, is acknowledged also by Christine de Pisan; her *Faits d’Armes* adduces some 50 examples of Roman military exploits and chivalric valor, all of which pertain to the Rome of classical history. In a

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72 See the examples in Whiting, *Proverbs* 491-92, entry R182. For evidence of the centrality of Rome in people’s imaginations, see R183-184.

73 Childs does not specify the *Gesta Romanorum*, but she must have them in mind as chief among the *exempla* that alluded, however generally, to past events in Rome and Italy. On the everyday incorporation of the *Gesta* into English sermons, see Owst 149-56.
different context John Trevisa notes this past Roman greatness; even in its current state of physical decay, Rome has no rival for grandeur:

Rome, no thing is pere to the,
    They3 thou nygh all fallynge be;
On alle thou schewest thy bounde,
How grete thou were, when thow were sounde. 74

All of this points to Rome’s spiritual and historical centrality.

Medieval Rome’s economic or political importance was another matter, however, and could not rival that of other European locales. As Robert Bartlett has pointed out, for much of the early medieval period Rome sat perilously close to Muslim possessions in southern Italy, and until the time of the Renaissance popes the city lagged far behind the more developed areas of northern Italy, the Low Countries and the bustling mercantile centers along the Rhine. The fourteenth and fifteenth centuries saw the diminishment of Muslim power in the Mediterranean, but Rome still occupied a relatively peripheral part of Europe, as advocates for an Avignon papacy so often claimed. To be on the periphery, however, was in the nature of pilgrimage centers, which were “supposed to be at the ends of the earth. Not only did this make them suitable as sites for liminal experience, but it meant that they really did serve one

74 This is Trevisa’s translation of the verses (c. 1120) by Hildebert of Lavardin, bishop of Le Mans and archbishop of Tours: “Par tibi Roma nihil, cum sis fere tota ruina;/ Fracta docere potes, integra quanta fores,” quoted in William of Malmesbury’s De regibus and reproduced in Higden, Polychronicon I, 212-13. Parks, English Traveler 251-52, discusses these lines and their appearance in a book on the marvels of Rome by a certain Master Gregory, but does not mention the Polychronicon’s quotation of them.
of the common purposes of pilgrimage, the penitential function.” Perhaps the perceived remoteness of Rome as a pilgrimage center “at the ends of the earth” (or at least on the fringes of Western Christendom) partly allowed Geoffrey of Monmouth and his subsequent translators, including La3amon and the author of the *Morte Arthure*, to depict the Roman Emperor as a destabilizing force that allowed Saracens and pagans into Europe to attack Britain.

Still, Rome retained, at least in the minds of some persons, its benign identity as the ancestral guardian of the faith in its best and simplest form. This was the view Julian of Norwich maintained, or wanted to maintain, in her *Shewings*, where she demurs at prying too deeply into the faith’s mysteries, particularly the notion that a loving God could be moved to wrath. Instead, she envisions her relationship with the Church as one between child and parent: “And now I yeele me to my moder Holy Church as a simple child owyth.” Julian’s emphasis on spiritual simplicity is a late medieval phenomenon, in part a reaction to the excessive subtleties and controversies of the Schools in the late thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. The image of Rome’s

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75 Bartlett, *Making of Europe* 294, on which much of the discussion in this paragraph is based. On the other hand, worldly popes such as Boniface VIII wanted nothing less than to make papal Rome central to and dominant over the affairs of the various European realms.

76 *Shewings of Julian of Norwich* 96, ll. 1637-38. One could reply, however, that Julian’s occasional theological dilemmas arise from her realization that her own visionary faith is in fact far simpler than the Church’s teachings.
mystical simplicity nevertheless seems to have endured throughout the Middle Ages, at least in the minds of some of the uneducated:

Working in the fields of distant Worcestershire or Gloucestershire, the ordinary thirteenth-century peasant would never have seen the physical city of Rome. He would not even have been able to think of it in any serious sort of physical detail.... But as unlikely as his having been to Rome or his having been able to imagine its detail is his not having heard of it or having some idea of what it stood for. Of all the cities of the world only Jerusalem and its sacred satellites can have competed with Rome for a place in thirteenth-century men’s minds. (Brentano, Rome Before Avignon 73).

The complex idea of Rome encountered throughout educated Christendom would have been “the idea of many Romes combined – ancient and modern, pagan and Christian, governmental and spiritual, holy and sinister” (Brentano 73). This multi-layered impression conforms to that identified by George Parks as that of “the Christian Rome of the past, as seen by the pilgrim; the imperial Rome, also of the past, as seen by pilgrim and scholar; and papal Rome, the city of the living present.” It is not known whether many travelers to Rome perceived a similarity between the ruins of the shrunken medieval city and the corruption of the papal court. The “simpler folk,” though, had little to do with the Curia:

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77 English Traveler 234-35. In the view of Le Goff, “the Roman image is polysemous and ambiguous. Was it a city or an empire? Pagan or Christian? Glorious or ruined?” (“Warriors and Conquering Bourgeois” 265, n. 22). Le Goff’s tone implies that he knows the answer – that Rome was both city and empire, pagan and Christian, and so forth. More to the point are the explicit statements by Parks and Brentano. See also Curtius, European Literature 30.

78 William of Malmesbury had made the connection: Rome, “once the mistress of the earth seems slight nowadays in comparison with its glorious past. And the Romans, whose ancestors wore the toga and ruled the earth, are now a miserable lazy race who live by selling justice for gold and putting
They made their stations, they marveled devoutly and wept and prayed, they carried away the vernicle or leaden pilgrim brooch which was cast in the semblance of St. Veronica's kerchief with its portrait of Christ which they saw exhibited on the proper days at St. Peter's. If such travelers departed with hard thoughts of Rome, they probably thought rather of the exactions of innkeepers or of guides than of the greed of cardinals and popes.\textsuperscript{79}

Many who wrote of Rome praised it, whether or not they had actually seen it. George Parks claims that Gervase of Tilbury's enthusiastic \textit{Otia Imperialia} (1211) was an armchair yet pious composition. A somewhat earlier work by another Englishman, who may or may not have been the "Master Gregory" named by Ranulf Higden, reveals little that is new in spite of the author's having visited the city.\textsuperscript{80}

The almost formulaic praises of the city repeat themselves in the works of visitors and non-visitors alike. It is for this reason that I disagree with George Parks' price tags on every canon of the law of the church." Much later, St. Bridget of Sweden, surveying the city following the earthquake that marred the Jubilee of 1350, observed that "In times past it was a city in which dwelt warriors of Christ, its streets strewn as if with gold and silver. Now all its precious sapphires are lying in the mire and few of its inhabitants live the Christian life." William's reflections appear in \textit{De Gestis Regum Anglorum}, ed. W. Stubbs, (Rolls Series, London, 1887-89); Bridget's remark is found in her \textit{Revelationes}, ed. C. Durant (Antwerp, 1611); both are quoted in Sumption, \textit{Pilgrimage} 221, 240.

\textsuperscript{79} Parks, \textit{English Traveler} 245. On pilgrims' perceptions of the greatly diminished medieval city (in comparison with the Classical one) and their lyrical treatments of the nobility of these ruins, see 245-55. Brentano observes that "At Sant'Angelo, as at the Colosseum and in San Tommaso in Formis, the life of thirteenth-century Rome was sewn into the ruins of classical Rome; the life of the present used the artifacts of the past to its own purposes" (\textit{Rome Before Avignon} 15). The remark holds true of Rome throughout the medieval and modern periods.

\textsuperscript{80} Parks 246-49. The \textit{Mirabilia Urbis Romae} (mid- to late twelfth century) was translated into English for the first time in 1889 by Francis Morgan Nichols. The second edition, a reprinting of Nichols' volume by Eileen Gardner, contains a new introduction and bibliography and is easier to find. For Nichols' doubt of the veracity or usefulness of Higden's attribution of the \textit{Mirabilia} to "Master Gregory," see xix-xx.
implication that the Arthurian tradition stemming from Geoffrey of Monmouth ignores this special importance. Parks downplays Wace’s and La3amon’s awareness of Rome as Rome, insisting that the earlier writers would have seen it as simply one of many lands against which the British had fought (*English Traveler to Italy* 232). On the contrary, the idea of Rome that emerges in the *Morte Arthure* (to say nothing of the *Fall of Princes* or the *Solace of Pilgrims*) is explicitly that of the twofold city, “the Capytoile,” the seat of “senatours,” whose very title conjures up memories of a long history of conquest and subjugation, as well as the legitimating spiritual and temporal authority of the pope and his cardinals. Yet it is also in league with Islam, at least in the *Morte Arthure*, and this image of an Italian locale sitting perilously close to the frontier with the East is not entirely without precedent, for Sicily occasionally attracted notice for its Muslim population and its possible hosting of Satan in Mt. Etna. This idea, along with Sir Cradok’s suggestive remark that Arthur is “Ostayande in this Oryente [i.e., central Italy] with awfull knyghtes” (3502), behooves us to keep in mind the image of a polyvalent Rome and Italy, for a city whose image is this plastic can take on a shape quite different from the one imagined by its inhabitants, as the pseudo-Orientalized images of it in certain Middle English texts show.

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81 Vale, “Law and Diplomacy” (35 and n. 24) suggests that the poet thought of “emperor” and “senators” as ancient Roman equivalents to fourteenth-century English king and his council.

82 See Parks, *English Traveler* 221 ff.
One English author in particular managed to stretch the terms "Italy" and "Lombardy" into a variety of forms. Mention must be made of Chaucer, "the first major poet outside Italy whose work reflects an appreciation of the importance of Dante." The recent publication of David Wallace's monumental *Chaucerian Polity: Absolutist Lineages and Associational Forms in England and Italy* would render otiose an extended commentary on Chaucer in this context. A brief summary of Wallace’s book is necessary, however, because certain of its arguments raise some pertinent questions that remain unanswered.

Wallace analyzes the political conditions prevailing in Tuscany and Lombardy during the time of Chaucer’s Italian visits in 1372 and 1378 and argues that the English poet would have been struck by the differences between the associational, horizontal politics of Florence and the hierarchical, vertical politics of Milan, whose despotic Visconti family strove to replace the "religion" of the *patria* (cultivated in Tuscany) with the cult of the state, particularly of the Visconti themselves. Having had direct experience of both city-states, Chaucer wrote the *Canterbury Tales* with the ideal of

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83 Wetherbee, *Chaucer and the Poets* 21. Similar remarks expressing the profound impact that Dante, as well as Boccaccio and Petrarch, had upon Chaucer are found in (to cite only a few examples) Bennett, "Chaucer, Dante and Boccaccio"; Boitani, "What Dante Meant to Chaucer"; Wallace, *Chaucer and the Early Writings of Boccaccio*. Karla Taylor agrees that "Dante clearly sharpened Chaucer’s sense of what poetry could do, and in this sense the influence is very great indeed," but insists that the English poet reveals "an intellectual engagement [with Dante] both deep and deeply critical" (*Chaucer Reads the Divine Comedy* 1). A measured account of Chaucer’s "transformations" of his sources, particularly Boccaccio’s *Filostrato*, appears in Schless, "Transformations" in Brewer, ed., *Writers and Their Background* 184-223. See also Schless, *Chaucer and Dante*.

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associational polity in mind, a celebration of *felaweship* across social groups that freely assemble and choose their own ruler from amongst themselves. But associational polity was fast on the wane, as the despotic rule of Richard II made clear, and by the time Henry Tudor eventually seized power, the despotism of the Lombard Sforza family had become an acceptable European model for rule. Henry VIII’s abolition of a particularly cherished form of associational polity in England, the guilds, coincided with the establishment of Latinate humanism (long associated with absolutist rule in Italy), the privileging of the “novella and sonnet, the homogenized generic forms of Boccaccio and Petrarch” over “the diversified forms of Chaucer,” and the general abandonment of Chaucer as “archaic and semi-intelligible, hence rustic and provincial” (64).

This summary does not do justice to the complexity of Wallace’s study, but it does present the broad outlines of his argument. One further point needs mentioning: Wallace confirms previous scholars’ claims that Chaucer saw Lombardy as a land of tyranny, but Wallace goes further than they in regarding that region as a space where specifically male, hierarchically-oriented will seeks to eliminate the kind of group bonding “exemplified and criticized” in Boccaccio’s *Decameron*, where women play such a prominent role in keeping the polity together. A few questions may come to mind: Did Chaucer expect his audience to perceive Italy the same way he did, or was he content to craft a literary meditation on Italy that only he would truly understand? Given the *Clerk’s Tale*’s refined portrait of Walter of Saluzzo (who is a willful
Lombard ruler but technically not a tyrant) and the *Merchant's Tale's* comical depiction of the absurd Januarius (a lecherous Lombard ruler but hardly a Bernabò Visconti, the "scourge of Lombardy"), did Chaucer seek to challenge the more conventional image of Lombard tyranny that we see in Gower's *Miroir de l'Homme* and in Alceste's warning in the *Legend of Good Women*? Is there a difference between the social "tyranny" of Walter and Januarius and the political tyranny of the Lombards as condemned by Gower, or the economic "tyranny" implied in Langland's association of the Lombards with the Jews? Does Chaucer's non-association of Lombards and Genoese with Jews, as opposed to their union in the *Morte Arthure* and in *Piers Plowman*, signal a more "humane" outlook towards the former groups than that which seems to inform what Wallace calls "the evil genius of the Prioress' Tale" (*Chaucerian Polity* 98)?

I answer in passing the last three questions (really variations on a theme) in the body of the dissertation, but my first question, concerning Chaucer's relationship to his English audience, arose as a result of the way Wallace presents Chaucer and needs to be addressed here. I believe that Chaucer distilled his Italian experiences into literary matter, avoided easy stereotypes of Lombards to increase the rich complexity of his characters, and at the same time wished to reveal, however subtly, his authority as a *conoscente* of Italy. Wallace, without wanting to do so, envisions Chaucer as he has been often envisioned, as a proto-Renaissance poet every bit the equal of his Italian forebears.
We learn that Chaucer is "a skilled reader of political signs" (11) who is capable of absorbing vast currents of Lombard or Tuscan ideology as well as the minutiae of day-to-day existence. He is able to channel them into the *Canterbury Tales* for many to read, but Wallace says nothing about the possible audience for this representation of Italy. Chaucer seems to be the English literary precursor to a Leonardo or a Michelangelo, the godlike artist who creates with acts of will and leaves far behind audience expectation and public conceptions of the artist's work. Although Wallace never uses Spearing's phrase "Renaissance Chaucer," he wishes to release the fourteenth-century poet from his "medieval" cage. Indeed, the polemical tone of Wallace's book appears early: Wallace seeks to collapse facile distinctions between "medieval" and "Renaissance" and to show that "there is nothing going on in Petrarch and Boccaccio that cannot, with profit, be brought into intelligent relation with Chaucer" (7), for

he had not, of course, crossed any magical dividing line that would befuddle a "medieval" imagination with "Renaissance" cultural forms. He was operating within a familiar international framework of magnate militarism and merchant exchange: capital, warfare, and wool. (9)

Contextualizing Chaucer within the social realities of his government position in England and his commission in Italy makes sense, but Wallace's strategy of attacking modern academic periodization plays right into the hands of committed partisans of the Renaissance. Although he judiciously challenges the excesses of a positivist historicism that crushes the "life, the spontaneous intelligence" (3) out of Chaucer's writings,
Wallace has allowed the Hadrian's Wall of the medieval-Renaissance debate to confirm Chaucer (in the eyes of defenders of Renaissance civility against medieval barbarity) as an outsider who must be let "in." Chaucer must be shown to be every bit the humanist that Petrarch and Boccaccio were, and more so; he must not be shown to be vulnerable to inconsistency or to the human emotion of awe when he actually finds himself in Florence, for "it is illogical at once to celebrate Chaucer as an informed reader of Italian texts while representing him as a bedazzled voyeur in the face of all other aspects of Italian cultural production" (9). Wallace clearly hopes that "perhaps the terms 'medieval' and 'Renaissance' might be assigned to the trash can of historiography (and hence of literary history)" (11). I have at best only mild objections to the old-fashioned (and now challenged) epithet of Chaucer as the "father of the English language" or to the label "father of the English Renaissance," but Wallace's objections are far stronger, particularly to the latter label, so it is odd that it should always threaten to fall upon Chaucer in Wallace's study.

Such are the few querulous quibbles I would make about the most ambitious and intelligent study of Chaucer's relations to Italy yet written. Any supplement to his study, which I hope to undertake in future, should attempt a comparative approach to Chaucer's treatment of Italy that takes into account the images disseminated by Gower and Langland, whose studied conventionality appears static when placed side-by-side with Chaucer's dynamic brilliance. In my own dissertation, I occasionally gesture towards such an approach, usually while trying to resist the unwarranted but
chronically recurring assumption that Chaucer's engagement of Italy must be more intrinsically interesting than what we see in the Morte Arthure, the Fall of Princes and the Solace of Pilgrims. In fact, the authors of these texts fashioned an Italy that met the needs of audiences whose tastes and expectations they knew and addressed. I hope that the images of Italy which emerge from a reading of these works reflect the conditions of their composition and show only as much homogeneity or heterogeneity as their creators, contexts and audiences made possible.
In the alliterative *Morte Arthure*, Italy appears as the object of British expansionist desire, the longed-for ancestral domain that has been lost by King Arthur's ancestors but is to be regained by the king himself. Although it makes no sense to speak of actual imperialist aggression toward Italy in late fourteenth-century England, the poem does represent English cultural defensiveness toward Italy as political self-defense and subsequent military offense. Italy is an amalgam of its two historical "selves," comprising classical Rome and its empire as well as the fourteenth- and fifteenth-century Italian city-states or communes. In conquering Italy, then, Arthur subjugates its past and its present.¹

¹ Hamel, "Christening" 299, notes the *Morte Arthure*’s sweep through various historical epochs but does not comment upon it. Burke maintains (Renaissance Sense of the Past) that the Middle Ages "lacked a sense of the past being different in quality from the present," but the medieval understanding of the past was not necessarily senseless. Benson, "The Date," uses the term "modernization" to describe a tendency in which "All romancers translated their supposedly ancient tales into contemporary terms" (19). Spearing observes that "As in most medieval literature (Chaucer is again an exception) these things are set in a fictive past which is imagined in terms of the present; and this serves only to intensify the profitableness 'to the pople that them heres'" (Readings in Medieval Poetry 145). Patterson argues that medieval historiography "delineate[s] an instructive chronology of secular empire, more commonly to apprehend the plan of providential dispensation" ("Romance of History" 198). The *Morte Arthure*’s seemingly vague notion of time has actual
The poem opens with a feast at Arthur’s court which is interrupted by the arrival of Roman imperial envoys, who inform the British king that he must pay the tribute owed by a subject colony to Rome, tribute that Britain has not offered since the days of Julius Caesar. Arthur vows not only to resist this foreign intervention in British affairs and the invasion that is sure to follow it, but also to conquer Rome itself, which maintains intimate contacts with Muslim Arabia and Africa and holds sway over the late medieval Italian communes of Genoa, Milan, Como, Pisa, Piacenza, and a host of other towns in the Holy Roman Empire. Traveling and conquering from France to Italy, Arthur kills the emperor Lucius and is eventually offered the imperial crown by one of the pope’s cardinals. Just as he is about to become the next Roman emperor, however, Arthur learns of Mordred’s usurpation of the British throne and retreats to Britain, where, during a prolonged battle, he suffers a fatal wound. With no magical fanfare, he is transported to Avalon, where a surgeon from Salerno (famous in the Middle Ages for its medical school) will tend his wounds in vain.

consequences: it reveals the British nation as a concrete, continuous and unified reality in existence from time immemorial, while affirming the legal and even divine right of that nation to mastery over both the ancient and the Holy Roman empires.

2 The ancient Roman Empire is more conspicuous in this poem than its medieval Germanic “successor.” Post, “Two Notes,” illustrates the weakness of the Holy Roman Emperor in relation to the growing strength of the Western European kingdom (292-96, 316, 320): “The kingdom, moreover, was becoming a patria communis: it was no longer a local patria within the patria communis of Rome” (320). Still, L. Benson, “The Date” 20-21, 35, argues compellingly that the Holy Roman Empire would have been on the minds of the poem’s original audience, who would have recalled that both Edward III and Richard II had been offered the imperial crown; more importantly, the unpopular Richard’s closeness to his brother-in-law Wenceslas IV probably would have stirred up hostility toward that particular emperor.
Although in keeping with his sources, the poet’s representation of classical Rome and the Italian communes as Britain’s enemies reflects on and prescribes a model for Anglo-Italian relations around the year 1400. As David Wallace points out, Chaucer’s view of contemporary intellectual and cultural developments in northern Italy did not consist of blind admiration for the new “Renaissance” princes or their hireling poets. The *Morte Arthure* poet, whether or not he knew Chaucer’s works or Italy first-hand, is even more critical in his assessment of the implications for England of the Italian cultural past and its modern embodiments. The tyranny of ancient Rome is culturally intertwined with that of medieval Tuscany, and the Rome of the emperors arouses in Arthur the same mixture of covetousness (for its riches) and scorn (for its political disorder) that Lombardy and Tuscany do.

The *Morte Arthure* dramatizes the Arthur-Lucius conflict with greater attention to action and character development than appears in Geoffrey of Monmouth’s *Historia Regum Britainiae*, Wace’s *Roman de Brut*, Lawman’s *Brut* and other sources. Furthermore, the alliterative poem gives to its late fourteenth-century and fifteenth-century audiences something more than a variation upon the already familiar theme of Arthurian conquest. The *Morte Arthure* reacts defensively to the cultural authority of the Roman heritage by connecting it with the formidable

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3 *Chaucerian Polity* 9, 261-98.
economic power of fourteenth-century Italy and by transforming the relations between Britain and Italy from those of colony-to-empire into those of empire-to-colony. In doing so, the poem suggests that might, both military and moral, makes right: the might of Arthur is represented first as military strength but later as personal piety; both are intimately bound up with nationalistic fervor. Arthur leads Britain/England (the two names are used interchangeably) to a condition of political soundness after a period of internal dissension. The enactment of this combined domestic and foreign policy invites comparison with Arthur’s own personal development toward pious reunion with God and the Church of Rome following a period of violent conquering. Arthur is the exemplar of Britishness; thus his violence, though rendered with occasional ambiguity (the importance of which will be discussed below), appears generally in a positive light, for he declares war against the enemies of God and of Britain.

Foremost among these enemies is Italy. With its Genoese giants, heretical Roman Emperor, Tuscan tyrants and Muslim allies, Italy occasions the inversion of the

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4 Britain is closely associated with Arthur himself, pace Newstead, who in her perceptive and urbane review of Matthews’ Tragedy of Arthur asserts that “[u]nlke Geoffrey [of Monmouth] and his followers, this poet is interested not in the history of Britain but in the fate of Arthur himself” (118). Although the Morte-poet does not narrate the whole story of Britain’s Trojan origins and former possession of Rome, he clearly depends on it to validate his account of Arthur and, more importantly, to confer upon him and his knights incomparable prestige: see, e.g., ll. 23-24, 275-87, 887, 1692-99, 4342-46, and of course Arthur’s admonitory dream of the Nine Worthies which nevertheless is interpreted by the “philosophers” as evidence of the British king’s inclusion in their number (3438-45).
traditional relationship between the marginally located island nation and the Continental peninsula. No longer a center of fourteenth-century European economic, religious and cultural life around which Britain distantly orbits, Italy is relegated to the periphery, even the frontier, of Christendom. The poet places Britain at the center of civilization and appropriates for it the power and glory of the Roman Empire, though finally rejecting imperial Rome and all its works to concentrate on Arthur's most important triumph over internal divisiveness and chaos in the beloved homeland.

Because it associates Italy with Islam (in Lucius' recruitment of Muslim mercenaries), the poet's vision may invite us to think of it as "Orientalizing," yet such a description, without qualification, would be misleading. True "Orientalism," in Edward Said's sense of the term, is "an exercise of cultural strength," "knowledge of the Orient that places things Oriental in class, court, prison, or manual for scrutiny, study, judgment, discipline, or governing" (Orientalism 40, 41). This way of looking at the East assumes technological superiority over it, something that fourteenth-century England lacked with respect to Italy. But the Morte Arthure, like Dante's Divine Comedy and other medieval Western works analyzed by Said, does suggest "the schematic, almost cosmological inevitability with which Islam and its designated representatives are creatures of Western geographical, historical, and above all, moral apprehension" (Orientalism 69). In the Morte Arthure the East - and Italy, which exists on the border between East and West - functions to give England a means of defining itself: "the language used to depict the Orient ... [is trying to] characterize the
Orient as alien and to incorporate it schematically on a theatrical stage whose audience, manager, and actors are for Europe, and only for Europe. Hence the vacillation between the familiar and the alien” (71-72). Italy and its Eastern allies are “always about” England: the poet plots an itinerary of English ethnic and national self-construction through a land whose Roman Church, papal curia, northern Italian bankers, merchants and mercenaries frequently aroused a variety of English reactions, which included jealousy, admiration, fear and hatred. The coupling of Italy with the Muslim world⁵ means that the “foreign policy” that the poet and his audience imagine for the latter will be extended at least partly to the former. Pitting Arthur against the forces of “heathenness,” the poet in effect proclaims the continued relevance of the Crusades to early fifteenth-century England, which in the poem spearheads a crusade against the foes of Christendom both within and without the latter’s geographical boundaries. Rome is foremost among those foes, for its secular, imperial self is at variance with its spiritual self as the site of the papacy. The poem thus confers cultural and religious legitimization upon England by imagining a partly Orientalized Italy,

⁵ Chrism claims that “[w]hat sets the Wars of Alexander apart from these works [Sir Gawain and the Green Knight and the alliterative Morte Arthure] is its more exclusive focus on the interpenetrations of eastern and western cultures” (“Too Close for Comfort” 120), but the Morte poet intends to horrify his audience precisely by foregrounding the shocking intimacy between the forces of the Roman Empire and those of the Muslim East.
which simultaneously elicits reactionary imperialistic desire and moral repugnance. In its attempt at *translatio imperii*, the former Roman colony of Britain merits the opportunity to rule the Roman Empire, past and present, and reduce it to colonized status, even if in the end Arthur willingly forfeits that opportunity.

Refracting Italy: The Giant of Genoa

Arthur struggles to protect Britain and his Continental possessions against a variety of enemies, all allied with Rome: the Giant of Mont Saint-Michel, the "heretik" Roman Emperor Lucius and "Sarazenes," Muslim mercenaries from the East and Africa. A traditional Arthurian foe appearing first in Geoffrey of Monmouth, the Giant of Mont Saint-Michel now has a new Genoese identity. This innovation has been noted previously but explored little. The portrait of the "grett geaunte of Geen

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6 As I stated at the beginning of this chapter, it makes no sense to speak of England as an imperialistic power in the fourteenth century, at least outside this poem. English imperialism within the poem is, however, an important issue.

7 On *translatio imperii*, see Curtius, *European Literature* 28-29: "the transference of dominion from one empire to another is the result of a sinful misuse of that dominion." John of Salisbury devotes a chapter of his *Policraticus* (trans. Nederman) to the concept ("By what cause rulership and kingdoms are transferred," book IV), and cites Ecclesiasticus 10:8: "kingdoms will be transferred from dynasty to dynasty on account of injustice and injury and abusiveness and diverse forms of deceit" (61). Turville-Petre discusses the passing of Britain from the British to the Anglo-Saxons to the Normans: *England the Nation* 81-98, 126. Other, brief discussions of the concept of *translatio imperii* in the poem include Twomey, "Heroic Kingship" 134; and Obst, "Gawain-Priamus Episode" 11.

8 Krishna has pointed out that the Genoese Giant of Mont Saint-Michel and the other Genoese giants in Lucius' army recall the infamous Genoese mercenaries who troubled England during the Hundred Years' War (Critical Edition 170). Shaw notes that Geoffrey of Monmouth originally identified
[Genoa] engenderde of fendez” (843) associates Genoa and its well-known alien merchants, pirates and mercenaries with otherworldliness. I wish first to examine the Giant’s dual characterization as both supernaturally evil and absurd, and then to consider how by means of such a monstrosity the Morte-poet “refracted the social facts” (to borrow a phrase by Jacques Le Goff) of the “real” Genoa in the Middle Ages. I hope to show that the Morte’s “refraction” of what was known about this powerful port city not only demonizes its commercial and military identities but also crafts them into images readily comprehensible in aesthetic and moral terms by English readers.

Approaching Mont Saint-Michel, Arthur sees the Giant munching on a human thigh and roasting men, beasts and “cresmede childyre” on a spit over a roaring fire (1046-52). Denouncing the Giant’s feast as “cury vnclene” (“filthy cuisine” [1063]) and the Giant himself as “Caffe [chaff, refuse] o f creatours all” (1064), Arthur vows

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9 Throughout I quote from Hamel, *Critical Edition*. Here and throughout this dissertation I use “3” to designate MS. “yogh” and have substituted “th” for ms. “thorn” and, when quoting Lawman, for MS. “eth.”

10 Le Goff, “Lévi-Strauss in Broceliande” 107-31. Roving bands of youths, *juvenes* comprised the younger sons of twelfth-century French aristocrats who embarked on collective martial adventures. In depicting solitary knightly adventures in courtly romances, French writers “refracted the social facts in such a way that their interpretation often amounts to an inversion of reality” (129).
to avenge his horrific crimes (1066-68). The narrator’s memorable description of the Giant is rather long but deserves attention:

He grenned as a grewhounde with grysly tuskes;
He gapede, he groned faste with grucchande latez
For grefe of the gude kynge that hym with grame gretez.
His fax and his foretoppe was filterede togeders,
And owte of his face, fome ane halfe fote large;
His frount and his forheuede all was it ouer
As the fell of a froske, and fraknede it semede;
Huke-nebbyde as a hawke, and a hore berde,
And herede to the hole eyghn, with hyngande browes.
Harske as a hunde-flsch, hardly who so lukez,
So was the hyde of bat hulke hally al ouer.
Erne had he full huge and vgly to schewe,
With eghne full horreble and ardaunt, for sothe;
Flatt-mowthede as a fluke, with fleryande lypyps,
And the flesche in his forthe fowly as a bere.
His berde was brothy and blake, that till his brest rechede,
Crassede as a mereswyne, with corkes full huge.
And all falterde the flesche in his foule lyppys:
Ilke wretie as a wolfe-heuedede, it wraythe owtt at ones.
Bulle-nekkyde was that bieme, and brade in the scholders,
Brok-brestede as a brawne, with brustils full large;
Ruyd armes as an ake, with rusclede sydes,
Lym and leskes full lothyn, leue 3e for sothe;
Schouell-fotede was that schalke, and schaylande hym semyde,
With schankez vnschaply schowande togederyrs;
Thykke theese as a thursse, and thikkere in the hanche.
Greese-growen as a galte, full grylych he lukez;
Who the lenghe of the lede lelly accountes,
Fro the face to the fote was fyfe fadom lange.\(^{11}\) (1075-1103)

\(^{11}\) In translating this passage I have relied on the glossary and notes in Hamel’s edition. “He grinned like a greyhound, with gristy tusks; he gaped, he groaned vigorously with angry looks out of rage at the good king who greets him with hostility. His hair and forelock were tangled together, and slaver hung down from his face half a foot long. All his face and forehead were like the hide of a frog, and they looked spotted. Hook-nosed like a hawk, with a hoary beard, he was hairy even to the eye-sockets, with eyebrows hanging. He was as coarse as a dogfish, (as anyone may see) who looks closely, and his hide was wholly so. He had very huge ears, ugly to behold, with very horrible, fiery
Comparing the giant to a greyhound, frog, hawk, dogfish, flounder, bear, dolphin, wolf, bull, badger, oak tree and boar, the poet reveals how the Giant is fundamentally unlike any of those animals in his unnatural hybridity. Visually and ideologically he is of a piece with, but finally even more monstrous than, the “babewyns” of the Luttrell Psalter so richly analyzed by Michael Camille in his *Mirror in Parchment* (262-75), which explores the nuanced and ideologically charged portrayals of peasants, Scots, Arabs and women in that manuscript’s illuminations. Embodying piecemeal so much of God’s animal creation, the Giant simultaneously exceeds nature and fails to approximate it. In shaping him, the poet has appropriated what Mary Campbell identifies as a technique of hybridization worked out in medieval and early modern travel writings, which present non-European peoples as monsters with body parts taken from a variety of animals. But the poet is making a moral as

eyes, truth to say; (he was) flat-mouthed like a flounder, with flaring lips, (and) with the flesh in his front teeth; he seemed as filthy as a bear. Smeared with cooking juices, his black beard reached down to his chest, fatty like a dolphin’s, with a huge body. All the flesh in his foul lips quivered, each fold like a wolf’s head; it writhed out at the same time. Bull-necked was that man, and broad in the shoulders; badger-chested as a board, with very large bristles; rugged arms like an oak’s, with bark-like sides; loathsome limbs and flanks, you may believe it as the truth. That fighter was shovel-footed and seemed to shuffle along with misshapen shanks knocking together, with thighs as thick as a demon’s, and thicker in the haunches. Covered in fat like a boar, he looked hideous; whoever faithfully reckons the man’s length (reckons that) from head to toe he was fifty fathoms long.”

12 “The effect of hybridization is technically inescapable: in the context of describing the unknown, similitudes based on features of the known inevitably result in such perverse collages, destroying the coherence of the alien subject in order to transmit a visualizable image” (Campbell, *Witness and the Other World* 70). In *Le Morte d’Arthur*, Malory retains the Giant of Genoa and the various other Genoese giants in Lucius’s army, but in his more economic version of the *Morte Arthure’s* story he
well as an ethnographic judgment: he greatly expands the monstrous description of the Giant that he found in Geoffrey of Monmouth and thus makes it both terrifying and comical, rendering it physically incoherent but endowing it with a clear, negative spiritual identity.

The most obvious ideological motive for the poet’s expenditure of so much artistic energy on the Giant is the glorification of the British king. John Stevens argued some time ago that “Arthur’s encounter with the giant of Mont Saint-Michel is an essential means of enhancing him, Arthur” (Medieval Romance 98). But the glorification of the British hero is not all that the poet accomplishes. He also enhances Britain itself by defining its enemies in terms that have moral and nationalistic resonance. Although I agree with Stevens’s assessment of the reason for the poet’s depiction of the Giant, I disagree with his claim concerning the poet’s method. Stevens holds that the encounter narrated here is between the human and the superhuman and not between the human and the supernatural:

Of course he is a Bad Monster; almost all giants and dwarfs and unnatural creatures are — the correlation between ugliness and wickedness came easily, inevitably, to all romance-writers. But he has no reserves of wickedness, so to speak; he has no spiritual identity, only a moral colouring. The mystery of iniquity is not in him. He is unnatural rather than supernatural — unnatural even as a man might be. (99)

presents a far less striking picture of Mont Saint-Michel’s fiendish guardian: “Than the gloton gloored and grevid full foule. He had teeth lyke a grayhounde, he was the foulest wyghte that ever man sye, and there was never suche one fourmed on erthe, for there was never devil in helle more horryblyer made: for he was fro the hede to the foote fye fadom longe and large” (Works, ed. Vinaver, 121).
I doubt that the *Morte*-poet meant to draw such a distinction between unnatural and supernatural, or between absurd and terrifying; actually, the Giant eludes easy classification. That he is supernaturally evil should be insisted upon, *pace* Stevens's view and Karl Heinz Goeller's contention that the giant is merely preposterous.¹³ Before meeting the Giant at Mont Saint-Michel, Arthur had been informed by a Templar at Barfleur that "Here es a teraunt besyde that tourmentez thi pople,/ A grett geaunte of Geen engenderde of fendez" (842-3), and "his sustynaunce all this seuen wyntteres" has consisted of the flesh of more than five hundred people and an equal number of baptized children (844-46). In having Arthur label him a "fend" (871, 1038, 1154), "tyraunt" (878), "warlaw" (warlock, l. 948, 958, 1140), and "traytour" (886) against his lord Arthur, the author clearly wishes to give the Giant at least a partly non-preposterous nature by showing him as a rebel against the feudal order and the moral order, a characterization of the Italian tyrant that we shall see repeated in Lydgate's *Fall of Princes*.

¹³ Ignoring Finlayson's observations on the Giant (see n. 14, below) and surpassing Stevens's, Goeller maintains that this "entertaining mock *aventure* ... serves something of the purpose of the inversion or even parody of a knightly combat"; Arthur's battle with the Giant, a "preposterously grotesque monster," is a "very twisted 'romantic element'" (22, quoting J.P. Oakden, *Alliterative Poetry in Middle English* [Hamden, Conn., 1968], II, 36).
The fact that the Giant of Genoa thus seems both terrifying and ridiculous has not been much remarked upon by scholars, who argue either one or the other view. His ambiguity, I believe, offers further evidence of what scholars have seen as the poet's artistic skill in exploring the many-sidedness of an idea, person or thing, which is why so often even Arthur's enemies, Mordred in particular, are portrayed fairly, if not sympathetically. The poet's purposeful ambiguities may be rooted in the mentality of his period. Larry Benson, following Arnold Hauser's insights on the dualism inherent in Gothic art, has suggested that "the Morte Arthure is emphatically a poem of its own time and place, simple in design but complex in the moral attitude that derives from the late Gothic ability to maintain contradicting attitudes and to

14 Finlayson is more "right" than Goeller in discussing the Giant as primarily an embodiment of supernatural evil; see "Introduction" 16-17; "Arthur and the Giant"; "Concept of the Hero" 261. Finlayson rightly observes that "[t]he giant in this poem is ... a very potent symbol of Evil, the unnatural and death, and this combat, besides being dramatically interesting, establishes Arthur as at once the champion of Christianity against Evil, epic hero and redeemer of his people, defender of ladies in distress (1200-7), and generous monarch" ("Introduction" 17; cp. "Arthur and the Giant" 113, 115, 117). O'Sharkey, op. cit., 350, notes the contrast between this giant and Lawman's "more human and less 'monstrous'" one. For a similar approach to the Giant that stresses the connection between literary representations of ugliness and condemnations of evil character, see Ziolkowski, "Avatars of Ugliness" 9-10; Finlayson, "Arthur and the Giant" 115-16. If it is true that, as Spearing remarks, "the unspoken implication of the whole sequence [lines 1162-72, the exchange between Arthur and Bedevere] is that the religious devotion of a warrior-king is a matter of saving his territories from evil giants rather than of visiting saints' shrines" (Readings in Medieval Poetry 156), it is also true that the poet does not question this form of "religious devotion" but rather celebrates Arthur's virtue by heaping damnation upon the Giant. In fact, the poet conflates "religious devotion" with "saving [Arthur's] territories" throughout the poem. Velma Bourgeois Richmond sees all Arthur's foes as "forces of evil, devil-figures, who threaten Christianity": The Popularity of Middle English Romance (Bowling Green, 1975), 52, quoted in Hamel, "'Christening'" 301, n. 18.

15 Because the poet presents Arthur himself as a warrior both humanly sinful and superhumanly glorious, it should come as no surprise that in this dualistic outlook the Giant should appear both ludicrous as well as malevolent.
derive aesthetic pleasure from the tension of unresolved conflicts." On the other hand, perhaps what Benson calls “conflicts” are nothing of the sort. Aron Gurevich has argued that the medieval grotesque’s comic and horrific impulses are in fact bound up with each other:

The jest, the mockery, the reduction of the image of the bearer of absolute evil to the comic, made bearable the tragedy of a situation threatening eternal perdition. In this psychological context laughter became the means of overcoming fear, the intensity of which is difficult for us even to imagine. (193)

Gurevich’s research implies, furthermore, that dualistic representations of the grotesque occasionally overlapped with ethnographic moralization, such as that directed against the Jews. Art employed ethnography as one of its weapons when it was engaged in defining the boundaries between good and evil. Using the Jews as a prefabricated and stereotyped referent for the latter, the Morte-poet accentuates his

16 “Medieval Tragedy” 75. Rondolone, citing Mircea Eliade’s *Myth and Reality*, trans. Willard R. Trask (New York, 1963) and *The Myth of the Eternal Return: or, Cosmos and History*, trans. Willard R. Trask (Princeton, 1971), argues that in oral cultures “there is no hard-and-fast mutual exclusion of divine vs. human, eternal vs. temporal, or sacred vs. profane; instead, human beings have the power to experience the cosmic, the eternal, and the sacred in the here-and-now” (“Wychipe” 210-11). She argues, however, that the *Morte Arthure* does not reflect an exclusively “oral-heroic” view of human nature. For a thoughtful treatment of the grotesques in the Luttrell Psalter that sees them as both comic and ideologically charged, see Camille, *Mirror in Parchment*, esp. 276-308. Camille uses Anderson’s phrase “imagined community” to describe the Luttrell Psalter’s compilers and audience.

17 The late thirteenth-century Dominican Rudolph of Schlettstadt, in his *Memorable Histories*, recounted that Jews who had stuck knives or needles into the consecrated host “evoke[d]... a mysterious child’s cry or a flow of blood, for which they are subjected to persecutions.” Such an example of the grotesque “reduces the great to the small, profanes the sacred, and thus can come close to sacrilege” (Gurevich 197, 196), but evidently also depends for its horrifying effect on a depiction of the Jews’ blaspheming.
condemnation of the Giant's countrymen, the Genoese mercenaries in Lucius' army. Sir Gerard, one of Gawain's knights, stabs a certain "Jolyan of Jene, a geant full howge," after which the poet observes: "Thus es the geant forjuste, that errawnte Jewe,/ And Gerarde es jocunde and joyes hym the more" (2889, 2895-96). The Morte Arthure's demonization of the Genoese is multifaceted, figuring them as mercenaries, hideous giants and wandering Jews; the poet's possible choice of "Jewe" for alliterative purposes nevertheless participates in the general exploitation of the Jews at a time when, expulsions and mass burnings notwithstanding, "Christians were 'cannibalizing' the Jewish bodies that had constituted that exteriority [of Christendom]."\footnote{Biddick, Shock of Medievalism 119. I do not mean to suggest that the Jews were considered merely as a trope or as a "grotesque referent." Van Court has pointed out that such "interpretive supersession," in which "the Jews are read as figurative references to other groups," has a claim to validity but should not obscure "the very real issue of Jewish presence in Christendom that continues to concern the Christian community even in the absence of the Jews," following their expulsion from England in 1291 ("The Siege of Jerusalem" 228). Camille argues that even the absence of the Jews can be used to indicate what is proper in society: "their non-presence in English society does not mean they cannot still be attacked in the realm of the imaginary, and in the margins of the [Luttrell] psalter, as part of the very definition of a good society — that is, as excluded from it" (Mirror in Parchment 284). In the above-quoted lines from the Morte, the ethnographic impulse circulates back and forth: if the Genoese are represented in terms of the Jews, the Jews in turn are portrayed in terms of the Genoese. Again, that "Jews" may have been chosen for alliterative purposes does not undermine my argument but rather suggests the general validity of the view that van Court problematizes, that "[the Jews'] presence in narratives becomes a kind of pedagogical category into which other sources of anxiety are displaced" (228). The relation of Italian moneylenders to the Jewish moneylenders, who were the Italians' predecessors, was, in fact, a relation of supersession (Trevelyan, English Social History 46; Chism, "Liquidating Assets" 322).}

Although the Giant of Genoa has laughable animalistic traits, his risibility exists alongside his capacity to elicit terror. And his ethnic identity is bound up with his

18 Biddick, Shock of Medievalism 119. I do not mean to suggest that the Jews were considered merely as a trope or as a "grotesque referent." Van Court has pointed out that such "interpretive supersession," in which "the Jews are read as figurative references to other groups," has a claim to validity but should not obscure "the very real issue of Jewish presence in Christendom that continues to concern the Christian community even in the absence of the Jews," following their expulsion from England in 1291 ("The Siege of Jerusalem" 228). Camille argues that even the absence of the Jews can be used to indicate what is proper in society: "their non-presence in English society does not mean they cannot still be attacked in the realm of the imaginary, and in the margins of the [Luttrell] psalter, as part of the very definition of a good society — that is, as excluded from it" (Mirror in Parchment 284). In the above-quoted lines from the Morte, the ethnographic impulse circulates back and forth: if the Genoese are represented in terms of the Jews, the Jews in turn are portrayed in terms of the Genoese. Again, that "Jews" may have been chosen for alliterative purposes does not undermine my argument but rather suggests the general validity of the view that van Court problematizes, that "[the Jews'] presence in narratives becomes a kind of pedagogical category into which other sources of anxiety are displaced" (228). The relation of Italian moneylenders to the Jewish moneylenders, who were the Italians' predecessors, was, in fact, a relation of supersession (Trevelyan, English Social History 46; Chism, "Liquidating Assets" 322).
demonic spiritual identity, both of which are fleshed out by his obscene diet of baptized children (845, 1051, 1065-67). In contrast to this unspeakable evil, Arthur possesses stirring piety, for he instructs his knights to make offerings to "Saynt Mighell" (940), vows to avenge the murder of the infant "marters" "Thurgh myghte of Seynt Mighell" (1065-69), and later will attribute his victory not to himself but to God (1209-11) and will command that a church be raised on the mountain where the Duchess has been buried (1218-21). The Giant of Genoa of course is defined as the opposite of this sort of hero. Even Bedwere's oft-cited ironic remarks to Arthur about the so-called "saint" that Arthur claims to have been seeking –

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"Be Myghell, of syche a makk       I hafe myche wondyre,
That euer owre soueraygne Lorde   suffers hym in heuen!
And all seyntez be syche           that seruez oure Lorde,
I sail neuer no seynt bee,         be my fadyre sawle" (1166-69)
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imply a spiritual dimension to the Giant's identity. The irony registers the carnivalesque quality of the Giant because it hints at what he is not: he is not saintly but diabolical. His birthplace of Genoa is guilty by association, for it is the city where he was "engenderde of fendez."  

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19 The national or ethnic aspect of the Giant's alterity need not be the only one. Harwood claims that this passage targets the peasantry in its portrayal of the Giant as a rural outlaw: "the very disgust for the peasantry that it activates, and that its hearers experience historically, is levied to make fearful the prospect of living outside the social altogether" ("Witness to Epic" 278).
The *Morte*-poet demonizes Genoa for nationalistic reasons, not the first time that Genoa has drawn moralistic and ethnographic fire. Genoa was long known as a breeding ground of mercenaries, merchants and pirates; in the *Morte Arthure* its name not only conjures up images of cannibalistic demons but also signifies fugitive loyalties. The poet employs the former as a sort of objective correlative for the latter. “Be sekyre of thi sowdeours,” Lucius is told by the Roman ambassador returned from England. This must have seemed good advice, if a bit naive: can one ever be sure of one’s mercenaries, especially if they number “Many geaunte of Geen, justers full gude” (559)? Minot only ironically praised the Genoese crossbowmen who challenged Edward III's army at Crecy: “Men delid thare ful mani a dint/ Omang the gentill Genevayse.” The alliteration in the last two words comically points up the non-gentility of the hired-out enemies of Edward. Froissart in particular illustrated the unreliability of the Genoese mercenaries who fled from English archers and consequently earned the mortal wrath of their French employers:

At this the English archers took one pace forward and poured out their arrows on the Genoese so thickly and evenly that they fell like snow. When they felt those arrows piercing their arms, their heads, their faces, the Genoese, who had never met such archers before, were thrown into confusion. Many

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20 Dante condemns the Genoese as “men strange to all good custom and full of all corruption” (“uomini diversi/ d’ogne costume e pien d’ogne magagna”), *Inferno* XXXIII, 151-53; in Singleton, ed., I, part 1, pp. 358-59.

cut their bowstrings and some threw down their crossbows. They began to fall back.

Between them and the main body of the French there was a hedge of knights, splendidly mounted and armed, who had been watching their discomfiture and now cut off their retreat. For the King of France, seeing how miserably they had performed, called out in great anger: "Quick now, kill all that rabble. They are only getting in our way!" Thereupon the mounted men began to strike out at them on all sides and many staggered and fell, never to rise again. (Froissart, Chronicles, trans. and ed. Brereton, pp. 88-89)

Minot’s and Froissart’s depictions of the Genoese soldiers border on the comical, yet their threat to the English was real enough at the time. Although the image of the Genoese-as-giant is far from reality, that of Genoese-as-Other preys on the real fears in the minds of some English subjects. The Genoese certainly traded with Muslims, and within the first decade of the beginning of the Hundred Years’ War, England was on the alert for a possible Turkish invasion launched from Genoa. Nearly a century later, Genoa’s infamous shifting of allegiances and its willingness to enter into an agreement with the “Saracens” in order to plunder the harbor of the Isle of Rhodes incited the English Parliament to call for the universal condemnation of Genoa as an

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22 Register of Edward the Black Prince, I, for 1346-48, records that, on July 26, 1346, order was given to Roger Trumwyn, lieutenant of the justice of North Wales, to garrison his castles and have guards posted on his coasts to watch for a possible invasion. The order was given "on information that a fleet of galleys full of 'Sarazins' called 'Turks' is coming out of the parts of Gene at the demand of Philip of Valois, who calls himself king of France, to do what mischief they can on the coasts of England, but no one knows whither they will betake themselves" (3). The fear of a Turkish alliance with an Italian power apparently was well founded. L. Benson recalls Froissart’s account of the treacherous role played by Giangaleazzo Visconti, who warned the Turks of the advancing Christian army; this valuable piece of information helped them to defeat and massacre the Christians at Nicopolis in 1396 (Benson, "The Date," 28). See also the following note.
enemy of the Christian faith. This association of Genoa with the Muslim East is even given geographical justification by Higden’s *Polychronicon*, which, in treating “De mari magno medio, sive Mediterraneo,” noted that it “hath in the right side Africa, and in the left side Europa; and thereof springeth the ynnere sees,” such as the sea called “Ligustius by Ianua, a citee.” In embracing “Narbon” (close to the Spanish frontier), “Spayne,” “Ytaly,” “the hauen of Sicilia [that] passeth to Creta,” “Pamphylia and Egipte,” “Grees” and “Bo[s]forum,” where “Xerxes the kyng made ouer a brigge of schippes for to passe in to Grees and werre there ynne,” Higden and Trevisa depict a seascape that conjures up religious heterodoxy as well as the threat of maritime violence. Given the territorial company that the Ligurian Sea keeps, it is appropriate, in the florid phrasing of the unknown Harley MS scribe who translated the

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23 *Rotuli Parliamentorum* 20 Henry VI, no. 15 (1442): “To the wise and discrete Communes of this present Parlement: Please it to your wise discretions to understande, howe nowe late the Janueyes, with v grete Carrakes full armed and arrayed for Werre, havyng in their felaship grete nombre of Sarazynes under covert within the said Carrakes, aryved and entred the Port of the Isle of Rodes, and in colouryng of their untrue purpose, beryng the Armes of the Hospitall of Seint John Jer[usa]l[e]m, and so feynyng hem as they hadde been good frendes, as it semed to theentent to make the said Sarazynes have good knowlge of the entrees into the said Ile, and ther sodenly spoiled II Shippes of the Religion of the said Hospital, and brent a Balynger of the same Religion, and robbed certain persones in the seid Ile, and depraied divers Bestail under the said colour of disceit, to grete reprefof all Cristen, grete hurt and disworship of the Maister and Bretheren of the Covent of Rodes, and of all other Inhabitantz in the said Ile. And therupon like it to your wise discretions, to pray the Kyng our Soverain Lord, and all the Lordes Spirituell and Temporell in this present Parlement assembled, that all the Janueyes beyng in this lond, be had in suche reputation and conceite, as thei that bee Enemies unto the Cristien poeple, Socorours and Helpers to the Enemies of the Cristien feith and Mescreantz; and to purvy such remedie and punishment ageins their demerites and evil purpose, as may be plesaunt to God, profit and ease to Cristien poeple, honour and worship to this lond, and suerte and salvation of the said holy Religion; for the love of God, and in way of charitee: Consideryng that is wretten and noted, and ordeyned to be notefied to all Cristen Princes of the saide Treson, desirynge of hem to have the saide Janueyes in like consait and reputation” (V, p. 61).
Polychronicon, that "the bosom of the water Ligusticus watrethe the cite callede Ianua."  

A cause of anxiety to English Parliament, the perfidy of the Genoese sometimes disgusted even the Muslims with whom the Genoese were occasionally associated. Writing around 1450, Thomas Gascoigne reports a common and long-standing conception of Genoese infidelity:

I have heard a certain man, who is worthy of credence, say that he heard among the pagans and Saracens that there were three causes for their not wishing to be converted to the faith of Jesus Christ: firstly, the diversity and contradiction of opinion among Christians in various sects and on various subjects; secondly, the evil lives of the Christians; and thirdly, the ill-faith of the Christians, and especially of the Venetians and Genoese.  

The re-naming of Geoffrey of Monmouth’s Giant of Mont Saint-Michel as a native of Genoa and the amplifying of his hideousness give visible, almost palpable form to the substance of such moral verdicts and to the historical realities that prompted them. The steadfastness in both war and religion of Arthur and the knights of the Round Table contrasts with the half-man, half-beast nature of the Giant of Genoa, the defection of the Duke of Lorraine’s mercenaries (which included Genoese), the hinted-at lawlessness of Tuscany and Lombardy, and the apostasy of the emperor Lucius.

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24 The above discussion is based on Polychronicon, I, 53-55. Higden’s vox Ligusticus urbe Januam is translated more liltingly by the scribe whose translation of the Polychronicon appears in MS Harleian 2261 than by Trevisa.

25 Gascoigne, Loci e Libro Veritatum, ed. Rogers (1881), 102-3, quoted by Southern, Western Views 83. That this is the view of a Muslim seems not to have mattered to Gascoigne.
The animalistic qualities of the Giant and the naming of the mercenaries as specifically Genoese signal, as I suggest above, a "refraction of the social facts," a literary bending of the "historical" Genoa's tendency to commit itself to short-term mercantile associations or military allegiances rather than to lasting bonds or higher moral causes.

In the *Morte Arthur* and, as we shall see, in Lydgate's *Fall of Princes* and Capgrave's *Solace of Pilgrims*, England, when compared with Rome or Italy, defines itself as a steadfast and pious nation with an unchanging view of itself and its relations with other nations. The image of Genoese infidelity that we have seen comments visually upon Genoa's identity as a "hermit crab," an "amoeba" that defined its commercial and foreign policies according to prevailing circumstances at home and in its colonies. Its mercantile mentality of negotiation allowed Genoa to shift its allegiances, to enter into pacts with, alternatively, Christians and Muslims, Normans and Byzantines, the Empire and the Papacy (Airaldi, *Genova e la Liguria nel Medioevo* 24), all for the sake of expanding its trade empire.

Generally, Italian merchants in England — and in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries most Italians in England were merchants — earned respect as merchants, not as human beings. As J.K. Hyde observes,

> At home in their own city, they might be great and respected, but abroad they were suspected aliens whose governments could do little or nothing to protect

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26 On Genoa's flexible pact-making policy, see Fernandez-Armesto, *Before Columbus* 96-107; Hyde, *Society and Politics in Medieval Italy* 38-64 and passim; Airaldi, *Genova e la Liguria nel Medioevo* 1-24.
them. They were unpopular and regarded as social inferiors by many of their
clients, for whom they were upstarts tainted with usury; they could flourish
only under the patronage of the great and powerful. (*Society and Politics in
Medieval Italy* 164)²⁷

The Genoese enjoyed particular notoriety in and out of England. At the close of the
thirteenth century, Marco Polo partly familiarized the Near East for his readers by
observing that “in recent years Genoese merchants have taken to launching ships on
this sea [the Black Sea] and sailing on it.”²⁸ Written in the 1350s, *Mandeville’s
Travels* refers to Genoa several times, and this book’s characteristic blurring of fact
and fiction appears even in its accounts of the achievements of the Genoese mercantile
spirit. Mandeville reports that Corfù was a Genoese colony,²⁹ and Crete once had
been given to the Genoese by the Emperor of Constantinople (53). He identifies
Genoa as a departing point for the Holy Land (101) but also for “Tartar, or Persia, or
Chaldea, or India” (112), and relays what may have been common knowledge.
Merchants of Genoa and Venice in particular are said to frequent the isle of Ormuz
and to journey as far as Cathay to sell merchandise (120, 141, 168). Most intriguing,

²⁷ Of course the Genoese resisted the notion that commerce was usurious, as evidenced in a municipal
law of 1369: “Against these who claim that exchange and insurance agreements are usurious
according to Scripture and who appeal to Church courts to get them rejected ... whereas if such
agreements were not honoured then citizens and merchants of Genoa would suffer great loss ... let
whosoever invokes this kind of plea be sentenced in all justice to pay one half of one pound (as a fine)
for each pound that he shall have refused to pay” (Quoted by Lopez, *Birth of Europe* 268). Genoa was
less interested in the niceties of Church teaching on usury than in the practical necessity of defending
the rights of its merchants and thus promoting commerce and order in the city.

precisely because of its conflation of truth and fable, is Mandeville’s claim that it was
in Genoa where one could find the container (acquired by the ubiquitous Genoese
merchant?) into which the head of John the Baptist had been placed after his
execution; even today “men do it great honour” (92).30 And it had been Genoese
merchants who sold Christ’s crown of thorns to the French for “a great sum of gold”
(48).31 Mandeville offers no critique of Genoese morality; on the contrary, he mentions
these startling tidbits in such a matter-of-fact way that one suspects his audience
would have reacted with knowing recognition. A clerical audience in England would
have reacted similarly to Walsingham’s chronicle account of the Genoese who had
aided Pope Urban VI in his struggle against King Charles of Sicily in 1383 but had

29 Mandeville’s Travels, trans. Moseley, 68, 101; future references are to this edition.

30 Even today Genoa’s Treasure Museum displays the fifteenth-century Gothic gilded Ark of the
Ashes of St. John the Baptist by Teramo Danieli and Simone Caldera.

31 In the version of Mandeville’s Travels that Skeat read, it was the Jews who allegedly had sold
Christ’s crown of thorns to the French king (Piers the Plowman, vol. II, 86). Apparently different
medieval editions of Mandeville reflect the close relationship between Jews and Genoese that the
Morte Arthure makes explicit. Genoese merchants traded in just about everything, in both exotic and
practical items. In July, 1355, Edward the Black Prince owed a debt “to Andrew du Meer, merchant
of Gyene, of 70l. for an eastern ruby and a great diamond, and 70l. for a helm with many great pears
thereon and a leopard on the crest thereof” (Register of Edward the Black Prince, IV, for 1351-1365,
p. 140). In 1436, however, the author of the Libelle of Englyshe Polycye conceded the utilitarian
value of Genoa’s goods (“woad,” “Woll-oyle, wood-aschen ... Coton, roche-alum and gode golde of
Jene” (lines 333-36)), while reserving his invective for the frivolous luxuries exported by Florence
and Venice (“The grete galees of Venees and Florence/ Be wel ladene wyth thynges of complacence
... Nifles, trifles, that litell have availed/ And thynges wyth whiche they fetele blere oure eye/ Wyth
thynges not endurynge that we bye” (lines 344-51)). The merchant mentality of the Genoese and
Venetians, as has been seen, had been well known to Marco Polo, who spread the report in his
Milibone, and to Boccaccio, whose Decameron includes several stories involving Genoese merchants;
see esp. the ninth story told on the second day.

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extorted gold from the Pope for their “services.” The proverb *Genuensis ergo mercator* (“a Genoese, therefore a merchant”) was, as Hyde puts it, “only a slight exaggeration of the truth” (72).

Finally, a brief account of two British reactions to Genoa will further indicate the social realities of the Italian city as foreigners knew it and give a sense of the intertextual company that the *Morte Arthure*’s Giant of Genoa keeps. In 1323, an Irish Franciscan named Simon Fitz-Simon went on pilgrimage to Egypt and Palestine and had occasion to travel in Italy. Of Genoa he notes its military might at sea, its fame, its rich seafaring heritage and the natural beauty of the surrounding riviera, whose “imperial” blessings parallel the city’s military and commercial successes:

[W]e sailed to the famous city of Genoa, excellently fortified with engines of war. Outside the city lies the body of the venerable priest Bede [Bede the Younger, d. 883]. This is among all the cities of the world most famous, most powerful, most victorious, and notably by sea, since it specially abounds in ships of wonderful size and in armed *galeys*, and is the nurse and womb of sailors. For here that most imperial riviera is endowed with a most beautiful view, which is marvelously marked by splendid olive and other fruit trees, and

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32 “[...] a qua civitate [Janua] transmigrare non permittitur, donec inaestimabilem auri summam pro sua ereptione persolvisset Januensisibus; qui plus propter numnum quam propter Deum ejus ereptioni indenderant, prout patet” (“from which city he was not permitted to move, until he should have paid a trifling sum of gold to the Genoese for his capture; [the Genoese] were intent upon his capture more for the sake of the small sum of money than for the sake of God, as is plain”). Walsingham, *Historia Anglica*, II, 139.

33 On the commonness of this proverb in the thirteenth century, see also Fernandez-Armesto, *Before Columbus* 97. (Neither an English form of this proverb nor English proverbs about the Genoese in general are to be found in Whiting, *Proverbs*).
incomparably adorned and beautified by castles, palaces, riches, and other imperial beauties and treasures.\textsuperscript{34}  

Fitz-Simon's eyewitness description of Genoa neatly and unproblematically, if haphazardly, balances what seem to be mutually incompatible elements: the secular and the sacred, Genoa's warlike aspect and maritime strength and its hosting in its environs of the body of "the venerable priest Bede" (perhaps the author was thinking of the English Bede?). This description resembles that found in Mandeville in one important aspect: it suggests that Genoa's aggressive seafaring harmonizes with its piety. The representatives of Genoa in the \textit{Morte Arthure} differ from these depictions in that they appear solely as aggressors armed not with sanctity but with satanic evil. The Giant of Genoa is a conqueror of the mount sacred to the memory of St. Michael and a cannibal who devours noble ladies and Christian children. Other Genoese giants in Lucius' army are similarly "engendrede of fendez": the poet hints that mercenaries (particularly from Genoa), whoever their current employers may be, are descended from devils.

Writing in the 1340s and recalling the mercantilist eye of Marco Polo, an anonymous English traveler portrays the Genoese in terms of their wealth:

From Nice we went by Monaco, a perilous place guarded by galleys of Genoa, and so by sea to the crowded [\textit{conglobatam}] city of Genoa, where marble

buildings are raised on the cliffs. There the ladies of the city go in groups in garments of gold in great variety, wearing golden crowns set with precious stones and pearls. There the leading nobles in great assembly hold markets at which birds are summoned like falcons, so verifying what is written in Baruch [3, 17]: Where are the princes of the gentiles who play with birds of the air above the beasts of the earth?\footnote{35}

Again, as in Fitz-Simon, the city’s power is construed in terms of its military might (its “galleys”) and its wealth. Instead of remarking on its piety, however, the anonymous traveler censures the Genoese nobility as a modern example of the people of Israel who strayed from the way of the Lord. In the passage from Baruch, the secretary of the prophet Jeremiah knowingly asks where they have gone,

They who heaped up the silver
and the gold in which men trust;
of whose possessions there was no end?
They schemed anxiously for money,
but there is no trace of their work:
They have vanished down into the nether world,
and others have risen up in their stead.\footnote{36}

The pointed questioning tone of the passage from Baruch that the English writer does quote suggests that he knew its context and found it appropriate to the city he was describing. The \textit{Morte Arthure} associates Genoa with hybridized animalistic giants and so extends the familiar view of the city as a lavishly wealthy haven for sailors, merchants and mercenaries into the realm of the unfamiliar and unnatural. The poem

suggests to future English readers a deeper moral response to a city whose membership in Christendom they could not take for granted.

“Lykande to Schawe”: Lombardy, Tuscany, Rome and Beyond

The Giant of Genoa is a marvel in Le Goff’s sense of the word: it exists to define the identity of the person, social class or nation that confronts and challenges it. Far more than a mere ornament in the tale, it exemplifies the risible and horrific character of the medieval monster, and suggests the ethnographic terms in which England and its political enemies ought to be imagined. The poem presents an even more impressive and more threatening marvel, however, in the Roman Empire. Its alliance with Muslim nations for the purpose of conquering Britain enhances Rome’s physical enormousness but also its spiritual enormity, its status as an appropriate target of what Christopher Tyerman identifies as an ongoing “crusade ideology” in England. Although Wace and Lawman similarly show Arthur battling against

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36 I quote from the Catholic Study Bible, ed. Senior et al.

37 “That the marvelous plays such a large part in courtly romance is no accident. It is intimately associated with the idealized knight’s quest for individual and collective identity”: Le Goff, “The Marvelous in the Medieval West” 29. Le Goff focuses on twelfth- and thirteenth-century French romance, but this remark clearly applies to a romance episode in an alliterative fourteenth- to fifteenth-century English poem in the chanson de geste tradition.

38 “Although emerging from and running parallel to older theories of just and holy war, crusade ideology and rhetoric supplied a distinct impetus towards the creation of a quasi-religious ideology of nationalism which sustained English politicians and people into the sixteenth century and beyond”: 105
Muslim soldiers, the *Morte-Arthure* poet makes it clear that holy war between Christian England and the Rome-Orient alliance should condition late medieval English views of classical Rome and modern Italy. Slightly earlier, Chaucer already mapped out the complexity of Italy, subtly unmasking the relationship between political and literary tyranny in Petrarch's Lombardy, and insisting upon the irreducible integrity of Roman pagan literature that admitted of no facile allegoresis or Christian moralization. The *Morte Arthure* poet shows a different side to the intransigence of Roman classical identity in its irreconcilability with allegorical attempts to make it safe for Christianity; he offers dramatic historical "evidence" for the suggestion that English readers should maintain a cautious and vigilant attitude toward Italy. Those who would rhapsodize about the glories of ancient Rome see that, even after its conversion to Christianity, Rome still lapsed into heresy, sought to reconquer Britain, and pursued alliances with the Muslims. These last enemies of Christianity are shown to anticipate by hundreds of years their late-medieval counterparts, who destroyed a Christian army at Nicopolis in 1396, with the aid of a Tuscan tyrant, no less. Well into

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*England and the Crusades* 2 and passim. See also Chism, "Liquidating Assets" 312. Shepherd, "'This Grete Journee,'" meticulously identifies elements of crusading propaganda in *The Sege of Melayne* which find parallels in the *Morte*: the frequent appearance of the phrases "our men" and "our knights"; the frequent invitation to the reader "to feel at one with the cause espoused and to join in the action which supports the cause" (131); the claim of God's direct intervention in battle against Saracens; the apparently mad, suicidal rush of the hero into a vast enemy army, and the "largely spiritual" attitude towards warfare. These aspects invalidate the claim of Eadie, who assumes that the secular world of the poem makes it impossible for Arthur "to be engaged on any kind of quasi-religious crusade" ("Structure and Meaning" 5).
the fifteenth century and the era of English awakening to the Italian Renaissance, Lydgate’s *Fall of Princes* and Capgrave’s *Solace of Pilgrims* will insist, in different ways, that Italy, far from offering convincing claims that its ancient Roman past should be venerated uncritically, instead ought to be seen as a hybrid landscape, one of monstrous paganism lurking beneath surface Christianization.

Rome, the *caput mundi*, wields its power arbitrarily, tyrannically and foolishly. As I noted at the very beginning of this chapter, the early part of the *Morte Arthure* shows Britain threatened by the Roman Emperor’s desire to re-conquer it, for it has not paid tribute to Rome in many years. The *Morte Arthure* poet stands in an insular tradition, comprising Geoffrey of Monmouth, Wace, Lawman, and Robert Mannyng of Brunne,\(^{40}\) which reverses the direction of conquest and instantiates the westward-moving *translatio imperii* by maintaining and defending Arthur’s legal right to Rome:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{He [Lucius] askyde me tyrauntly & tribute of Rome,} \\
\text{That tenefully tynt was & in tym of myn elders,} \\
\text{There alyenes in absence & of all men of armes,} \\
\text{Couerde it of comouns, & as cronicles telles.}
\end{align*}
\]


I haue title to take tribute of Rome;
Myne ancestres ware emperours and aughte it them seluen —
Belyn and Brenne, that borne were in Bretayne,
They occuyyede the Empyre aughte score wynnytys,
Ilkane ayere aftyre other; as awide men telles; (271-79)

The “tribute” exacted by Rome in the days of Arthur’s reign was taken wrongfully, the helpless Britons having had no knights among them to offer resistance to the bullying Romans. The “cronicles telles” that “alyenes” (a term that I explore later) acquired this tribute by force, without the consent of the “comouns.” Having established Roman injustice, the poet then introduces Arthur’s just claim, the “title” to Rome handed down to him by his imperial forebears Belin and Brennius. These early British rulers were followed by Constantine, whom Arthur calls “our kynsmene,” who “conquerid [Rome] aftyre,/ That ayere was of Ynglande and Emperour of Rome” (282-83). Just as Arthur’s piety was partly shaped and defined externally by the savage impiety of the Giant of Genoa, the injustice of Rome is amplified externally by the piety of Britain and its early rulers. Legitimating both Britain’s subsequent history and Arthur’s wish to make Rome a branch of it, the poet praises this “kynsmene” Constantine as “He that conquerid the Crosse be craftes o f armes/ That Criste was on crucifiede, that Kyng es of Heuen” (284-85). Absent is the contempt in which Constantine was held by Geoffrey of Monmouth or, much later, by Polydore Vergil.41 On the contrary, the

41 Geoffrey records that Constantine “was struck down by the vengeance of God” for having killed two of Mordred’s sons in churches (Thorpe 262). Lawman has only praise for Constantine (Allen, Il. 14298-14356). Robert of Gloucester presents the story of Constantine and Mordred’s sons without
poet insists on his virtue by accentuating both his piety and his Englishness (he is heir of “Ynglande”). Chronicles record both the British imperial conquest of Rome and the British *inventio* of the True Cross: temporal and spiritual “conquests” form the “euydens” that Arthur will use as the basis for invalidating Lucius’ “ryghte” to the Empire and asserting his own (286-87). King Aungers’ passionate support of Arthur’s claim (288-303) and the Roman envoy’s later verbatim report of this claim to Lucius (520-21) convey the poet’s earnestness in presenting this idea. Further authorial sanction of this plan appears in the king’s appeal to two forms of authorities, textual (“cronicles”) and oral (“awilde men”).

The conflict between Arthur and Lucius is thus an international and national crisis for both rulers, because each claims that the other’s lands historically belong to

comment (4599-4604). Robert Mannyng of Brunne too reports the double slaying but does not condemn Constantine for it; he rather implies a contrast between him and the two sons, for “Of London thei seised the cite/ & the best of alle the cuntre” (13759-60). Another contrast is suggested between Constantine and his successor Conan, “a folte, a misproude man” (13782). Polydore Vergil appears to side with the early British historian Gildas in criticizing him: “Next unto Arthure reigned Constantine, a dissolute manne, whome the hollie Gildas, which then lived, didd hate extreemelie .... Constantine, who, contrarie to Divine and humaine lause, hadd rejected his wife, and was openlie forsworne, did eche daye commit six hundred haynus offences, with which example he didd moste harme in the depraving and corrupting his Brittons”: *Polydore Vergil’s English History*, I, 122. Polydore Vergil does not doubt Arthur’s existence; he simply records (with neither approval nor disapproval) that “the common people is at this presence soe affectioned, that with woonderus admiration they extol Arthure unto the heavens, alleginge ... that hee manfullie overthrew the Romaines, with there capitam Lucius” (122).

42 The claim is repeated in lines 641-43 and 1309-10.

43 Rondolone, arguing that the poem reflects a tension between oral heroic and Ricardian literate values, emphasizes more than I do the importance of “the norms of the oral-heroic ethos” (“Wyrchipe” 219).
him. But the conflict takes place in the realm of historiography as well as in the arena of national/international politics, for two different recollections of history clash, particularly that history of the special link between Rome and Britannia. Lucius has his envoys demand from Arthur the tribute that the "sugett" ruler (87) of a Roman colony owes to the caput mundi; Arthur launches a historiographical counter-attack by narrating the British conquest of Rome by his forebears and then declaring all-out war with this "history" as his justification. The envoys' demand that Britain submit to outside rule brings about the opportunity for Arthur to continue the epic cycle of history, to seize the Roman imperium and make it Britain's. Arthur seeks to reverse the power dynamic between Britain and Rome by showing the Romans' military and moral inability to secure the allegiance of their erstwhile colony, to demonstrate that the center is no longer able to master the periphery. Britain asserts itself as the center of indomitable political autonomy and moral righteousness.

This is not to say that, in highlighting the historiographical theater of the Anglo-Italian conflict, the poet will change the chronicle "record" and portray Arthur as an undefeated conqueror or eliminate his tragic ending. The poet does not change Arthur's death (this is the Morte of Arthur, after all). In rendering so stirringly the end of the king's life and the antecedent woes in England during Mordred's unjust

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44 Keiser, "Narrative Structure," points out the poet's use of this term and demurs at Matthews' suggestion that "[i]t is as a challenge to a rival emperor that Lucius sends this ultimatum" (132-33, citing Matthews, Tragedy 21, 127).
stewardship, the poet implies that Britain has reached the same depths of tragic history as those attained by the classical city. Like Rome, Britain is a self-sufficient “textual nation,” a state with its own epic history of momentous rises and falls. What distinguishes Arthur’s homeland from that of Lucius is that the eventual dissension within the former will be caused not by foreigners (as in the case of Rome, as the prose Brut and Lydgate’s Fall of Princes point out) but by one of “the kynde bloode of Engeland” (to recall the Brut’s phrasing), Arthur’s own nephew. Even though the

45 The Morte Arthure hints at a way of conceiving cultural comparisons between England and Rome that was made explicit later in the fifteenth century. The author of the Examples of Mutability (c. 1470) bemoans the wealth of strange and harsh moral lessons that English readers may find in their own country, and points out that it is no longer necessary to read sad tales of the Romans, particularly those found in the Gesta Romanorum or the Fall of Princes. The lesson of social collapse brought about by internal political dissension may be learned at home:

Wee nede not nowe to seke the cronicle3 olde
off the romans, nor bockas tragedye,
to rede the ruyen & fallys manyffolde
off prynces grett, putt to dethe & miserye
In sondrye landes, for wee haue hardelye
here In thys lande with-In the xx yere
as wonder3 change3 seen before our eye
as euer I trowe before thys any were. (lines 9-16)
This excerpt appears in Green, Poets and Princepleasers 146, quoting from Rossell Hope Robbins, ed., Historical Poems of the XIVth and XVth Centuries (New York, 1959).

46 Examples of other nations whose own subject or subjects are partly or wholly responsible (in legend, at least) for the nations’ downfall are Troy (because of the naivete of those who let in the “Trojan horse”) and Rome (whose citizens’ violence and immorality are emphasized by Lydgate; see. chapter 2, below). The Middle English prose Brut has this striking passage: “So miche vnkyndenesse was neuer seyne biforesh in Engeland ammones folc of on nacioun ... and hit was no wonder, for the grete lorde of Engeland were nou3t alle of o nacioun, but were mellede with othere naciones, that is forto seyn, somme Britons, somme Saxones, somme Danois, somme Peghtes, somme Frenchemen, somme Normans, somme Spaignardes, somme Romayns, some Henaudes, some Flemynghs, and of othere diuerse naciouns, the whiche naciouns acored nou3t to the kynde bloode of Engeland” (The Brut, or the Chronicles of England, I, ed. Brie, ll. 14-16, 17-23, quoted by Turville-Petre, England the Nation 17.)
Morte admits that foreigners settled Britain and played a role in the translatio imperii, there is no hint that the presence of foreign blood in the bodies of British subjects, or the presence of Welsh and Irish subjects within England, brings about internal warfare. Those who would destroy Britain are either alyenes, i.e., external threats, or members of Arthur’s extended family and Round Table, but not foreigners dwelling in England. The Middle English Brut’s blurring of ethnic boundaries (alyene French, Roman, etc. blood in the bodies of British nobles) is absent from the Morte, and thus Britain’s downfall is all the more lamentable in having resulted from the British Arthur’s betrayal by a fellow Briton.

But if its internal problems originate with a native son and not a foreigner, the England of the Morte Arthure does resemble the historical Italy in a general way in that its most serious threat is internal, not external. Italy was chronically devastated by wars between communes and factional strife within them; England too is undone by

47 Arthur himself contains ethnic difference in being both British and English, a point insisted on in this poem and in the romance Ywain and Gawain, which actually emphasizes his Englishness. This view was not shared by all writers: Higden thought of Arthur as exclusively British, i.e. Welsh: “But on cas it is the manere of everiche nacioun to overe preyse som oon of the same nacioun, as the Grees preyseth here Alisaundre, and the Romayns here Octovianus, and Englisshe men here Richard, and Frensche men here Charles, and Britouns here Arthur” (Polychronicon V, 337). It was his anti-Welsh bias as much as his scholarly zeal that led Higden to question Arthur’s existence: “This [is] Arthur, o f whom the Britoun that goth out of the w^telleth many idel tales” (331). As is well known, Trevisa did not share Higden’s skepticism of Geoffrey of Monmouth. Although he criticized the “Britons” for spreading many false tales about Arthur, he claims that the truth about him endures in spite of such falsehoods: “Soth sawes beeth nevere the wors they madde men telle magel tales” (339). Trevisa was less anti-Celtic than Higden and probably thought of Arthur as a national hero, whether British or English, for he argues that he is praised by other nations: “and 3it they Gauffridus had nevere i-spoke of Arthur, meny noble naciouns speketh of Arthur and of his nobil dedes” (339).
the lust for power of one of its own. The internal strife of Italy is only hinted at in Arthur’s vow to “Sett lawe in the lande [Lombardy] that laste sall euer;/ The tyrauntes of Tuskeyn tempeste a littyll” (2406-07). Italian dissension can be conjured up so minimalistically because it is by now a given, yet it provides an instructive backdrop for Arthur’s law-giving wars in Italy and his retreat from Italy to quell the more dramatically portrayed internal strife in England. England has succeeded, in spite of itself, in replicating a fatally significant feature of Italian peninsular history: chaos caused from within. Adapting with caution Gabrielle Spiegel’s remarks on the use of prose chronicles in thirteenth-century France, we might say that the “romancing” of Arthur in the *Morte* and other late medieval English romances “performed critical social functions in the life” of that culture which in turn “sought to embed its ideology in history and thereby endow that ideology with the prestige and imprescriptable character that the past was able to confer in medieval society.”

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48 Spiegel, *Romancing the Past* 2. Guiding Spiegel’s investigations is the belief that “[t]he search for a usable past, capable of redeeming a cause that has been lost, in ideological if not actual political terms, becomes a compelling task for those who feel the need to mask the failure of their enterprise, to dissimulate the malaise that accompanies a fall from social grace, a decline in political authority, and a sense of the irrelevance of values that had guided comportment and identified the once-prestigious possessors of power and authority as central players in the social game” (1). Applicable to conditions in thirteenth-century France, this argument also may adequately describe the political climate in England as perceived by some late fourteenth-century English writers (including Chaucer and the Gawain-poet), but not necessarily all of them. The author of the alliterative *Morte Arthure* “searches for a usable past” but questions none of the older chivalric values; on the contrary, he makes a powerful case for their relevance not only to England but to Italy and the Roman Empire, so apparently lacking in those qualities.
least ethnic harmony within the fatherland appears to be part of this ideology. Britain’s oppression from without (by Rome) and destabilizing from within (by English subjects, not by foreigners) are literary themes that “refract” the medieval reality of perpetual hostilities between England on the one hand and Scotland, Wales and Ireland on the other. And in spite of the real generic differences between romance and epic, Susan Crane’s claims for the national self-awareness in medieval English romance surely apply to the expression of national identity in the Morte Arthure: “In securing his lineal rights the English hero secures the nation; his strength is not simply military but rests in the strength of law, custom, and justice.” Arthur’s fame for law and justice provides the basis for a Britain united under his exemplary leadership; his fame for all of those traits in addition to piety makes him superior to the Roman

49 Cp. Turville-Petre: “The concept of racial unity, as we have observed, is a fundamental part of the construction of national identity in the Middle Ages. So the English nation cannot be, as in fact it was, an amalgam of Celts, Romans, discrete Germanic tribes, and Normans” (England the Nation 97). Camille, Mirror in Parchment 296, quotes this observation in his own discussion of the Luttrell Psalter’s treatment of the theme of English ethnicity. Actually, the Morte Arthure and the romance Ywain and Gawain do identify Celts and other ethnic groups among Arthur’s loyal allies, but like the Genoese and other foreigners in Lydgate’s celebratory poem on Henry VI’s triumphal entry into London (discussed below, chapter 2), they are represented as unswervingly loyal. Tensions between the non-English allies or residents in England and the English themselves disappear in the poets’ creations of national unity.

50 Insular Romance 12. Crane’s discussion of the differences between romance and epic (10-12) centers on the romance’s peculiar separation of the private identity of the hero from that of the larger community around him.
Emperor, his Genoese giants and “Tuscan tyrants.” Britain by extension is depicted in a reactionary way as superior to Italy, to the Roman Empire and the communes. 51

I have discussed the poet’s wish to accentuate English nationalism by glorifying the downfall of Britain’s greatest ruler and presenting it as the stuff of epic, but the poet also champions the English nation by reducing or at least heavily questioning the epic qualities of Rome. The injustice of Lucius’ claim to Britain has already been mentioned. Because the poet wishes to underscore Britain’s political, ethnic and moral superiority to Rome, he furthermore represents Rome’s vaunted cultural superiority as something heard about but never experienced first-hand by

51 In representing English cultural defensiveness to Rome and Italy as moral and religious superiority, the poet shows Arthur engaging in an imperialist quest with gusto and occasional savagery, but, in spite of the opinion of an ever-growing legion of moralistic critics of the poem, we are never asked to doubt its legitimacy. It is not possible here to respond to, or even to provide full bibliographical information for the studies by, all the critics who see sharp criticism in the poet’s portrayal of Arthur. Matthews, Tragedy, was the first to claim that the poet saw the British king as an unjust warmonger. Cp. Goeller, Gleissner and Mennicken, “Reality versus Romance”; Patterson, “Romance of History”; Hamel, Critical Edition passim, but esp. 57-58, 327-28 (notes to ll. 2306-20), 332 (notes to ll. 2410-15), 351 (notes to ll. 3038-43); and the studies, identified more fully in my bibliography, by Boren, O’Sharkey, Twomey, Ziolkowski, Ball, Kennedy, Westover, and Schmolke-Hasselmann. Critics who accept Arthur’s sinfulness but point to either his moral recovery or the poet’s sympathy for him make more persuasive claims: Finlayson, “Concept of the Hero”; L. Benson, “Medieval Tragedy”; Lumiansky; Keiser, “Theme of Justice”; and the especially persuasive study by Shoaf, “Britain’s David.” Rondolone sees in the poem the undercutting of heroism but suggests that the poet himself “does not seem to have been fully converted” to such a critical view; see “Wyrichipe” 236. Vale, Porter, Eadie, Kelly, Obst and Dean completely exonerate Arthur and chivalry either because of the justness of his wars from a medieval point of view or because of the merely human nature of his sinfulness. W. Parks approves the views of Porter and Eadie but adds that “the action of the poem clearly shows that eventual failure and death are endemic to the human condition; and to this problem the path of heroic endeavor can ultimately provide no solution” (“Flying Contract” 69). Even so, it is Lucius’ arrogance and the alliance between Rome and its allies that we are meant to condemn. Arthur’s sins may be on a larger scale than those of ordinary mortals, but then Arthur is on
British subjects. We are told that "the Romaynes whare so ryche holden,/ As of the realeste blode that reynede in erthe" (174-75). Sir Lot looks forward to the day of battle when he "may se be Romaynes bat are so ryche halden" (387). When Arthur invites the Roman ambassadors to sojourn in his realm as his guests, he concedes the splendor of Rome, but only with heavy irony:

\begin{quote}
Forthi sal thow lenge here and lugge wyth thise lordes
This seuenyghte in solace to suggourne 3our horses,
To see whatte lyfe that wee leede in thees lawe lanndes,
Forby the realtee of Rome, that recheste was euere.” (152-55)
\end{quote}

Arthur acknowledges Rome's majesty by eclipsing it with that of the Round Table, as the catalogue of delicacies aptly shows (ll. 176-238). The author of the Morte, like the authors of his sources, wished his audience to recall the Round Table's prestige and to perceive the aptness of a comparison between it and the Roman Empire. The a larger scale than ordinary mortals, both in his achievements and in his suffering. The real enemy is Rome, and if its grendeur elicits awe, its sinfulness warrants condemnation.

\begin{itemize}
\item [52] Hamel, Critical Edition 259, n. to ll. 154-55. Hamel agrees with the poem's previous editor, Valerie Krishna, who glossed forby as "in comparison to"; line 155 thus does not belong with Arthur's instructions to Sir Kay, immediately following, but rather forms part of his remarks to Lucius' ambassador and his aids. The line "emphasizes the irony in Arthur's self-deprecation; the senator is about to experience unparalleled splendor in the royal welcoming feast.”
\item [53] This catalogue, as critics rightly note, is presented without irony: see Keiser, “Narrative Structure” 136; Vale, “Law and Diplomacy” 43. Roudolphe refers to it aptly as “a phalanx of food which [Arthur] uses as an extension of his own heroic stature” (Wyrchipe” 220). See also Harder, “Feasting,” esp. 51, 56, 58. The very existence of these foods at the Arthurian court hints at fourteenth-century English dependence on Genoese and Venetian merchant vessels, which trafficked in exotic goods from the East. See Chism, “Liquidating Assets” 321.
\item [54] G. Parks, English Traveler 231, notes that Geoffrey of Monmouth initiated a tradition of Arthurian writing, including Wace and Lawman, that glorified ancient Rome in order to make it a “model and match for the past greatness of Britain.”
\end{itemize}
poet’s engaging in cultural one-upmanship anticipates the later full-fledged assault on Roman imperial authority. Even this episode forms part of the larger cultural war between Arthur’s island kingdom and Lucius’ empire, and the poet’s representation of the imperial envoys as awed and passive spectators places “these lawe lanndes” on a par with the “realttee of Rome.”

Although his strategy of defining the English nation and its virtues by underscoring the vices of its Roman enemy will become more complex later in the poem, as the opposition between England and Italy becomes less clear-cut, the poet here opposes the identities of the two combatant realms by exploring their most important defining trait, their religious affinities. Rome’s planned invasion of Britain gives Arthur the tactical and political justification to launch a counter-attack, but the very nature of Rome’s allies enhances Arthur’s moral justification. Rome and Italy are located so near to the non-Christian East that Lucius can easily recruit its warriors by sending “lettres ... Onone into the Oryente” (570-71), into India, Arabia, Egypt, Crete, Cappadocia, Turkey, Tartary, Babylon, Baghdad and a host of other places taken from Geoffrey of Monmouth and Mandeville’s Travels. The enemy

55 Malory’s treatment of the Arthur-Lucius episode in his later Le Morte d’Arthure has it that “the Romaynes had ... grete mervayle” at Arthur’s feast (Vinaver, Works 114), but Malory omits the alliterative poem’s lavish catalogue of foods and thus diminishes the cultural rivalry between England and Rome.

56 Lines 572-609. The borrowing from Geoffrey and Mandeville is noted by Hamel in her edition of the poem (274, note to ll. 572-605). She surmises that the poet’s “inclusion of biblical names —
mercenaries are no longer a collection of exotic Blemmyae or Umbrella-Feet titillating the Western reader from the margins of Creation. They are dangerous Muslims. Perhaps the most marvelous aspect of Rome is its capacity to draw the forces of Islam and their “meruayllous,” exotic animals to Western battlefields:

\[\text{dromondaries of dyuerse lorde, Moyllez mylke-whitte and meruayllous bestez, Elfaydes and arrabys and olyfauntez noble [war-horses(?); Arabian horses That are of the Oryent with honourable kynges.} \text{ (2286-89)}\]

An empire as powerful as Rome’s might have managed to marshal together such far-flung legions, but the literal truth of this report matters less than its symbolic resonance. In showing such intimate collaboration between Italy and the East, the Morte-poet wishes his audience to reflect on the alterity of Italy and to situate it somewhere between the extreme poles of “Saracen” East and Christian West.

If the wonders of the East ever seemed threatening because of their strangeness, now they pose definite dangers because they are advancing out of their homelands, and out of the pages of ethnographic writers from Pliny to Mandeville, to take control of the normative cultural space inhabited by Arthur’s Round Table and, by implication, the readers of the Morte Arthure. The exotic origins of the “Saracens”

nazareth and Galilee as well as Elam and Cappadocia – would also remind his audience that the Christian Holy Places were in the possession of the ‘sultans and Saracens,’ adding overtones of the Crusades to Arthur’s war with Lucius.” In his Chronicle, Robert of Gloucester too gave the impression of close contact between imperial Rome and the East. After listing the Orthodox Christian and Islamic countries that send aid to Lucius (4125-28), he summarizes them as “Alle thes kinges & alle othere that were bi este rome” (4129), i.e., that were to the east of Rome, as though Rome marked the boundary between West and East.
are now inextricable from the physical and spiritual perils they pose. Rome's gathering of this colossal and hybrid force (Muslim as well as Christian, at least nominally) disrupts the "natural" and the political order: imperial Rome and the medieval communes of central and northern Italy anachronistically collaborate with one another and with Muslim mercenaries and so overturn the commonly accepted solidarity among Christians against the forces of Islam.\(^{57}\) Everywhere, the Roman

57 Geoffrey of Monmouth initially identifies only the places of origin of Lucius' Eastern and African allies (Thorpe 236), and when recounting Mordred's treason records that some of the steward's allies were pagans, others Christians (258). Wace and Lawman do not often label Lucius' allies "Saracens," but their awareness of their radical otherness is nevertheless clear: "Ofustesar, King of Aufrike — nes ther na king his ilike/ mid him com moni Aufrician; of Ethiope he brohte ths bleomen" (12665-6). See Lawman's Arthur, ed. and trans. Barron and Weinberg. Rosamund Allen's translation (Lawman: Brut, 324) has "Ofustesar, King of Africa — no king bore him resemblance — / With him came many an African, from Ethiopia he brought the black men." Wace has "Mustansar, the King of Africa, came from his distant home, many a long days' journey. With him were black men and Moors, bearing their king's rich treasure" (in Mason 78). Later, "Pagan and Saracen were set to prove their manhood against Angevins and the folk of Beauce" (103). Like Geoffrey, Lawman claims that there were heathens as well as Christians in Mordred's army ("hethene and cristene," 14122). The anti-Roman, anti-pagan invective in Wace and Lawman is especially harsh. Here is Wace: "‘Come,’ said [Sir Hiresgas], ‘come, true men’s sons, to the slaying of these Romans. Romans! Nay, cutpurses, rather, whoresons, paynims who have neither trust in God, nor faith in our true religion. Rome has brought them from the east for the destruction of their lives and our kin. On then, friends, let us wipe out these pagans; the pagans, and such renegade Christians as have joined them to slay Christendom more surely’" (in Mason, 104-5). A different episode in the history reveals similar sentiments in Lawman: "‘And these are the most accursed men of all men now alive. A race of heathens — to God they are loathsome:/ They abandon our Lord God and give allegiance to Mahound,/ And the emperor Lucius has no concern for God at all:/ Heathen hounds he has as his companions,/ God’s antagonists!’" (13634-40; R. Allen, trans., 348) The original is as follows: "And this beoth tha forcutheste men o ale quike monnen,/ haethene leode — Godd heo bilaeueth and to Mahune heo tuhteth/ and Luces the kaeisere of Godd soolf naueth nane care,/ that hafiethu iueren hathene hundes,/ Goddes wither-iwinnem!" Arthur's speech in the Middle English Brut (ed. Brie, I, 86) is very similar. Robert Mannyng expresses the same concept with succinctness: "On criste salle we hope & affie/ ageyn the houndes of Payenye/ for houndes salle 3e never fle ne Romeyns ere not als we" (12929-32). The Morte Arthure privileges action and characterization over speeches.
Empire fights alongside the enemies of the Christian faith: “Saracens” accompany “Senators” in several lines (e.g., 1844, 1960, 2277), and not merely to suit the demands of alliteration. The Emperor Lucius has assembled knights from the Papal States (Viterbo, 2025) to northern Italy (Lombardy, 1967-72; Venice, 2025), but has also enlisted the aid of the King of Libya (1803ff), the King of Syria (1844) and the Sultan himself (1295). Whereas Lawman, the Morte-poet’s alliterating predecessor in English, identifies the Byzantine Christian and Muslim countries that send troops to Lucius (Allen 323-24), he does not name Italian cities and locales but says only that they hailed from “many kinds of places” (Allen 324, translating “feole cunne londes” [12671]). In a similarly general vein, the Middle English Brut insists on the religious dimension of this war, although this prose chronicle recounts it in only a few pages and thus compresses the story greatly (85-87). By pausing to focus on the details of names and places, the Morte-poet accentuates the link among ethnicity, geography and religion; blurring Italian with “Saracen,” the poet has Lucius’ Italian allies assemble at Corneto (“Cornett,” 600) from “Calabre” and “Pulle,” suggestively linked with “Pruyslande” and “Lettow” (603-5). The Seneschal of Sutri (1870) fights alongside

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58 Cp. the coupling of “sowdane and senatours” (1295, 2277; “sowdanes that were sekyre sowdeours to Rome,” 593).

59 Line 603, “And of Calabre and of Catelonde bothe kynges and deukes,” is, as Hamel notes, found not in the Thornton MS but in the Winchester MS; these place names reappear in Malory, “and of Calabe [“Calabre” in Caxton’s edition] and of Catelonde bothe kynges and deukes”; see Works, ed. Vinaver, 117. Hamel’s textual note (Critical Edition 276) attempts to justify the inclusion of the line here based on its alliterative form in the Winchester MS and in Malory and on her belief that “two
his fellow Italian, the Captain of Corneto (1909) and the Muslim Captain of Cordova (1870ff, 1909). Although the *Morte Arthure* is not the first literary work to depict Arthur as a virtual Crusader against Muslims, it does depict this crusade more vividly and dramatically, partly by placing this holy war within the poignant drama of Arthur’s retreat from Rome and his pious death in Britain, partly by imputing unholy alliances to a land already infamous for its bankers, merchants and internal political warfare. In fact the realities of trade frequently brought Italian city-states into close contact with Muslim nations, and the *Morte*’s depiction of the Italian-Roman-Muslim alliance suggests a critical response to this contact.\(^60\)

Whereas England presumably keeps Islam and theological error generally at arm’s length, Italy embraces it. Martin Ball has claimed that Arthur’s two prophetic dreams, occurring before the king leaves Britain and before he is to return, frame European campaigns whose nature is “fantastic ... like a dream, a distorted reality.” This view is correct, but the argument that “the framing of [the whole European section of the poem] throws doubt on its status and puts into question its such unfamiliar names” would not have been added by later scribes. Since “Pulle” (Apulia, French “Pouille”) does appear in the Thornton MS, my remarks do not depend on the original presence of “Calabre” in the *Morte Arthure*. It may be noted, however, that the pairing of Calabria and Apulia has a precedent in *Sir Beues of Hamtoun*, l. 2435 ff., as pointed out above in the Introduction.

\(^60\) Malory later will make this criticism more explicit. In his reworking of the *Morte Arthure*’s Arthur-Lucius episode, he has Arthur order Sir Cador to put to death all the Christians who fight alongside Muslims in the late Lucius’ vanquished army: “’[F]or they that woll accompany them with Sarezens, the man that wolde save them were lytyll to prayse. And therefore sle doune and save nother hethyn nothir Crystyn’” (*Works*, ed. Vinaver, 134).
verisimilitude ignores the very tangible function of the exotic or Other World in the spiritual or national self-imagining of medieval culture. In deliberately portraying Lucius’ army and, later, Mordred’s as almost impossibly vast and “multicultural,” comprising Muslims as well as Christians, and in showing Arthur’s equally stupefying victories over such enormous odds, the poet seeks to convey a simple and fundamental “truth”: this is a struggle in which the British, “oure folke” and “oure syde” (2799, 2802), fight in the name of “oure Lorde” (2846) against “the fekyl faye” (the false faith), “falssede” incarnate, the enemy who “make faythe and faye to the fend seluen!” (2862). The Morte Arthure defines the English nation not only implicitly, by highlighting Rome’s marvelous alliances and the perverse morality that makes them possible. What Timothy Brennan calls “the national longing for form,” a process of cultural invention that constantly seeks to bring the “imaginary construct” of the

61 Ball, “Knots of Narrative” 358, 359. Ball’s observation of the “reality” of events in Britain and relative “unreality” of events on the Continent would have been even more convincing if he had noted that the most moving example of supernatural forces in the Arthurian tradition, Arthur’s mystical evanescence to the Isle of Avalon (an event that transpires in Britain), is given a wholly concrete and ordinary character in the Morte: Arthur “Entres the ile of Aueloyne,” “Merkes to a manere there,” is examined by “A surgyn of Salerne,” confesses his sins, and dies: “thus passes his speryt, and spekes he no more” (4309-4327).

62 Campbell, Witness and the Other World 108-112 and her chapter, “That othere half: Mandeville Naturalizes the East,” 122-61. See also Zacher, Curiosity and Pilgrimage 145-157; Howard, Writers and Pilgrims 65-76; Greenblatt, Marvelous Possessions 1-51, esp. 22-25. Greenblatt’s interest in “mimetic capital” and the medieval desire for possession leads him to de-emphasize, while not discounting, what Zacher, Howard and Campbell see as the very real spiritual relevance of the exotic to European societies in Mandeville’s charitable and moralizing account of the East. Said, Orientalism 55-73, makes incisive observations about the West’s long-standing cultural and economic exploitation of the East.
nation into being, articulates itself by explicitly excluding, in Turville-Petre's phrase, "what does not belong." The Morte Arthure-poet simultaneously defines the boundaries of English nationhood and blurs those of Italy by defining England's enemies as alyenes. This word carries a legalistic connotation in fourteenth- and fifteenth-century parliamentary documents, whose use of it enriches and is enriched by its appearance in the alliterative poem. Sometimes the use of the word indicates that the guests in question posed a threat to the realm, sometimes not. It is used usually to designate foreign merchants and holders of benefices dwelling in England. "Lombards and other aliens" were warned in 1360 not to render aid to Edward III's enemies during the Hundred Years' War; later, Richard II sought to allow friendly "m[ar]chantz aliens ... qi soient del amistee n[ost]re S[eigneur] le Roi & de son Roialme" to ply their trade freely in the ports and cities in England, a course of action which many inhabitants of those places had sought to prevent. In the Morte Arthure

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63 "Nations, then, are imaginary constructs that depend for their existence on an apparatus of cultural fictions in which imaginative literature plays a decisive role" (Brennan, "National Longing for Form" 49).

64 The MED provides the following definitions for the noun form of the word: "1.(a) A member of a foreign nation or country, a foreigner; (b) a foreign resident or merchant, an alien; an alien born; (c) theol. a stranger or transient. ... 2. An outsider or stranger: (a) one of different kindred; (b) one of a different religion, community; ~ fro, one excluded from (a religious community)" (MED pt. A.1, pp. 190-91; boldface in original). Most of the MED's many examples of "alien" in its noun or adjective forms date to the mid-fourteenth to late-fifteenth centuries, the time of greatest anxiety over foreign merchants and appointees to benefices.

65 Calendar of Close Rolls, 33 Edwardi III, pp. 662-63.
the word *alyenes* appears first when Arthur recalls that the Romans long ago took tribute by force from the helpless Britons: "alyenes in absence of all men of armes/Couerde [acquired] it of comouns, as cronicles telles" (273-74). The term is also used to refer to Lucius' ambassadors:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Thane the barelyche beryn</th>
<th>of Bretayne the lyttyll</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Counsayles sir Arthure</td>
<td>and of hym besekys</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To ansuere the alyenes</td>
<td>wyth austeren wordes,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To entyce the Emperour</td>
<td>to take ouere the mounttes.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Thane the barelyche beryn of Bretayne the lyttyll [noble, excellent Counsayles sir Arthure and of hym besekys To ansuere the alyenes wyth austeren wordes, To entyce the Emperour to take ouere the mounttes. (304-07)

Arthur later "Vtters [i.e., speaks to] the alienes" (418) and informs them of his plan to invade Lorraine and Italy. Afterwards he uses this word disparagingly to the envoys when he explains to them the route they must follow after leaving his court:

"... Thow weyndez by Watlyng Strette and by no waye ells; Thare thow nyghttes on nyghte nedez moste thou lenge ... There awes none alyenes to ayere appon nyghttys With syche a rebawdous rowtte to ryot thy seluen." (450-51, 455-56)

In describing the Emperor's war preparations following the news of Arthur's defiance, the poet leaves no doubt that he thinks of these *alyenes* as devil-spawn:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Thane yschewes the emperour</th>
<th>armede at ryghtys,</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arayede with his Romaynes</td>
<td>appon ryche stedys;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexty geauntes before,</td>
<td>engenderide with fendez,</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

66 *Statutes of the Realm*, 1378-79, p. 7, col. 2. These freedoms were reiterated in 1381-82 (pp. 23-24) and confirmed in 1435 during the reign of Henry VI (14 Henrici VI; p. 293). Laws passed to prevent the appointment of aliens to benefices in England were often quite plaintive in tone; see, e.g., *Statutes of the Realm* 3 Ric. II, 1379-80 (p. 14, col. 1); 13 Ric. II, 1389-90 (pp. 69-74); 2 Hen. IV, 1400-01 (p. 121, col. 2); 1 Hen. V, 1413 (p. 172).

67 "Where you are overtaken by night each night" (Hamel's gloss, *Critical Edition*, 371, n. to line 451).
With weches and wallaws to wachen his tentys,
Ayware whare he wendes, wyntrez and 3eres;
Myghte no blonkes them bere, thos bustous churiles,
Bot couerde camellez with tours enclosyde in maylez.
He ayerez oute with alyenez, ostes full huge...
In the contré of Coloine castells ensegez
And suggeournez that seson wyth Sarazenes ynewe. (610-17, 623-24)

The potential grandeur of the knights of the Roman Empire ("the emperour armede at ryghtys"; "appon ryche stedys") vanishes with the revelation that supernatural forces support them. Diabolical giants, witches and warlocks are associated not only with the lower classes ("churiles") but with Muslims ("Sarazenes"); all are "alyenez." The poet's demarcation of the Other resembles the vision of the illuminators of the Luttrell Psalter: the creators of both texts construct an ethnically, socially and spiritually repugnant identity for the outsiders.®*

The use of the word "aliens" not only demarcates the boundaries between Arthur’s England and its enemies; it also links the imperial Roman forces that threaten England externally at the beginning of the poem with the Muslim allies of Mordred that endanger England internally toward the poem’s end. While the term embraces the diversity of outsiders (Romans and Saracens), it stabilizes the essential unity and righteousness of Arthur and his Britain.®®  Michael Twomey has argued that

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®® Cp. Camille on the Luttrell Psalter’s depiction of foreigners as both social and racial inferiors (Mirror in Parchment 289-94).

®® Malory too uses the word to indicate foreignness, but his unusual spelling of it as "alyauntes"/"alyauntis" (Works, ed. Vinaver, 114, 115) suggests a lesser degree of comfort with it than the Morte-poet’s.
Mordred's usurpation of the throne suggests the poet's view that, at the end of his career, Arthur is morally unfit to rule. Arthur's wars cease to be just, even in Britain against the evildoer, and the presence of "Saracens" and Gawain's Roland-esque battle speech do not detract from the injustice of Arthur's invasion ("Heroic Kingship" 145). Twomey's argument, however, forces him to dismiss the poet's wish to underscore ethnographically the obvious iniquity of the Roman and Eastern invaders as well as Arthur's righteous cause. The same philosophers whose critical interpretation of Arthur's second dream elicits the approval of Twomey and other readers also make it very clear, in their description of Arthur's enemies, which party is just and which unjust:

"Bot the wolfes in the wode and the whilde bestes
Are some wikkyd men that werrayes thy rewmes,
Es entirde in thyh absence to werraye thy pople,
And alyenys and ostes of vncouthe landis ..." (3446-49)

The wickedness that threatens to ravage Arthur's subjects is both animal and alien.

The word "aliens" appears for the last time in the poet's report of Mordred's preparations for final battle against Arthur:

Now ischewis his enmye vndire the eyuys
With ostes of alynes full horrebill to schewe:
Sir Mordrede the Malebranche with his myche pople ...

70 The lawfulness of defending the homeland has already been remarked on. Post, "Two Notes" 295-6 and n. 62, further quotes the lines of Geoffroi de Nés to Philip V of France: "It is permitted to repel force with force:/ Therefore, King, fight for the fatherland" ("Licitum est vi vim repellere:/ Igiture, rex, pugna pro patria").
All fyghtande folke of the ferre lanndes ... (4060-62, 4066)

The line beginning “Now isschewis” echoes, intentionally or otherwise, the line describing Lucius’ preparations earlier (610). When such small parallels are set up between Arthur and Lucius or the Giant of Genoa, the poet may be suggesting that Arthur risks resembling the tyrants whom he opposes, but I do not believe that resemblance means the same thing to this poet as exact identicality. There is far too much evidence in the text that indicates that the audience is supposed to praise the British king and hate his enemies. *Alyenes* are “horrebill,” “wolfes in the wode,” “whilde bestes”: the poet’s use of this term charges the representation of the Romans with connotations of subversiveness, destruction wrought from within as well as from without. It also deepens the range of meanings used in Parliamentary documents: when Parliament denounces Italian aliens in the 1430s and 1440s, the term has picked up the added meaning of “potential bearers of social instability,” a connotation that appears to be part of the semantic range expressed in the strident tone of those documents.

As long as Arthur fights against Roman imperial forces outside Italy and “Saracens” within Britain, the poet presents a straightforward conception of *alyenes* as evil conquerors or destroyers of the English homeland. A more complex understanding of the relationship between England and “alien” Italy appears when

71 *Pace*, among others, Harder, “Feasting” 60.
Arthur actually makes contact with the Lombard and Tuscan territories that he has vowed so enthusiastically to conquer. Some of the poem’s earliest readers may have associated the unjust Romans with the corrupt Papal Curia. I believe that the poet himself intends no such association and distinguishes Lucius’ Rome, the land of alyenes, from the pope’s Rome, still the spiritual communis patria, but his audience need not have seen things his way. What I think serve to keep imperial Rome separate from papal Rome are the justness of Arthur’s campaigns before he arrives in Italy and after he invades it and the specifically non-papal nature of his targets within the boundaries of both the ancient Roman and the Holy Roman empires.

Ample evidence in the poem suggests that Arthur defends the Roman Church piously and steadfastly. Once in Italy Arthur distinguishes between the tyrannical

72 On images of papal Rome, see the discussion in the Introduction, above. The dual view of Rome in the poem is more complex than that in the comparable episodes in Geoffrey of Monmouth and his translators. Perhaps not coincidentally, Rome’s split personality mirrors that of the Orient: “the Orient, like all sacred places, is profoundly ambivalent. Territory of the blessed, it is also a damned space, inhabited by Gog and Magog; from there voices come regularly to announce the coming of Antichrist” (Delacampagne 43: “l’Oriente, come tutti i luoghi sacri, è profondamente ambivalente. Territorio dei beati, è anche lo spazio maledetto abitato da Gog e Magog e da dove, con regolarità, provengono voci che annunciano la venuta dell’Anticristo”). For a recent and rich discussion of the flexibility of the idea of Gog and Magog in medieval travel narratives, see Westrem, “Against Gog and Magog.”

73 On the idea of Rome as communis patria, see Kantorowicz, King’s Two Bodies 205, n. 35; 246-48.

74 In France, Arthur praises God for having given him strength to defeat the Giant (1209-11), and he erects a church and monastery “In mynde of that martyre” (the duchess) whom the Giant slew (1218-21). He later responds sympathetically to the French messengers who urge the British sovereign, “for Petyr luffe, the apostyll of Rome” (1256), to defend his French territories and face Lucius and his “haythen kyngez” (1260) in battle. Fighting for the homeland or even its territorial possessions appears as a good in itself, both in the poem and in canon law. In the Glossa ordinaria (c. 1228),
lords of northern Italy and the representative of the one Lord who dwells in Rome.

Over the former the "Conquerour kene, curtais and noble" (2394) declares that he will impose law and order:

"Than will I by Lumbardye, lykande to schawe,  
Sett lawe in the lande that laste sail euer,  
The tyrauntez of Tuskayn tempeste a littyll,  
Talke with the temperall, whills my tym lasts.  
I gyffe my protteccione to all the Pope landez,  
My ryche pensell of pes my pople to schewe;  
It es a foly to ofiFende oure fadyr vndire Gode,  
Owther Peter or Paule, tha Postles of Rome.  
3if we spare the spirituell, we spede bot the bettire;  
Whills we haue for to speke, spille sail it neuer!" (2406-2415)

George Keiser has written that "Arthur's plan to establish a rule of law and order [in Lombardy] might well have seemed a noble goal" to the poet's audience.\(^75\) The British king's wish to impose eternally lasting law suggests the poet's awareness that Lombardy lacks precisely this kind of enduring stability. Adam of Usk and John Bromyard would have agreed. From the poet's dim view of the tyrants of Tuscany one may infer a similar awareness and disapproval of Lombardy's political climate.\(^76\)

Accursius writes: "Ut est religio ergo deum, ut parentibus et patriae pareamus, ut contra violentiam resistamus" ("As religion is [love, obedience] to God, so let us obey parents and nation [and] put up resistance to violence"); see Post, "Two Notes" 285-86 and n. 21.


\(^76\) One could infer reasonably the same thing about the poet's view of Europe during the Great Schism, which, in the face of the looming Turkish threat, "distracted Christendom" (\textit{sisma Christianitatis orbem ... disturbans}) in Adam of Usk's view: \textit{Chronicon Adae de Usk} 131 (Latin),
In promising to protect the Papal States — "all the Popez landez" — Arthur distinguishes between the communes of Italy and the Eternal City and between the spiritual and the secular Rome. This is a crucial point: the poet wishes his audience to direct its hostility not at the Church (Arthur is no armored Lollard) but at the ancient Italy of the Roman Empire and the contemporary Italy of the city-states. Arthur earlier swore to the imperial ambassadors that he would "merke sythen ouer the mounttez into [Lucius'] mayne londez, To Meloyne the maruaylous and myn doun the walles" (428-9). Having crossed the Mt. Gothard pass into Northern Italy, "Lukande one Lumbarddye," he predicts the immediate future and reveals his desire when he exclaims "'In 3one lykande londe lorde be I thynkel!'" (3108-9). The Morte Arthure poet does not condemn such expansionist desire, yet it seems that Lombardy has done nothing to warrant invasion except tempt Arthur with its "lykande" features. Indeed, complexities and complications abound in the poet's imagining of Italy as

317 (English). "It does not seem unlikely that in such conditions the poet's vision of the great national hero Arthur as a Christian emperor uniting Christendom in peace and harmony would have appealed to English audiences of the last decades of the fourteenth century" (Porter, "Medieval Laws of War" 76). Hamel surmises that the Byzantine Christian Priamus's desertion of the Duke of Lorraine's army of heretics and "Saracens" to join Gawain's "small but unified band of Latin Christians" may reflect the poet's longing for a unified Christendom sharpened by the visit of the Byzantine Emperor Manuel II Paleologus to the courts of Italy, France and England from 1400-1403: "'Christening'" 305-06.

77 Benson, "The Date," makes a similar claim about the poet: "Whoever the author of the Alliterative Morte Arthure was, he was no Lollard. His heroes devoutly swear by the veronica, venerate the saints, make pilgrimages, respect the sacraments, and carefully observe the temporal rights of the church" (31).
Arthurian object of desire. The British king strikes out for the Lombard town of Como and takes it by stratagem:

Than they care to Combe with kyngez anoynted,  
That was kyde of the coste kay of all other.  
To the cete' vnsene they soghte at the gayneste  
And sett an enbuschement als them selfe lykys.  
Than ischewis owt of that cete', full sone be the mome,  
Skailande discouerours, skyftes theire horses;  
Than skyftes these skouerours and skippes on hyllis,  
Diskouerers for skulkers, that they no skathe lymppen.  
Pouerall and pastevelles passede on aftyre  
With porkes to pasture at the price 3ates;  
Boyse in the subarbis bourden full heghe  
At a bare synglere that to the bente rynnys.  
Than abrekesoure buschemennt and the brigge wynnes,  
Brayedez into the burghe with baners displayede;  
Stekes and stabbis thorowe that them a3ayne-stondes —  
Fowre streitis, or thay stynte, they stroyen fore euer! (3094-3111)

Although fierce in battle, Arthur’s knights capture Como for the good reason that it was recognized (“kyde”) as the most strategically important city (“kay”) in the region. It is no helpless out-of-the-way village to which the machinations of conquerors are unknown. Arthur devises an ambush (“enbuschement”) precisely to avoid the “skailande discouerours,” the scouts who disperse through the vicinity to detect would-be besiegers. The poet seems to emphasize the activity of reconnoitering (“discouerours,” “skouerours,” “diskouerers”); perhaps the choice of words meaning “scout” and “reconnoiter” is made to suit the alliterative pattern, but perhaps too the poet wishes to paint Como as in some sense a typical Lombard commune. The poor people and herdsmen (“pouerall,” “pastevelles”) begin their daily affairs in company
with military scouts on the alert for some tyrant’s marauding mercenaries. These lines suggest routine activity, and although Arthur’s ambush succeeds in surprising and overcoming the city’s defenders, the very fact that Como sends out scouts at the break of day suggests that readiness for assault is part of its identity.

The poet depicts the destruction caused by Arthur’s forces in Como with a dramatic flair: not only do they destroy four streets, but they destroy them “fore euer.” It is difficult to know precisely what the poet had in mind in describing the carnage in this way. The loss of four streets does not seem great, and the poet indicates that Arthur and his soldiers pierce and slay only those who show resistance (“that them a3eyne-stondes”). Much more important an indication of the poet’s sympathies is the phrase “oure buschemennt” (3108): the English poet and his audience have the same nationality as the ambushing army. Como is therefore the unfortunate “they,” the enemy. Of course siege by stratagem was perfectly in keeping with the rules of war (Porter, “Chaucer’s Knight” 71), and Arthur further legitimates his siege by keeping his banners raised (Hamel, Critical Edition 353, n. to l. 3109), and the capture of the town is beneficial to Arthur’s troops and the townsmen (Porter, Hamel). If English readers were expecting a reprise of the Sege of Melayne hinted at in Arthur’s earlier promise to tear down its walls, it never happens, because the quick capture of Como has prompted the “Syre of Melane” (3134) to surrender “Meloyne the maruaylous” — and Piacenza, Pietrasanta, Pontremoli, Pisa and Pavia (3140-41) — without a fight, an impressive accomplishment that signals both Arthur’s prowess and the cowardice (if
also the fantastic wealth)\textsuperscript{78} of the Milanese duke. But the poet apparently wishes to evoke his audience’s sympathy for the conquered. The rustic simplicity of the herdsmen leading their pigs out to pasture and that of the boys who joust (“bourden”) with what may be not a wild boar but a domestic pig (Hamel, *Critical Edition* 354, n. to ll. 3106-07) contrast sharply with the scheming Arthur, who lies in wait for just the right opportunity to attack the town. Lombardy is not merely a land of tyrants and warfare but the home of human beings, who herd pigs, play games and hope that their cities will not be invaded, even if in all likelihood they will be. Arthur may be justified in taking his war all the way to Rome, but this fact does not preclude our seeing that he at least begins to resemble the Roman tyrant he earlier vanquished, and that the Italy he is conquering seems more akin to the familiar (because it is humanized) and less like the Other.

Entering Tuscany, Arthur resumes his vigorous campaigning, captures towns, destroys defensive towers and causes pain and hardship for the people:

\begin{quote}
Into Tuskane he tournez, when thus wele tymede,
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
Takes townnes full tyte with towrres full heghe;
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
Walles he welte down, wondyd knyghte, towrres he turnes and turmentez the pople;
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
Wroghte wedewes full wlonke, wrotherayle synges,
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
Ofte wery and wepe and wryngen theire handis,
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
And all he wastys with werre thare he awaye rydez –
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
Thaire welthes and theire wonny[n]ges wandrethe he wroghte!
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{78} The Sire of Milan not only offers Arthur these cities but sends him large quantities of gold upon sixty horses (3136) and promises him purple cloth, fine pall cloth, gems, palfreys and steeds, a million in gold yearly, and his and his heirs’ homage (3142-47).
Thus they spryngen and sprede and sparis bot lyttill,
Spoylles dispetouslye and spillis theire vynes,
Spendis vnsparely that spared was lange;
Spedis them to Spolett with speris inewe. (3150-61)

Again the poet wishes to humanize the Italian landscape, but in drawing attention to the creation of weeping widows, he confirms the stereotypical views of war-torn northern Italy. Moreover, he shows that just as Britain had a stake in the history of the ancient Roman Empire, so too it is involved in the modern history of Italy, in the creation of its widows. Arthur not only makes contact with the land of violence; he helps to shape it and make it conform to its reputation. As I have indicated in the preceding paragraph, I do not think the poet sees this journey of conquest as wrong, but he does illustrate the consequences of Arthur’s wars on the civilian population and apparently concedes the horrors of even a just war. It is still a just war because, violence notwithstanding, this devastation of Tuscany fulfills Arthur’s earlier promise “The tyrauntez o f Tuskayne [to] tempeste a littyll” (2408). Tuscany would have reminded the poem’s audience of tyranny, and perhaps Arthur’s exploits recalled those of the English adventurer Sir John Hawkwood and his infamous White Company, whom English subjects probably would have sympathized with rather than criticized.

79 Sir John Clanvowe wrote that war’s atrocities were simply a fact of contemporary life: “ffor the world holt hem worshipful that been greete werreyours and fi3ters and that distroyen and wynnen manye loondis, and of swyche folke men maken bookes and soonges and reeden and syngen of hem for to hooide the mynde of here deedes the lengere heere vpon eerth, ffor that is a thing that worldely men desiren greetyl that here name myghte laste loonge after hem heere vpon eerth” (Clanvowe, Works, ed. Scattergood, 69-70; quoted in Green, Poets and Princepleasers 196). Clanvowe does not defend war on moral grounds; he merely states that the world honors those who succeed at it.
Nevertheless, the moral picture in the poem is a complex one. The poet is clear about what side he is on, and thus what side we should be on, but the enemy in Italy comprises not bands of Saracens planning to invade England, but rather Christians struggling to defend themselves from yet one more potential tyrant. We are expected to perceive that the enemy, if not like "us," is closer to us than the enemy that Arthur fought previously.  

Arthur's subsequent advance toward the town of " Spolett," modern Spoleto in Umbria, is also important for what it reveals about the Italy that Arthur is conquering and about Arthur himself. Mary Hamel identifies Spoleto as a papal holding and accuses Arthur of having broken his earlier promise to protect the Church.  

This passage, already quoted above, merits another look, for it reveals what seems to be a deliberately crafted tone of ambiguity:

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Thus they spryngen and sprede and sparis bot lyttil,
Spoylles dispetouslye and spillis theire vynes,
Spendis vnsparely that sparede was lange;
Spedis them to Spolett with speris inewe. (3158-61)
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This is all we hear of Spoleto. What actually happens there is a mystery, because we do not know whether Arthur attacks the town or simply proceeds toward it en route

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80 On the other hand, it is curious that report of the devastation spreads as far as Spain and Prussia (3162): apparently the conquest of Tuscany would have meaning to people living in the still partly Islamic Spain and in pagan Prussia if Tuscany's defenders still included the Muslim and pagan mercenaries recruited by Lucius.

81 *Critical Edition*, 332 (notes to ll. 2410-15) and 357 (notes to l. 3161).
to Rome. Because the poet frequently juxtaposes place names according to the requirements of alliteration and repeats an alliterating letter or group of letters for three, four or even more lines,\textsuperscript{82} the naming of Spoleto in a series of lines governed by the consonant group “sp” prevents us from saying anything certain about the poet’s intentions for Arthur’s goals while in this region of Italy. As Mary Hamel points out, “arguments based on names must be presented with circumspection (“‘Christening’” 299). Nevertheless, the poet’s silence on Arthur’s exact doings in or near Spoleto suggests that the town exists in a borderline space between peace and war. More precisely, it and perhaps even the papacy, of which Spoleto is a territorial possession, hover between being the object of Arthur’s benevolence and being the object of Arthur’s desire, either desire for conquest or desire for legitimization. We expect violent language to be used in the account of Arthur’s affairs in Spoleto; the poem almost literally points in the direction of violence by emphasizing the British army’s “speris inewe.” Is violence deflected or deferred or carried out and merely silenced? We cannot know; all we can know is that the closer Arthur gets to Rome, the more spiritual the implications of his advance become.

\textsuperscript{82} Kelly, “Non-Tragedy” 101, notes the subordination of geographical precision to alliterative need. On “the running-on of the same alliterating letter through successive lines (a particular feature of \textit{Morte Arthure}),” see Pearsall, \textit{Old English and Middle English Poetry} 161; Vaughan, “Consecutive Alliteration.” Vaughan’s belief that this practice indicates an important structural method is not shared by Spearing, \textit{Readings} 140-41, who finds it “grotesque and even vulgar.”
Shortly after Arthur's successful conquest of Tuscany-Umbria, there appears the "konyngeste cardynall that to the courte lengede" (3177). He begs Arthur to "hafe peté of the Pope, that put was at vndere" (3180) and offers to Arthur the imperial crown, to be placed on his head in Rome (3183-86). These tidings elicit Arthur's joyous exclamation "'Now may we reuell and riste, for Rome es oure awenl'" (3207). William Matthews holds that Arthur's meeting with this supplicating cardinal reveals that the king has been warring against the papacy all along; the poet intended such a conflict, Matthews reasons, in order to direct moral criticism against Arthur's belligerence (Tragedy o f A rthur 134 and 205, n. 25). But the cardinal does not seem to be Arthur's enemy here. He is described as "konyngeste," which Hamel glosses as merely "most learned" or "most skilled." He appears to function as an intermediary or peace-weaver between the two warring parties, an appropriate role for one of the pope's representatives. It may be the case that the pope was "put ... at vndere" (placed in subjection) by the heretical Lucius rather than by Arthur, but it must be conceded that here too the poet is intriguingly ambiguous. On the one hand, it is a perfectly sensible decision to send a cardinal to discuss peace with Arthur. Either the Roman senators or the pope himself assumed that Arthur, being the good Christian

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83 On the efforts of medieval popes to effect truces among warring nations, see M. Powicke, "War as a Means to Peace." Powicke's essay offers grounds for supposing that Arthur's intended conquest of the Roman Empire could have been defended as a means to ensure lasting peace within the British king's "rightful" Continental possessions. The representation of this cardinal and, for that matter, the papacy itself in Malory's version is more ambiguous. The cardinal and the senators seem to work more closely together: see Works, ed. Vinaver, 145.
that he is, would not menace one of the pope’s representatives entrusted with the role of peacemaker. This assumption turns out to be correct, for although the English king covets the imperial crown, he is not about to trample the papal mitre: he realizes that his legitimate claim to the former depends on the sanctification offered by the latter. And after the truce has been declared, Arthur holds a banquet for senators and cardinals alike. He “Rehetez the Romaynes at his riche table,/ Comforthes the cardynall so knyghtly hym seluen” (3198-99). The poet still portrays Arthur favorably, and cites textual authority as the basis for this portrayal: “And this roye ryall, as romawns vs tellis,/ Reuerence[s] the Romayns in his riche table” (3200-01).

On the other hand, much has been made of Arthur’s taking of the hostages offered by the cardinal, as though the hostages had been handed over by the pope. I believe that the text makes no such claim:

Of this vndyrtakynge, o stage are comyn
Of ayers full auenaunt, awughte score childrene
In toges of tarsse full richelye attyiyde,
And betuke them the kynge and his clere knyghttes. (3187-90)

These “ayers” seem not to be papal subjects but heirs to the thrones of the countries under Rome’s dominion. They are dressed in oriental “togas of Tarsus” (referring to either the city in southern Turkey or its fine silk fabric), which hints at a further association with Lucius and the Empire, not with the pope. But yet again, where one wishes the poet had been as explicit as possible, he prevents us from stating with certainty that the hostages are not the pope’s.
What the poet implicitly asks us to have faith in is Arthur’s own faith in God. After taking formal possession of Rome, Arthur will demonstrate his piety and “Syne graythe ouer the Grette See with gud men of armes/ To reuenge the Renke that on the Rode dyede.” H.A. Kelly responds to those who detect authorial criticism of Arthur by asking “Is this the picture of a power-mad killer who wars even against the Church?” (“Non-Tragedy” 112) It appears not to be. Although one might dismiss as irony Arthur’s vow to journey to the Holy Land to avenge Christ’s crucifixion, there is nothing ironic or clichéd in the poet’s depiction of the Saracens menacing Arthur before his arrival at Rome, or of the Saracen forces helping Mordred to wreak havoc in Britain. But the poet’s description of Arthur’s ultimate spatial retreat from Italy marks an ideological retreat from imperialist longing and a return home to the proper political domain of Britain and the religious domain of Arthur’s own soul.

This turning back from secular Rome toward the spiritual Rome, actually toward its manifestation within Arthur in his fully Catholic piety, has been prepared for us by the poet. Arthur’s second dream (3222-3393) and its interpretation by the philosophers (3394-3455) signal that his “fortune es passede” (3394), that he is guilty

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85 Chism sees the reverse in the *Siege of Jerusalem*: “From the outset, then, Christian initiative is directed away from private contemplation, prayer, and submission and toward imperial, military prowess” (“Liquidating Assets” 312). Incidentally, that poem’s generally enthusiastic portrait of the
of shedding blood through "cirquytrie" (3398-99) and that he should confess his "schame" now that he has had this "schewynge" (3400-01). But we learn that he is also to join the Nine Worthies and be celebrated "in romance" and "in cronycle" as "the doughtyeste that euer was duelland in erthe" (3438-45). Not only his military prowess but also his piety will assure Arthur of this status: he thanks God for having granted him "vertue and witt" to achieve victory over Mordred and world domination (4296-4300, 4305-06); he then asks for a confessor (4314-15) and is buried with bell-ringing, requiems, "Dosse messes and matyns," and, importantly, "Relygeous reueste in theire riche copes,/ Pontyficalles and prelates in precyouse wedys" (4332-35). Arthur is fully integrated with the Church of Rome, and the poet reasserts here the "proper" image of Rome as dispenser of blessings to the faithful, of whom Arthur is recognized as the paragon. If we are to understand the philosophers' censure of Arthur as authoritative and authorial, we nevertheless see the poet portraying him as a warrior who atones for his sins. He departs this life with a martial dignity worthy of a Roman emperor (albeit uncrowned) and a piety appropriate to a communicant of the Roman Church. The imperial coronation ceremony that does not take place at Rome

Christianized Roman Empire is profoundly different from the Morte Arthure's harsh invective against it.

86 Harwood glosses the word "prelates" in lines 146, 416 and 637 as "the lords spiritual, particularly the two archbishops and the nineteen bishops, but perhaps also abbots and priors" ("Witness to Epic" 269).
is superseded by the Roman Catholic burial ceremony that takes place in the island kingdom.

The *Morte*-poet all along has championed Arthur, however imperfect he may be. In fact, Arthur seems all the more praiseworthy because he is capable of both sin and redemption.® What then can be said of the ambiguities in the poet’s handling of Arthur’s Italian wars and thus of the image of Italy itself? I have speculated that what Larry Benson identifies as the “tension of unresolved conflicts” arises from the poet’s skill in fashioning characters and motives and in exploring complex themes in subtle ways. The poet also shows great skill in writing about Italy, the land from which the threat to Britain is launched and in which that threat is eliminated only to be followed by news of internal dangers in Britain. Italy is an aggregate of enemy lands that cooperate under imperial Rome and provide Lucius with soldiers, mercenaries and grotesque giants with which to conquer the renegade colony governed by Arthur. The poet wishes both to unify Italy and to individuate its cities in order to heighten the

® Other reasons have been proposed for Arthur’s ambiguous portrayal. Rondolone claims that “our inconsistent responses to the poem in general and to Arthur in particular” result from the “contradictory pressures from [the poet’s] environment: although he used written sources, he was working in an oral (or at least oral-derived) medium in an age which was still essentially craft-literate” ("Wyrchipe" 208) and thus “demonstrates how the old oral-heroic values and the more recent literate-Ricardian values met and clashed” (215; 217). More persuasive, in my view, is Harwood’s view that “Composed from written sources and within the habits of literacy, the *Morte Arthure* is paradoxically preeminent in meeting the tests for oral composition. It seems to be oral because the poet wishes it to appear that way. Rather, that is the way he wishes it to sound. Part of his purpose, I suggest, was trompe-l’oreille – giving his work the sound of the orally composed, orally transmitted poem that he was reshaping his written sources to imitate. He does not use some third technique transitional between oral and written; rather, he simulates orality in writing” ("Witness to Epic" 247).
physical threat to England posed by these *alyenes*. The prospect of a united Italian peninsula would have seemed a minor marvel in itself to anyone who knew how politically fragmented communal Italy really was, but in light of the communes’ economic strength, a victory over their combined power might have seemed momentous. The unification of the Italian enemy and its alliance with the forces of Islam actually profit England morally, for the Round Table must rouse itself from ignominious sluggishness, defend Britain, and reclaim Rome and its empire. On the temporal level Rome and the Lombard and Tuscan communes lead Arthur to impose secular law upon them; on the spiritual level, papal Rome leads him to a transcendence that prepares him for entry into the afterlife without canceling out the glory of the temporal undertaking.\(^8^8\)

Italy thus signifies both temptation and redemption, or at least preparation for redemption. During Arthur’s battles in Burgundy and Lorraine, and later on in Britain, Arthur appears as a crusader, waging religious warfare against Saracens, pagans and heretics. In those battles, Arthur wins temporal renown and spiritual glory at the same

\(^{88}\) Several critics of the *Morte Arthure* have claimed that the poem reveals an unresolved conflict between spiritual and temporal glory. Again, I am not convinced that a conflict exists. Maurice Keen has written that for chivalric treatise writers like Geoffrey de Charny “[c]hivalry is a means to salvation; he who takes arms for just purpose will save his soul, be it in his lord’s cause, or in defence of the weak, or to save his own honour and heritage, or against the infidel” (*Chivalry* 14). Although in the *Morte Arthure* a religious level has been shown to exist above the level of temporal glory, Arthur’s chivalric conduct does not prevent his entry into Heaven. On the contrary, his fighting against the enemies of Christianity, Britain and the Round Table aids him in his quest for salvation, even if he must seek pardon for some of his excesses.
time. His battles in Italy are different, as I have stated above: lacking Muslim
opponents, his campaigns there no longer recall the Crusades. Religious sanctification
comes not in Arthur's wars in Italy but in his retreat from Italy and return to face
Mordred and the Saracens in Britain. And yet if Arthur had not defeated Lucius,
entered Italy and pursued the imperial crown all the way to Rome, Mordred could not
have initiated the betrayal of his feudal lord that ultimately secured Arthur's
reconciliation with the Lord of Heaven and His representative in the pope. Arthur
realizes the primacy of this spiritual experience when, on his deathbed in England, he
offers prayerful thanks to God, who has "euer 3it the ouerhande of all other kynges"
(4300). Italy thus has become a twofold land: it comprises the northern Italian
communes, ruled by lawless tyrants and, because of this chaotic governance, presented
as fair game for British conquest and law. Yet Italy is also the home of the kingship-
legitimating and soul-saving papacy; it is the site of "schewings" and repentance.

89 Arthur's poignant death scene makes it clear that there will be no return from Avalon. The
portrayal of the king in this poem nevertheless aroused the sympathy of a later reader: at the end of
the poem in the Thornton manuscript someone has written "Hic jacet Arthurus rex qui lojondam rexque
futurus." Brewer has called this "Thornton's characteristic phrase" (Introduction, Thornton
Manuscript vii), but Hamel observes that the line has been "added in a somewhat later hand, perhaps
by a chance reader who disagreed with the poet's ending, or simply remembered the line from
elsewhere and could not resist adding it. It is certainly not part of the poem" (Critical Edition 397, n.
to ll. 4347-49; her "Scribal Self-Corrections" 119, n. 1; and O'Laughlin, "Middle English Alliterative
Morte Arthure" 168). The glory of the English nation is increased both by Arthur's sure death —
longing for the king's return implies cultural insecurity, a need for that return — and the deflating of
Welsh hopes for his return. Whoever penned the familiar inscription from Arthur's tomb saw the
myth of Trojan origin very differently from the way Patterson sees it (in "Romance of History").
Italy is partly an abstraction lifted from old chronicles to provide Britain with a national enemy and thus a moral purpose, and it is partly a land of warmongering tyrants. I do not claim that the poet wishes to discard the familiar concept of Italy as land of strife and disorder. Indeed, he suggests that the *terrae Italiae* have nothing to lose and everything to gain from British sovereignty, including the removal of demons and giants and the treachery, unnatural lust and supernatural evil they embody. The king's pious death does not mean that Arthurian order was not needed in Italy, a land not normally associated with order. Adam of Usk's "viper race of Lombardy" is the same discordant race that Langland and Gower inveighed against in their works and the author of *Sir Beues of Hamtoun* envisioned slaughtered in the streets of London; it is the same race that produced Chaucer's "tyrauntz" (the *Morte* too imagines "tyrauntz" of Tuscany and Genoa); the same *terrae guerrarum* whose dangers to pilgrims and merchants alike provided John Bromyard with a cautionary tale for his English hearers. Arthur's journey through Lombardy and Tuscany is intended not to elicit criticism but to stir adrenaline: Derek Pearsall has observed that the poet's ingenious handling of verbs in this episode (3591 ff.) "releas[es] the dynamism of the language and giv[es] to the journey a resistless abandon."\(^9\) The towns in those

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\(^9\) *Old English and Middle English Poetry* 162. A similar observation concerning the poet's use of verbs appears in Spearing, *Readings in Medieval Poetry*, 150. Elsewhere, Pearsall has stated that the alliterative revival is not necessarily associated with English nationalism: "English flooded back [after the decline of Anglo-Norman "as a fashionable literary language"], and in this particular part of the country [the West Midlands] with its more tenacious tradition of English as a high-caste language, and with an equally tenacious traditional poetic form at hand, it flooded back as unhymned
regions, regardless of their Christian inhabitants, act as lightning bolts for Arthur’s martial energies. Wolfgang Obst has remarked that Arthur, following the reduction of Lorraine, “plans to establish an eternal *pax arthuriana* in Italy” (“Gawain-Priamus Episode” 13); I think it is fair to call it more generally a *pax Britannica*, and not simply because Arthur is a Briton. The order and stability that this poet imagines for Italy reflect British ideals of just rule, British anxieties over the prospect of national unity being shattered by specifically internal chaos, and British responses to Italy.

We also see, however, that in Italy there dwell ordinary mortals who suffer in wartime, not as monstrous giants but as peasants, shepherds and wives. Arthur’s slaughter of knights in Tuscany creates many “wedewes full wlonk ... [who] wepe and wryngen theire handis” (3155). One could ask, with some justification, whether Arthur is not worse than the tyrants he seeks to vanquish. Robert Lumiansky has argued that whereas Arthur creates stability and order in Lorraine, “he does not stabilize the conquered areas [of Italy] — rather he leaves them in chaos and devastation,” causing the same “‘wandreth’ or evil destruction ... with which Lucius was earlier charged (323, 2370), and to which Mordred later admits (3889).”

He alliterative verse. These historical circumstances need no gloss, and certainly the movement embodied no national or anti-French feeling such as Hulbert (1930-1) postulated in his thesis of the alliterative revival as the poetry of baronial opposition”: “Alliterative Revival” 44-45.

Lumiansky 109, 110-111. Eadie responds that “wandreth” has “no specific pejorative overtones” since it appears six times in various contexts and appears to have been chosen for reasons of alliteration and meter as well as meaning (9).
began as a defender of England; is he about to become a quintessential foreign signore over Italian peoples who did not invite him to govern them?92

Although I disagree with Lumiansky’s and Russell Peck’s judgments that Arthur has become a tyrant, I do agree with Peck that the king “dispossesses himself” and has been alienated from his true home – Britain on the literal level, Heaven on the allegorical.93 We do not see Arthur’s inner spirituality completely manifested until he has fought the Holy War against Mordred and the Saracens and regained the throne of Britain, which he hands on to Constantine, who, as the poet has already told us, will discover the True Cross. His piety appears most fully when Arthur is dying in Britain, but the way to that piety and penitence was prepared in Rome, by the moral teachings of the philosophers and by Sir Cradok, who reminds all of us of Rome’s higher valence as the site of papal pardons for sins. Arthur may have “alienated” himself spiritually (to use Peck’s term) from Heaven, but the poet clearly wishes us to see a difference between this form of alienation (which is temporary, as we realize at

92 Had the poet chosen to give a voice to the fearful Lombards and Tuscans, perhaps their lament would have echoed that of the lawyer Bartolomeo di Saliceto, who railed against the notorious English mercenary John Hawkwood: “What shall I say of these companies of men at arms who overrun the territories of our cities? I reply that there is no doubt about their position, for they are robbers ... and as robbers they should be punished for all the crimes they have committed”; quoted in Keen, Chivalry 227-28. But the poet demonstrates that Arthur’s conquest of Italy is no crime.

93 “Willfulness and Wonders,” esp. 155, 158, 170. It seems unhistorical, however, to claim that “His geographical displacement is simply a manifestation of his psychological disorder” (172).
Arthur's burial mass) and the permanent political and spiritual alienation of the enemy 

*alyenes*, strangers to both Britain and Heaven.

Arthur's return journey homeward involves a spiritual turning inward, and connected with this complex depiction of the British king is the nuanced representation of his object, the subjugation of Rome and its territories. The poet humanizes Italy by presenting it as a place not so different from England. In fact, the two "nations" resemble each other in their contacts with the East: Mordred's recruitment of Muslim mercenaries for the purpose of toppling Arthur's regime suggests a striking parallel to Lucius' enlistment of "Saracens" for the same purpose. The poet seems to believe that his English audience ought to heed the example of Italy for two reasons. The first is that the Roman cultural and historical heritage is an imperialistic one: it sees Britain as an inferior colony to be brought back into the Empire by force, and it tempts the British king to adopt a similar imperialist policy, which ultimately proves less attractive and important than the maintaining of order in the island kingdom. The second reason is that England can learn from Italy about the dangers of heterodox religious thinking, figured either as heresy or as intimate contact with the East. Lucius is a "fals heretik" in Gawain's words, and he thus demonstrates his unworthiness to rule; his hiring of Muslim "sowdeours" only confirms his and imperial Rome's moral depravity. That these warning signs apply to England appears in the disaster that befalls it when Mordred illegitimately seizes power. The dreaded
“serpent of division” – Lydgate’s phrase for internal dissension⁹⁴ – is a sovereign terror, joined here with religious heterodoxy and invasion by alyenes. I do not propose that heretical Romans and Muslim mercenaries should be seen as mere surrogates for Lollards, but I do believe that this poet’s highlighting of the repugnance instilled and national crisis posed by religious error in any guise parallels late fourteenth- and fifteenth-century anxieties over the dangers to orthodox Catholicism posed by Wyclif and his followers and, perhaps more relevant here, the increasing urgency of the Turkish threat to Europe.⁹⁵ Italy threatens Britain not only by marshaling the forces of the Other World against it, but also by providing it with a lesson about the moral and spiritual consequences of bringing that world into the homeland.

The circumstances of Arthur’s burial – masses, bell-ringing, the officiating by pontificals and prelates – confirm that on the spiritual level Arthur has found the true Rome; in the words of the decretists, “Rome is where the pope is” (Kantorowicz, King’s Two Bodies) and papal blessings apparently follow Arthur into the grave in Britain. The presence of papal representatives sanctifies Arthur, but Arthur’s solemn burial and exalted dignity in turn legitimate the papacy; after the “Babylonian

⁹⁴ In Lydgate’s short prose tract The Serpent of Division, ed. MacCracken, a synonymous phrase is “Snake of Wantrust and of discorde” (52).

⁹⁵ For insights into the Siege of Jerusalem’s similar mediation of these anxieties, see Chism’s fine analysis in “Liquidating Assets,” especially 312-14 and 332-33.
Captivity” in Avignon and during the Great Schism, it probably needed all the legitimization it could receive.

At least one reader and re-writer of the *Morte Arthure* story, Thomas Malory, seems to have taken a more critical view of the papacy than the *Morte* poet’s. Although Arthur “was crowned Emperour by the Poopys hondis” and later “toke his leve of the holy fadir the Pope and patryarkys and cardynalys and senatoures full rych” (Vinaver, *Works* 145, 146), the pope’s legitimizing powers are accorded less reverence in the *Le Morte d’Arthur* than in the alliterative poem. Earlier a duke of “Weste Walys,” whose knights were captured by the Viscount of Rome while they were making a pilgrimage through Tuscany, complained of his treatment to the pope, “but I had nothynge ellys but pleasaunte wordys; other reson at Roome myght I none have, and so I yode my way sore rebuked” (115). This remark may not suggest collaboration between emperor and pope, but Malory’s papal Rome does resemble the inefficient and ineffectual bureaucracy familiar from anti-curial complaint poems. The fact that in Malory Arthur does not die at the end of the “Emperor Lucius” episode means that the British king need undergo no healing spiritual redemption and need not retreat from the temptations of empire to save his own soul.

Very different is the ending of the alliterative *Morte Arthure*, where the spiritual Rome is justified, in a sense, by the exempla of Arthur’s pious death and chivalric life. These two aspects of Arthur’s character were separated from each other
in Italy, but are recombined in Britain. The last lines of the poem again assert the validity of British history and historiography, the British view of Britain's own past:

Thus endis Kyng Arthure, as auctors alegges,  
That was of Ectores blude, the kynge son of Troye,  
And of sir Pryamous the prince, praysede in erthe:  
Fro thethen broghte the Bretons all his bolde eldyrs  
Into Bretayne the brode, as the Bruytte tellys. (4342-46)

Britain's legendary identity receives a sort of ideological confirmation from the poet's account of Arthur's exemplary death, a fitting Christian culmination to a period of strife against the "heretik" Roman emperor and his "haythen" allies. British cultural identity appropriates the religious aura of papal Rome, for it is in Britain that Arthur attains to spiritual perfection. The Roman Empire, on the other hand, is remembered as something conquered but not possessed; by the end of the poem its prestige has vanished. Arthur's retreat from Italy suggests that Rome, its territories and its cultural legacy are not worth keeping if internal danger menaces Britain. This skeptical, or at least qualified, view of the importance of the classical Roman heritage will appear in differing degrees in Lydgate's *Fall of Princes* and Capgrave's *Solace of Pilgrims*. In the *Morte Arthure*, Lombardy, Tuscany and (secular) Rome seem mere baubles; they

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96 Of the ending of the poem, Field, "Anglo-Norman Background," writes: "We are a long way here from the romance version of a wasted Britain in which the body of the king – if he is indeed dead – is attended by lonely hermits. In no other version is the continuity of society so clearly expressed, and it is an idea fully consistent with the poet's interpretation of the material. ... In this emphasis on the dependence of the king on his lords can perhaps be seen the lasting contribution of baronial influence on English Arthurian literature, through its direct influence on Malory" (69).
number among the riches of empire that Arthur wisely rejects in order to attend to the
more important business of saving Britain from internal strife and of saving his own
soul by asking for a confessor. The focus of the poem narrows from empire to
kingdom to the soul of the king, but Arthur’s decision to initiate this narrowing seems
to be, from the poet’s point of view, the right choice.
Unlike the alliterative *Morte Arthure*, the *Fall of Princes* conceives Anglo-Italian relations not as open warfare between nations but as dialogue between scholars. Bookish Benedictine that Lydgate was, however, he could rattle the saber when the historical reputation of England was at stake. In Book IX, Lydgate’s energetic invective\(^1\) targets presumptuous and tyrannical rulers but also his predecessor, the “auctour” Boccaccio,\(^2\) for his unprofessional and Anglophobic scorn of English chivalry. At first Boccaccio seems a pleasant figure, authoritative without being authoritarian: in his vision, he wins the trust of illustrious personages from many nations and epochs, and he patiently listens to their occasionally long tales of woe. Roman and Italian figures make a strong showing in this procession of worthies, and

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\(^1\) Cf. the image of a tired Lydgate painted by Lerer, *Chaucer and His Readers* 34-39 and by Wallace, *Chaucerian Polity* 333: “In pursuing his patron through the whole length of the *Fall of Princes*, Lydgate becomes ever more exhausted and alienated from his own intellectual labor.”

\(^2\) Or “Bochas,” as he appears in Lydgate’s source, the second version of Laurent de Premierfait’s French translation of the *De casibus virorum illustrium*. I use Gathercole’s edition of Book 1 of Premierfait’s *Des cas des nobles hommes et femmes* along with the substantial excerpts reprinted in vol. 4 of Bergen’s edition of Lydgate’s *Fall of Princes* (the standard edition of that work, and the one I use in this dissertation). In quoting or citing Boccaccio’s Latin original I employ Ricci and Zaccaria’s edition, included in Branca’s multivolume edition of Boccaccio’s collected works.
even Dante and Petrarch visit Boccaccio to goad him to finish his compilation: Roman and Italian history are clearly central to the *De casibus*’s Florentine author.

In Lydgate’s translation, however, the presumptuousness of Roman and Italian tyrants ultimately infects Boccaccio himself. Having failed to learn the lesson of humility that Lydgate’s Englishing insists upon, Boccaccio becomes an Italian casualty, a “modern instance” of an aspiring upstart. Although he commits no violent acts in history, he does violence to historiography. Conscious of being an Italian descended from Roman imperial grandeur, Boccaccio resurrects ancient Roman stereotypes of British backwardness and lets them taint what, in Lydgate’s view, ought to have been objective historical writing about the English victory over France at Poitiers. Lydgate refuses to alter his source and blunt Boccaccio’s anti-Englishness, not because he wishes to defer to the Florentine’s *auctoritas* but because he wishes to extend his heavy moralization of Italian tyrants to an Italian tyrannical author. He meets the Italian humanist’s criticism of English chivalry with a devastating blow to his scholarly reputation, and ultimately lifts England, its poets and its “noble princes” out of the mire of temporal chaos that traps all other nations.

Although ethnography was not foremost on Lydgate’s mind in the composition of the *Fall of Princes*,

3 In fact, in the late fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, “It is rather Lydgate’s own sententious generalities that seem to have struck a sympathetic note with his readers. The great majority of the
intellectual activities are not mutually exclusive, of course: medieval writers often presented moralized accounts of foreign peoples, and they similarly identified foreign persons or places in ethnic terms in order to hint at their perceived moral depravity (e.g., the Morte Arthure’s “Jolyane of Gene,” labeled as an “errawnte Jewe”). In light of Hayden White’s theory of history, Lydgate’s historiography, including his representation of Rome and Italy, cannot but be moralistic:

In order to qualify as historical, an event must be susceptible to at least two narrations of its occurrence. Unless at least two versions of the same set of events can be imagined, there is no reason for the historian to take upon himself the authority of giving the true account of what really happened. ... We can comprehend the appeal of historical discourse by recognizing the extent to which it makes the real desirable, makes the real into an object of desire, and does so by its imposition, upon events that are represented as real, of the formal coherency that stories possess. ... The demand for closure in the historical story is a demand, I suggest, for moral meaning, a demand that sequences of real events be assessed as to their significance as elements of a moral drama. (Content of the Form 20-21)

The Fall of Princes suggests two ways of presenting the history of ancient Rome, depending on whether the “cronicleer” is Italian or English. One can present it favorably, as many English writers in fact did, by calling for the emulation of the noble virtues of Rome’s cultivated citizens. On the other hand one can view Rome critically,

[copied manuscript] selections consist of passages of moral commentary or didactic injunction added in his translation. Particularly prominent are selections from Lydgate’s innovations, his Envoys, which seem often readily to have achieved the status of separate poems, silently excerpted from the larger work” (Edwards, “Influence of Lydgate’s Fall of Princes” 431; “Lydgate Manuscripts” 23). The very silence that seems to have greeted Lydgate’s representation of particular locales and personages in the Fall speaks volumes about the medieval Englishness of their reception. Many early readers of the Fall were more interested in moral didacticism rather than the classical past and the resurrection of its ideals in fifteenth-century Italy.

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condemning its barbarity, bloodlust, greed and civil strife. In spite of the occasional praise that he lavishes on a few Roman statesmen and poets, Lydgate generally shows himself to be a hostile reader of Roman history who wishes to give “the true account,” a characteristically moralistic, fifteenth-century English judgment “of what really happened.” I am not saying that as a fifteenth-century Englishman Lydgate of necessity had to condemn Rome, but I would argue that he polarized the range of possible responses to Roman history. A slavish translator of an Italo-Latin humanist history will accept pagan Rome in spite of its offenses, but a self-respecting Englishman and a vigorous aspirant to auctor status will put it on trial. The result of this close scrutiny is a highly bookish ethnography, one that acknowledges Italy as a center of classical history and humanist writing about that history but highlights political and moral disgraces rather than lauding cultural triumphs. In spreading out before his English readers this moralized history, Lydgate occasionally demonizes Roman and Italian tyrants and the passionate mobs they rule over. At the very least he “humanizes” or demystifies exalted objects of Italian humanist veneration: classical Rome and, in the case of Boccaccio, the very humanists themselves.

Lydgate decenters Rome, or, more precisely, he shows that it experienced a general cultural casus that mirrors the individual downfalls of its kings, emperors, senators and poets. And yet the Fall of Princes merely rehearse, though with greater passion, the troubles that afflict Rome in much medieval moralistic, didactic literature,
where this city takes a certain pride of place. What kept English writers interested in Rome was partly the fact that the deeds of the Romans were more closely related to British history than were the exploits of the Trojans or Thebans. “Historical” tensions between Rome and its colony of Britannia surface, as we have seen, in Geoffrey of Monmouth’s *Historia regum Britanniae* and the many historical poems, the *Morte Arthure* included, that follow in its wake. Furthermore, what Lydgate called the

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4 Despite their topographical non-specificity, the *Gesta Romanorum* originally may have comprised “stories from Roman history in actual use as texts for sermons ... these stories were then put together for the express purpose of being moralized, and finally appeared under the title of *Gesta Romanorum Moralizata*, or something similar”: Swan and Hooper, *Gesta Romanorum*, xiii, summarizing the argument of Hermann Oesterley (*Gesta Romanorum*, Berlin, 1872).

5 On the other hand, Smalley argues that Geoffrey of Monmouth’s *Historia* served to link England with the entire ancient world, not merely Rome: “The *Historia* popularised the fiction that Brutus the Trojan conquered the giants who inhabited Britain, and was the first ruler of the island. At the price of bedevilling the problem of British origins, this tall story made British and English history part of ancient history, or perhaps the other way around. It gave the Englishman a new and personal interest in the tale of Troy and the *Aeneid*” (16). Elsewhere: “Antiquity therefore came to Englishmen as part of their own history. As Christians they were linked to Rome and the Holy Land through the Bible and the lives of the saints. As Englishmen they were linked to Mount Olympus and Troy town” (24). I believe that it was easier to explore the link to Rome than to that ancient Greece because of the frequency of pilgrimages to the former, but Chism’s highly suggestive article “Too Close for Comfort” ably demonstrates the relevance of Alexander the Great’s Greek identity to a chivalrically-inspired audience in the northwest Midlands of England: “Despite his eastern and magical origins, Alexander becomes the founder of a chivalric empire and a worthy predecessor to fourteenth-century nobility who wished to look further back than Arthur or even Rome for desirable chivalric forefathers” (118). Classical locales could function differently in different Middle English texts: C.D. Benson contrasts the pessimistic view of Troy and Trojan history in Guido delle Colonne’s *Historia Destructionis Troiae* with the exuberant relish for war found in its Middle English translations, especially the *Laud Troy Book*. See his *History of Troy in Middle English Literature*, esp. 79. In the medieval English imagination, Thebes, Troy and Rome had a common feature: their downfalls were caused or aided by internal dissension, a favorite bugbear of Lydgate’s and the thematic link between ancient history and current concerns in England. Lydgate, of course, had already written *The Siege of Thebes* and the *Troy Book* by the time he began work on the *Fall* (but there was no Renaissance of interest in the Theban or Trojan classics to inveigh against!).
“serpent of division” had struck famously and more recently in Rome than in Thebes or Troy, and always threatened to do so in England.

“Medievalization”: The Englishing of the Italian Author

Lydgate’s ambivalence toward the Roman cultural heritage is paralleled by his dual view of his Italian source. In seeming more humanly fallible and less cosmically erudite a personality in the Fall of Princes than in his own De casibus virorum illustrium, Boccaccio is depicted (and later criticized) with what is usually referred to as Lydgate’s “medievalizing” tendencies. Critics have frequently used the term “medievalization” to describe Lydgate’s way of apprehending the world and books, and some explanation of it now is necessary. Although agreeing with Derek Pearsall’s characterization of the “Monk of Bury” as thoroughly medieval and medievalizing, Lee Patterson demurs at the proposition that he was “somehow unproblematically medieval, that [he] lived [his] medievalness naturally and without self-consciousness.”

Admittedly, although Boccaccio was a representative of the new literary humanism coming out of Italy, in the De casibus virorum illustrium he is still medieval in comparison to Petrarch: see Pearsall, John Lydgate 230-31; Branca, Giovanni Boccaccio 89-91; Boccaccio Medievale 20-21. Both authors were more readily understood by the rest of Europe in their “medieval” versions. On Petrarch’s reception in France, for example, Hay observes that “the French scholars with whom Petrarch was in correspondence were unable to understand his real originality: it was the traditional moralist of the De remedii utriusque fortunae who was admired in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries: not the critic of traditional philosophy, not the introspective, not the epic poet” (Italian Renaissance 193). The differences between Petrarch and Boccaccio and between these writers and
In his reading of the *Troy Book*, Patterson argues that its author, Lydgate, and its patron, Henry V, "adopt[ed] identities that were not simply traditional but *traditionistic*, identities that were conspicuously, perhaps even deliberately ‘typically medieval’" and were assumed in order to disguise awareness that old values and ideals no longer applied to present realities. Patterson borrows Brian Stock’s notion of the “traditionistic” as describing a self-conscious propagation of social values, as opposed to the unconscious repetition of the merely traditional:

All medieval society was traditional in some sense. However, at various periods, it is possible to distinguish between what I would call *traditional* and *traditionistic* action. Traditional action is substantive. It consists of the habitual pursuit of inherited forms of conduct, which are taken to be society’s norm. Traditionalistic action, by contrast, is the self-conscious affirmation of traditional norms. It is the establishment of such norms as articulated models for current and future behavior. These guidelines imperfectly reflect the past, since at any given time individuals are only in contact with a part of their cultural heritage. Indeed, one of the features of traditionalistic action is that norms are consciously selected from the fund of traditional knowledge in order to serve present needs. (*Listening for the Text* 164)

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later humanists may simply suggest different kinds of Italian humanism: see Black, “Humanism”; Wallace, *Chaucerian Polity* 300 ff.

7 Patterson, “Making Identities in Fifteenth-Century England” 73.

8 The result of “traditionalism” is probably what Hobsbawm calls the “formalized social past,” “a particular selection from the infinity of what is remembered or capable of being remembered. ... ‘We ought to return to the ways of our forefathers’ when we no longer tread them automatically, or can be expected to. This implies a fundamental transformation of the past itself. It now becomes, and must become, a mask for innovation, for it no longer expresses the repetition of what has gone before, but actions which are by definition different from those that have gone before. Even if the literal attempt to turn the clock back is made, it does not really restore the old days, but merely certain parts of the formal system of the conscious past, which are now functionally different” (“The Sense of the Past” II, 13-14).
The Fall of Princes too is a "traditionalistic" work in that it self-consciously selects and promotes familiar social ideas to serve present needs. Internal political dissension brings about the downfall of a realm; base-born foreigners who acquire power inevitably wreck their host country; princes must not oppress the poor but instead should rule with benevolence and prudence; historians should show no bias in preserving the past for future generations of readers. In giving voice to the first three of these ideas, Lydgate responds to the "present need" for just and wise governance in the kingdom of Henry VI. The fourth idea emerges in Lydgate's response to a different kind of "present need," his own personal duty to execute the translation asked of him by his patron, Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester. "Traditionalism" marks Lydgate's attitudes not only towards society and kingship but also towards historiography and the historian, such as Boccaccio.

Lydgate writes about the crafting of historical poetry as well as about the calamitous falls of princes. We shall see that these concerns are linked in his representation of Boccaccio, for his Italian "auctour," like his literary subjects, appears at first to be a noble and virtuous personage, but he jeopardizes his fortunes by

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9 This is the kind of rule that Henry VI, through no fault of his own, was unable to demonstrate at age nine, when Lydgate began writing the Fall under the patronage of Henry's regent, Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester. In spite of this fact, the earnestness of the Fall need not be taken as a naïve or self-deceiving attempt to wish away its author's alleged pessimistic view of England's future. This negative interpretation, which sees contradictions and confusion in Lydgate's long poems, has been made by Patterson, "Making Identities," and Strohm, "Hoccleve, Lydgate and the Lancastrian Court."
choosing to allow irrational passion to subvert what should be a rational ordering of
the textual “lives” placed in his care. Apart from the political needs that he must
address, then, Lydgate responds to a literary need for a magisterial English poetic
voice by deflating his predecessor’s authority. Lydgate would create a poetics that
enshrines prudence and truth, particularly the truth of England’s greatness, and not a
poetics that simply genuflects to Italian models, whose custodianship of the truth is as
fragile as the power of Roman and Italian tyrants.

Lydgate’s “traditionalism” appears in the first lines of the *Fall* in the depiction
of Bochas himself. In lines 8-469 of the Prologue to Book I, Lydgate introduces his
unfamiliar Florentine “auctour” by repeating familiar concepts about what the trade of
an “auctour,” in this case a poet, is all about. Poetry is the craft of artificers who
make the old seem new again, and yet poetry avoids presumption by showing
meekness and deference to sources and patrons. Poets should be capable of either
terseness or verbosity, as the situation requires. We see too that Bochas strives for
personal fame yet recognizes the importance of laboring for the common profit, for he
believes that it is “almesse” – a Lydgatean word absent from the Englishman’s sources
– to correct sinners of all social classes. We encounter the modesty topos so central
to Lydgate’s poetic,10 his meditation on the past glory of poets, his commendation of

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10 On the antiquity of the modesty-topos, see Curtius, *European Literature* 83-85. For a discussion of
the conscious strategies behind Lydgate’s appropriation of it, see Lerer, *Chaucer and His Readers* 1-56.
his pious patron, Duke Humphrey, and his implicit comparison of him to Julius Caesar. This last point affirms the historical and cultural membership of Lydgate’s English patron and England itself in the mainstream of Rome-derived European history. And yet what makes this “classicizing” of the patron an English authorial gesture is that it occurs within the context of poet-patron relations in England, where those relations differed markedly from those in other European courts.

The dominant trait that Lydgate shows in this “traditionalistic” prologue is subservience, deference to superiors, a stylized self-abasement before aristocratic power. This attitude is an understandable sign of the translator who is unsure of his status relative to his aristocratic patron, particularly at the English court, which fostered literary activity in the service of the state less enthusiastically than did its French, Burgundian and Neapolitan counterparts. Lydgate needed to write with caution: because of his precarious condition as a poet at the fifteenth-century English court (as opposed to his more stable identity as a Benedictine monk at Bury St. Green, Poets and Princepleasers 29, 149-52, 164-67, and especially 203-11. Lerer, Chaucer and His Readers 15-19 makes some suggestive remarks about patronage as conditioned by the “cultural insecurity” of the English fifteenth century. On patronage at the Neapolitan court, see Bentley, Literature and Politics in Renaissance Naples, 47-137. Lawton, “Dullness and the Fifteenth Century,” and Mertes, “Aristocracy” 58-59, point to the shared social and religious values of patrons and writers and, in Mertes’ article, the nobility and the clergy. However, Pearsall’s focus on the poet’s delicate situation when offering advice to rulers (John Lydgate 138-40), and Green’s example of Martin le Franc, whose Champion des Dames was ignored by the work’s patron, Philip the Good (205-6), suggest that the “dullness” of fifteenth-century literature was as much a matter of diplomatic tact shown by the ruled to the ruler as a feature of shared social values between them.
Edmund's), he could not play the raconteur with the self-assuredness of a Marie de France, nor could he champion poetry and poets as self-importantly and zealously as Petrarch and Boccaccio had done earlier. For his services to Duke Humphrey, the humanist Pier Candido Decembrio felt emboldened to name the payment he most desired, a villa that had belonged to Petrarch. This request, and its author's self-confidence, might well have met with a favorable response from an Italian patron. Decembrio's English patron, however, took offense, "and the subsequent cooling of his relationship with Candido suggests that he was not so deeply affected by the new humanist spirit as to be prepared to overlook the presumption of an inferior, however splendid his literary credentials" (Green, Poets and Princepleasers 210). Although in England service to a lord conferred upon the servant prestige and a measure of power, it also required constant deference and humility and often meant that a servant had to think of a reward as something discretionary rather than guaranteed. England's situation, then, was quite different, even in the 1430s, from Italy's: in spite of the sections in the Fall that praise poets and poetry, Lydgate could not approach his project or his patron with an Italian poet's magisterial authority. He seems to have been aware of this cultural divide between England and Italy — and perhaps of the  

12 For a discussion of the contrasting English and French royal perceptions of the court poet's authority, see Green, Poets and Princepleasers 106-13.

13 Green 204. On the importance of service in English society and institutions, see Horrox, "Service," esp. 66-67.
temperamental difference between a Benedictine writer such as himself and a lay writer such as Boccaccio\textsuperscript{14} — in his attempt to “Anglicize” his Italian auctor.

Boccaccio, or “Bochas,” exists in the Fall of Princes as a textual construct, the imagined recipient of the conventional humility with which fifteenth-century English writers greeted the figure of the author. Lydgate paradoxically needs both to follow closely behind this author and to alter him, to make him less offensive to Duke Humphrey: translating “with support off his magnificence,/ Vndir the wyngis off his correccioun” (Prologue, I, 435-36), the “Monk of Bury” promises, unlike Bochas, to show no bias of his own and to refrain from harsh attacks on persons or “estates”:

\begin{quote}
He bad me I sholde in especiall,  
Folwyng myn auctour, writen as I fynde,  
And for no fauour be nat parciall —  
Thus I meene to speke in generall,  
And noon estat syngulerly depraue,  
But the sentence off myn auctour saue. (Prologue, I, 443-48)
\end{quote}

The English reception of the Florentine humanist (or proto-humanist) at this early point in the text shows the same features that characterize Lydgate’s attitude toward Humphrey: deep formality, modesty and deference, the implicit rejection of

\textsuperscript{14} According to the Rule of St. Benedict, “If we wish to ask a favor of those who hold temporal authority, we dare not do so except with humility and respect” (ch. 20, trans. Meisel and del Mastro, p. 69). It would be interesting to trace Lydgate’s response to Benedictine teachings throughout his works. Perhaps even in Lydgate’s authorial modesty there is more sincerity, deriving from the Black Monk’s spiritual training, than critics sometimes allow. For some thoughts along these lines, see Cannon, “Monastic Productions.”
Petrarchan-Boccaccian self-importance.\footnote{The affected modesty that appears in the Preface to Boccaccio’s De Casibus and in Premierfait’s French translation contains nothing of the fulsome self-abasement found in Lydgate: cf. De casibus, Prohemium (in Ricci 8-10); De cas., Prologue II (in Gathercole 92-93) . In the Preface to his Genealogy of the Gentile Gods (whose fourteenth and fifteenth chapters famously glorify the poet and poetry), Boccaccio nearly turns the modesty topos into a caricature of itself: “from your exalted position, you have chosen me, as one supposed to enjoy deep and wide erudition in such matters, to be the author of this vast work. I will not dwell upon my wonder at your desire, for it becomes not a humble person to scrutinize the motives of a King; and I refrain from uttering my misgivings at your choice of me, for in showing my insufficiency to the task I might seem by subterfuge to try to escape that office which you impose” (in Osgood 3). Robert of Sicily had asked Petrarch to dedicate his epic poem Africa to him; in book II of the Genealogy of the Gentile Gods, Boccaccio queried, “whose glory, I ask, was he about to increase, Petrarch’s or his own? His own, of course!” (quoted in Green 205). Lerer, Chaucer and His Readers 29, notes that Boccaccio’s glorification of Petrarch in the Genealogy makes him “unbounded by the borders of nation or tongue” and turns Petrarch into nothing less than a walking world: a near Edenic synthesis of old and new, near and far.” A full exploration of the cultic self-promotion of Petrarch (and the Lombard tyranny that exploited it) appears in Wallace, Chaucerian Polity 261-98; see also, e.g., Petrarch’s “Letter to Posterity” (in Musa, trans., 1-3). At no point in his works does Lydgate ever presume to censure those of noble birth, as Boccaccio did, or to elevate himself above them, as Petrarch did.} If Bochas generally appears as a sympathetic figure, it is because Lydgate, in his subservient persona, depicts him as a humble teacher, not as someone who claims to possess divine or semi-divine authority. This Italian auctor is not significantly different from his English translator; he has been “naturalized” or domesticated by being detached from the tradition of Roman and Italian authorial self-importance of which Boccaccio in reality was very much a part. Italy, by implication, produces poets who submit to authority — textual and political — rather than claiming authority for themselves. Only one seeming contradiction appears in Bochas’ temperament: although he believes that poets, including himself, should retreat from worldly tumult, he also desires worldly fame.
Bochas’ interest in fame appears almost at the outset of the work. He thinks that his fame will grow if he records no “cronycle nor historie” except those that are “notable,/ Auctorised, famous and comendable” (I, 150-54). He sharpens his pen for the sake of “his eternal fame,/ Onli be writyng to geten hym a name.” Lydgate perhaps approves this quest; he certainly sympathizes with Bochas’ subsequent declamation against princes who fall as a result of forsaking the “trouthe and vertu” (IV, 162-68) that the poet himself presumably espouses. In dramatizing Bochas’ search for good fortune as a writer, Lydgate furthermore may be registering the anxiety felt by writers who received patronage in the fifteenth-century English court, as I suggested earlier. In his dialogue with Lady Fortune, Bochas says that he wants to be remembered as the author of the Fall of Princes with large letters cut onto his tomb (VI, 225-31), but qualifies this plea by adding that he began writing

Teschewe slouhthe & vices al my lyue,
And specialli the vice of glotenye,
Which is norice vnto lecherie. (VI, 232-238)

Showing a measure of humility, Bochas tempers his ambition, or rather Lydgate tempers Bochas’s ambition: he has the Italian admit his ignorance of heaven’s secrets

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16 “IV. 1-168 have no counterpart in Bochas or Laurence” (Bergen, IV, 205).

17 Cf. Boccaccio, De casibus VI, i, pp. 466-78. For Premierfait’s version of this dialogue, see Bergen, IV, 246-50. Lydgate’s version of Bochas’ rationale for writing is quite far from Boccaccio’s original.
and voice his preference to leave such things to scholars or “dyuynes of estat.”

He adds that

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{with poetis that been off low degrees} \\
\text{I eschewe to clymbe to hih aloffte,} \\
\text{List for presumpcioun I shold nat fall[e] softe} \quad \text{(VI, 288-98)}
\end{align*}
\]

If Bochas possessed such divine mysteries, he would expound them in plain language, without envy and, importantly, with “humble reuerence.” Lydgate’s presentation of Boccaccio as a writer of still-uncertain authorial status accurately reflects the image of the Italian found in Premierfait’s translation and even Boccaccio’s original, but Lydgate amplifies his author’s modesty. In doing so, however, Lydgate reveals his own virtue as an English poet who knows his — and Boccaccio’s — proper, humble role in relation to an aristocratic patron. Lydgate’s Italian author-figure is not the scholarly demigod of the *Genealogy of the Gentile Gods*. He is a fallible, sometimes even inept human being, one whose vulnerability to error and disgrace will be decisively exposed at the end of Book IX.

Although Boccaccio wishes to avoid presumption, he does presume beyond the boundaries of both reason and Christian faith in

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Besechyng hir Fortune for to forthre his book,} \\
\text{That his name, which was litil knowe,} \\
\end{align*}
\]

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18 In Premierfait, Bochas admits “ie nay pas aussi si cler engin que ie peusse attaindre les causes des effectz des chose que Dieu et nature font” (Bergen, IV, 248). No mention is made of other thinkers whom Bochas deems worthier than himself to inquire into such “secretz de dieu.”
Be good report myhte be ferther blowe.

That his fame myhte ferther spreede,
Which stood as yit shroudid in dirknesse . . . (VI, 432-36; cp. VIII, 22ff)¹⁹

The Florentine lacks sufficient fame and craves it, apparently unmindful of its dubious distinction, which Chaucer underscored in his *House of Fame*, and its painfully brief duration, which Boccaccio himself and Lydgate even more plainly demonstrate in this text. Requesting the aid of Fortune is hardly heretical, but elsewhere, in a poem preserved in British Library MS. Harley 2255, Lydgate condemned just this sort of imprudence:

Fortune is double, doth favour for no boone,
And who that hath with that queen to doone,
Contrariously she wyl his chaunce dispoose.²⁰

The *Fall of Princes* is nothing if not a tirade against the fickleness of Fortune and the witlessness of those who put their trust in it. Fortunately for Boccaccio, this lapse in

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¹⁹ Cp. Premierfait: "Ie te prie & supplie dame fortue que mon liure des cas des hommes soit par ta grace bienheureux et agradable / & que mon nom qui est obscur & descongneu aux hommes presens soit esclary & congneu aux hommes auuentir / & soit anobly & exaulte par le moyen de ta resplendisseur" (*Des cas* VI; Bergen, IV, pp. 250-51). In Boccaccio: "queso supplex ut tua gratia ceptum secundetur opus et quod obscurum presentibus nomen meum est tuo illustratum fulgore clarum apud posteros habeatur" (*De Casibus*, VI, i, p. 472). Edwards records that "the evidence of the surviving manuscripts suggests that the *De casibus* was a work enjoying a limited academic circulation in England, possessing little general popularity" ("Influence of Lydgate's *Fall of Princes*" 427). For a different and not entirely convincing view, see Kennedy, "Generic Intertextuality" 48-50.

²⁰ "As a Mydsomer Rose," II. 44-46, in *Minor Poems* II, 782; cited and discussed by Horrox, "Introduction" to *Fifteenth-Century Attitudes* 8. Although it is unknown exactly when Lydgate composed this poem, he appears to have been in a *Fall of Princes* frame of mind, as the next lines in the poem suggest: "Who sitteth hihest moost like to falle soone/ Al stant on chaung, like a mydsomyr roose" (47-48).
judgment seems not to damage his capacity for morally sound conduct, for in Book VIII it is still possible for him to secure fame by legitimate, conventionally pious means. Petrarch pays him a visit to goad the elderly Florentine (and, indirectly, the even more elderly English monk) to finish the work before him. The great "auctour" counsels the obscure one and reminds him that poets should write in honor of Christ:

"And for to make our names perdurable,  
And our merites to putten in memorie,  
Vices teschewe, in vertu to be stable,  
That laboure may of slouthe haue the victorie,  
To cleyme a see in the heuenli consistorie –  
Despiht of idilnesse & foorthryng of vertu –  
Fyn of our labour be youe to Crist Jesu." (VIII, 176-82)\(^{21}\)

This is salutary advice, much needed by the weary Boccaccio. If this is really Lydgate reflecting on his own perceived duties as a poet, it is also Lydgate presenting the Florentine writer in a "traditionalistic" way. Of course, Boccaccio in the *De casibus* wrote like a "medieval" poet, but Lydgate makes him more so, and more human and more fallible as well. By dramatizing his collaboration with Fortune, Lydgate shows that even writers who cultivate virtue, contribute to the common profit, and aspire to universal *auctoritas* stumble in their pursuit of fame. Because he wishes to identify his

\(^{21}\) Like the injunction to trust in Jesus in Book I, this mention of Jesus is not found in Boccaccio, who has Petrarch instruct him to seek fame as a way of honoring God ("sed propter Deum totis exquirenda viribus est") and to remember that God rewards such labor with an imperishable gift ("labori non periturum munus impendit"; *De casibus* VIII, i, pp. 658, 660). Premierfalt's version is certainly pious: "Certain est que dieu voit la bourne et la fin a quoy tendoyent les hommes / dieu ne peult estre trahy ne deceu / Dieu aussi rent vng don de vie pardurable a celluy qui laboure a lacroissement enlargement de la gloire diuine" (*De cas* VIII, i; Bergen, IV, p. 295).
own precarious condition as patronized poet with that of Boccaccio, whom he imagines to be "dying," "dull" and "ignored" in his own "sad world" cut off from the "aureate age of the trecento humanist" (Lerer 35), Lydgate shows the Italian poet as an ordinary mortal who in a moment of weakness grasps at Fortune, the nearest means at hand to ensure his fame. Revealing the inner anxiety that impels Boccaccio to appeal to Fortune, Lydgate makes him vulnerable to the same untrustworthy Fortune that afflicts "makaris" in England and all other mortals. In doing so, the Englishman implicitly transforms the Italy of Boccaccio's time into a less stable source of rewards for poets than that which the Italian humanists' confident self-mythologizing made it out to be.

Seth Lerer argues that in Book III of the Fall "Lydgate illustrates the contrast between the equities of the past and the inequities of the present" by writing that Dante, Virgil, Petrarch and Chaucer all received support of princes in the form of cash payment for their works (37). This remuneration existed in the past; both in Italy and in England it exists no longer. This characterization of even Italy as a "dull" place for poets makes an ethnographic statement, if a rather bookish one concerning the

22 For a discussion of the inferior status of "makers" in relation to auctores, see Kiser, Telling Classical Tales 136-38 (on "makyng" vis-a'-vis "poesye"); Lerer, Chaucer and His Readers 31-39. Ebin, Illuminator, Makar, Vates, sees a less rigid distinction between the "makaris" and the auctores: "the fifteenth-century poets viewed Dante, Chaucer, and certain of the French poets as auctors [sic] and models for their own eventual assumption of that role" (xii); see also pp. 49-90. For a discussion of the auctor in relation to other categories of authorship borrowed from the Scholastic commentary tradition (scriptor, compilator, commentator), see Minnis, Medieval Theory of Authorship 94-103, 209-10.

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scholarly class of the *gentes Italiae*. Just as Chaucer’s England is different from Lydgate’s England in that the former generously rewarded its poets while the latter does not, so too the Italy of Virgil, Dante and Petrarch gave “plesaunce” to its illustrious poets, while in the fifteenth-century version of Italy, the land of Lydgate’s “Bochas,” poets wither on the vine. The “Renaissance” began with Dante and ended with Petrarch; all Bochas can do is wish that the Italian cultural efflorescence included him as well. To this version of Italy Fortune will bring trouble in many forms: the oppression of weak citizens by powerful tyrants, the destruction of city-states by internal dissension and outside invasion, and unsure prospects for those poets whose job it is to preserve the history of these events.

*Lydgate among the Heathens: An English Missionary to the Image of Rome*

Before Lydgate undoes Boccaccian authority in Book IX he anatomizes Roman and Italian history, the very basis for that authority. All roads of Italian historiography lead to Rome, and the *Fall of Princes* suggests continuity – in violent conditions and the moralization to be extracted from them – between the ancient imperial city and the Italy of Bochas’s own time. The extent and intensity of Lydgate’s criticism of ancient Rome point to a view of classical culture that cannot be called “humanistic,” at least not in the Italian sense. If an Italian-style humanist is, in Beryl Smalley’s formulation, “a scholar who uses his learning consciously as an instrument
for reviving the cult of *litterae humaniores* (English Friars and Antiquity 7), then Lydgate declined membership in that cult, for his interests differed from those which characterized Italian humanists. As A.C. Spearing observes, Renaissance humanism certainly means acknowledging the “otherness” of classical Rome:

Renaissance means not birth but rebirth, and Renaissance writers and thinkers felt themselves to be grasping and bringing back to life cultural achievements that had died or slept. This experience has two essential components: it involves, first, a recognition of the difference, the alterity, of the culture of classical Rome, as something which possessed its own autonomy but which had not been authentically transmitted through the intervening centuries, the *medium aevum*; and then a sense of the possibility of bringing this culture back to life by means of skillful imitation — imitation which is not merely mechanical but imaginative, an imaginative re-creation of the classical past. And this implies that there is also a third and final stage: a sense of reunion with the past, a new recognition of the universality of a high culture which had been supposed dead. (*Medieval to Renaissance* 11)

As we shall see, Lydgate acknowledges the “alterity” of Rome but has little wish to preserve it. Although he sees the relevance to England of Rome’s internal troubles, he harbors no wish to effect “an imaginative re-creation of the classical past.” Adopting the didactic, practical, advisory tone familiar to fifteenth-century English aristocratic audiences, Lydgate alternately rejects and ignores the new high culture emergent in Italy, and condemns the despotism that characterized much early Roman history and

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23 For other helpful definitions, which further highlight the differences between the humanists’ concerns and Lydgate’s, see Mann, “Origins of Humanism”; Kristeller, “Humanism”; Burke, “The Spread of Italian Humanism”; and Black, “Humanism” (with its many important qualifications). 171
later made Italian neoclassicism possible. In the *Fall of Princes*, Rome and Italy do not overflow with humanist scholarly energy; rather, they appear simply as the most prominent features in a landscape of regular and deterministic admonitory exempla. The most memorable events in Italy, past and present, are the outrageous abuses of power that result in the calamitous falls of those who committed them.

Lydgate's handling of the story of Tarquin and Lucrece is important for several reasons. It depicts Rome as a place whose internal violence leads to political breakdown (the banishing of the king himself and all Roman kings); it serves as a litmus test for Lydgate's humanism; and it affords Lydgate an opportunity to express his literary nationalism by placing Chaucer side-by-side with an Italian humanist source-text. Lydgate freely admits that he follows Chaucer's account of Lucrece in the *Legend of Good Women* (II, 979-1001), and only reluctantly does he find himself "folwyng the tracis of Collucyus," i.e., incorporating passages from the version of the

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24 The connection between tyrannical rulers and humanist writers has been much commented upon; see especially Wallace, *Chaucerian Polity* 54-62, 261-98; Black, "Humanism" 245, 264-265, 274. Wallace and Black draw attention to Burckhardt's *Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy*, the first study to make this association. Anglo, "Humanism and the Court Arts," shows moreover that later fifteenth- and sixteenth-century dukes and princes, who had commissioned humanists to design pageants and spectacles in their honor, ultimately were interested in the humanists' philological and scholarly efforts only insofar as they impressed spectators and glorified the dukes and princes themselves. See also Airaldi, *Genova e la Liguria nel Medioevo* 8-9; Holmes, "Humanism in Italy" 123, 126-27. The fact that English poets needed to show greater humility than their Italian humanist counterparts (see above) suggests that perhaps English kings were more tyrannical than Continental ones. The relationship between English poets and their aristocratic patrons may challenge the notion that only despotism can nourish humanism. I owe this insight to Professor Richard Davis. On the other hand, Italian potentates sought out Latinate humanism as an ornament to their regimes; English kings were less interested in hiring out authors to promote them. Even so, this possible contradiction merits further consideration.
story by Coluccio Salutati which Duke Humphrey has lent to him. But this story suggests the point that Lydgate made more explicitly in his earlier prose tract *The Serpent of Division*: the story of the downfall of Rome’s early kings applies to England and English rulers.

In the *Fall of Princes* the story of Lucrece follows that of the community-minded Mucius Scaevola and precedes that of Appius and Virginia, a narrative familiar from Chaucer’s *Physician’s Tale*. All of these Rome-centered stories stir admiration for those virtuous few who labor for the public good, and they appear after a highly relevant address to princes to preserve peace and to honor their subjects. The larger context of Lucrece’s life, then, is Lydgate’s moral exhortation to rulers to be “prudent gouernours” who “The peele kepe from al contrauersie,/ Causyng the[res] weefrare tencrece & multeplie” (II, 872, 874-75). This last phrase is suggestive: rather than treating their subjects badly, as did King Jeroboam (II, 624-805), princes should aspire to the all-creating benevolence of the God of Genesis by inducing their people to be

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25 In the *De casibus*, the story of Lucretia appears within the longer account of Tarquinus the Proud, King of the Romans (202-208). Cp. Premierfait, in Bergen, IV, pp. 174-75.

26 “And thus all the while they weren of oon herte and of oon assente, and voide of variaunce withinne hemselfe, the noblesse of Rome flovred in prosperite; but als sone as fals covitise broughte Inne pride and vayne ambicion, the contagious Serpent of Division eclipsed and appalled theire worthines; concluding softly as in sentence that every kingdome be division is convied to his distrucccion” (49-50); “whiles vnite & acorde stode vndefowled and vndivided in the bondis of Bretayne, the my3ti conquerowre Iulius was vnable and impotente to venqvishe hem,” until the British heroes Cassibolan and Androgius, Duke of Cornwall, “felle at debate among hemselfe” (50-51).
fruitful and multiply. Sextus Tarquinus, king of Rome, was precisely the opposite. He stole into the chamber of Lucrece “lich a theef . . . With naked suerd” (II, 1025-26) and raped her at sword-point. The use of politically charged words to describe this crime reveals Lydgate’s understanding of the king’s rape of a female subject as an act of tyrannical oppression. Lucrece is clearly a helpless victim of political as well as sexual tyranny. She suffered this atrocity as a solitary victim in a private bedchamber, far from other members of her family and the political community. Yet Lydgate emphasizes Lucrece’s solitariness to dramatize the public revelation of this deed: its being made known will endow her with a martyr’s power and will result in the symbolic decapitation of the Roman body politic in the expulsion of Tarquin.

Collatyne vows that “On thyn iniurie we shal auengid be” (II, 1114), and if Lucrece will only show self-restraint by ceasing her lamentations, she will see Tarquin

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27 Cp. the words of consolation that Lucrece receives from her husband Collatyne: “thauoutour ... Maugre thi will[e], as a theeef be nyht/ The encoumbred off veray force & myht” (II, 1117-20).

28 “Tarquyn hir falsli dede oppresse” (II, 975); “Collucyus [i.e., Coluccio Salutati] ... descryueth the dolerous tresoun/ Off hir constreynd fals oppressiou” (II, 1009-13); “[Lucrece] bi the luxure & tresoun odious/ And vicious outrage of Sextus, proud Tarquin./ Oppressid was” (II, 1018-20). In a similar vein, her husband Collatyne tells Lucrece that Tarquin “dede oppresse” her beauty (II, 1117), “so unknyhtli was his deede” (II, 1161); yet although “He myhte thi bodi be force weel oppresse,” he could not master her inner purity (II, 1163-6). Moreover, Collatyne twice refers to Tarquin as a “tirant” (II, 1181, 1190), and Lucrece, although she ultimately kills herself rather than enduring shame, concedes “I was ageyn my will oppressid” (II, 1282).

29 “This said Tarquyn ... Cam lich a theeef, alas, vpon a nyht/ With naked suerd./ whan no man took non heede./ Vpon Lucrece, she quakyng in hir dreede./ Liggyng abedde ferr from hir folkes all./ And knew no refuge for helpe for to call” (II, 1023-29).
become an exemplary victim whose own just suffering will serve to warn other would-be criminals:

Thou sholdist seen so egal a punshyng
Vpon thi moste froward mortal fo,
To warne alle othre, thei shal no mor do so ... (II, 1123-25)

In explaining to Lucrece the absurdity of the suicide she is contemplating, Collatyne hints that it is the evil king who deserves to die: “It were gret wrong be al our iugement/ To spare a tirant and slen an innocent” (II, 1189-90). In fact, Lucrece does kill herself, but not before urging Collatyne and her father Brutus to use her self-inflicted death as the means to stir up the wrath of the Roman people and incite them to overthrow not only Tarquin but the very institution of kingship in Rome (II, 1317-30): “Off this vengaunce to make no delay”; “Let hym take his wages and his pay” (II, 1325, 1328). What follows suggests that violence inflicted by the oppressor against the oppressed may be canceled out only by violence committed by the oppressed against herself: Lucrece stabs herself in the heart “with gret violence” (II, 1332), and we are left to assume that her self-destruction served to “Stere and excite the peeple off this toun/ To doon ther deuer [i.e., duty]” and exile all the Roman kings (II, 1321-23). The fact that Lydgate combines Lucius Tarquinus the Proud with his son Sextus
Tarquinus ("Sextus, proud Tarquin") may be a slip, but it does conflate the injustice of the rapist with the injustice of the despotic ruler into one "tirannye."

Lydgate brings the reader out of the narrow confines of Lucrece's bedroom and even out of the more general topic of domestic morality (e.g., "The chast[e] chaumbres off wifli gouernaunce" [II, 1234]), to the public site of history, the chronicle record available to all who care to inspect it. Because of Lucrece's suicide,

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\begin{align*}
\text{be record off writyng,} \\
\text{Was ther neuer in Rome the cite,} \\
\text{Affhir that day no man crownyd kyng,} \\
\text{As in cronycles ye may beholde and see.} \\
\text{Thus for luxur[y]e and ther cruelte,} \\
\text{Ther tirannya and fals extorsion,} \\
\text{Thei wer exilid out off Rome toun. (II, 1338-44)}
\end{align*}
\]

Lydgate invokes the authority of written history to "prove" that the Romans did in fact banish their king. Their decision was sensible because Tarquin stood guilty of a horrible crime: he had degraded the act of sexual union, which ideally ought to enshrine love and practically should produce a legitimate heir, into mere violence, the expression of unrestrained power over an innocent. Shifting to the larger discussion of "cronycles," Lydgate's narrative movement parallels the legitimate, socially transformative rage and awareness of crime that begins in Lucrece and spreads to the

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30 Yet earlier, in the Serpent of Division, Lydgate noted that kings ruled Rome from its beginnings "tyl at the time [of] Tarquyne soone of Tarquyne the prowde, for his outragious offence doone vnto Lucressse wife of the worthy Senatour Collatyne" (49). In the City of God, St. Augustine specified that "King Tarquin's son had lustfully gainâl possession of [Lucretia's] body and had ravished her with violence" (I, 19, in Bettenson, trans., pp. 28-29). Cp. the account in Livy, History of Rome I, 57-60 (in Livy: The Early History of Rome, trans. de Selincourt, pp. 81-85).
rest of the Roman populace. But it is not just this one king who stands accused, but all Roman kings: Tarquin's offense taints all of them, and they are banished because of "ther cruelte,/ Ther tirannye and fals extorsioun.” These attributes appear later in the *Fall of Princes*, when Lydgate condemns Romulus for permitting slaughter and rapine to dominate the civic life of the young city. Far from Augustus' imperial virtues of *pietas*, *gravitas* and *stabilitas*, these negative traits permeate Romano-Italian history from the time of Tarquin to that of Walter, Duke of Athens, who usurped power in fourteenth-century Florence, as we shall see.

In sum, Lydgate's handling of the Tarquin and Lucrece story reveals a desire to moralize, to denounce unjust tyrants who crush the weak. But it also shows a willingness to synthesize moralization and ethnography, for from it we learn about a trait that distinguishes Italy throughout its history. Whether at the dawn of Roman history or in the afterglow of imperial splendor in the age of the perpetually warring Italian communes, princes tend to oppress the vulnerable, and the downtrodden in Italy typically rise up in revolt against their rulers. The storied violence of Italy, then, is not a mysterious given in the life of that country, but the result of real oppression with discernible histories and identifiable, humanized protagonists, even if ultimately this cycle of violence remains impossible to explain fully. Retaliatory violence appears to be the only remedy for the initial violence of invading despots or arrogant domestic politicians, but its remedial nature makes it no less tragic and no less a horror to dread. The *Fall of Princes* introduces into English the history of Italian wars from antiquity
to the fourteenth century; although it cannot explain the social and political conditions that repeatedly foster tyranny and oppression in Italy, yet it fleshes out Bromyard’s relatively laconic condemnation of Italy as *terrae guerrarum* and the warning Chaucer’s Alceste gives to Cupid not to emulate “tirauntz of Lumbardye” (*Legend of Good Women* F 374). The tendency toward warfare resists amelioration, dominates the Italian landscape geographically, and characterizes Italy historically, the origins of this warfare being traceable to the founding of Rome itself.

The Roman violence that began with Tarquin was not banished with him but resurfaces in the story of Romulus and Remus. Lydgate’s “medievalizing” attempt to make Rome’s classical past comprehensible to the views of his time and place appears in his explanation of the she-wolf’s suckling of Rhea’s sons, a legend about which Boccaccio and Premierfàit said nothing whatsoever. The she-wolf was “Be God ordeyned, or be sum heuenli fate” (II, 4021) to protect Romulus and Remus from death. Lydgate assures his audience that this providential sheltering of the two infants is no mystery,

> For Hooli Writ pleynli ber[i]th witnesse,  
> God can diffende, as it is weel kouth,  
> Childre fro myscheff in ther tendre youth. (II, 4023-25).

As in the shocking case of Rome’s expulsion of its kings, Lydgate again invites us to consult the written historical record, only this time it is Sacred Scripture, and it

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31 “II. 4200-4263 are Lydgate’s” (Bergen, IV, p. 181).
justifies the existence of supernatural marvels overseen by God. Yet underneath his apparent confidence, Lydgate remains puzzled by this bizarre cooperation between animals and human beings. He confesses that he finds it “Onto Nature a thyng contrarious/ Childre to souke off beestis raunynous” (II, 4038-39). He seems to reassure himself as much as his audience that it was “this Lord off eueri creature” who “maad a fell woluesse/ Onto twei childre hir bigges for to dresse” (II, 4040-46). Derek Pearsall argues that the medieval period simply understood the classical past allegorically in the first instance rather than trying to make that past “safe” by imposing allegory onto it (John Lydgate 35). However, this particularly vivid “otherness” at the root of Roman history causes problems for Lydgate, who seeks to make sense of the feral upbringing of the two brothers. The fact that Lydgate needs to exert some effort to do so suggests that he is actually trying to impose a “safe” allegory onto a rebarbative pagan notion, that he is having difficulty in doing so, and that he is not merely discerning God’s Providence buried beneath layers of pre-Christian myth.

Lydgate wishes to present otherness in a familiar light, but his patience has limits. In the end, he condemns the “fals” as such, and strongly implies that the evil that taints the whole Roman line began with the unnatural nurturing of the two brothers:

Off fals disclaundre first began that lyne,
The roote out souht, ful vicious founde att all,
Cleerli remembred for a memorall,
Ther gynnyng greuh off such incontinence
As clerkis call *incestus* in sentence. ...

And thus the lyne off Rome was begunne:
For slauhtre, moordre & fals robberie
Was cheeff gynnyng off al ther aucnetrie. (II, 4063-74)

Lydgate energetically and dramatically exposes Rome's dirty secrets. His heuristic rhetoric - "out souht," "founde," "cleerli remembred for a memoriall" - confirms him as an authoritative reader of texts who unveils recondite facts to curious readers. He has already drawn our attention to the "record off writyng" of Tarquin's expulsion and asked us to "beholde and see" it. Now he illuminates the dark sins of Rome's fabled "aucnetrie," which John Capgrave will later malign more graphically in his *Solace of Pilgrims*: Italian painters glorify the she-wolf myth, but the truth is that the infant twins were the bastard sons of a prostitute named "Lupa."

Lydgate observes that Romulus and Remus resorted to banditry, rape and murder, and recruited "strengest theues" to aid them. They fell into an "vnkouth striff" over the naming of the town, a battle eventually won by Romulus. Having built a wall surrounding the city "all foreyn[e]s for texcluden oute" (II, 4145), Romulus passed a law forbidding, on pain of death, anyone from climbing over it. Remus, ignorant of the law, did so, and was killed by one of Romulus' knights. Romulus was not the least sorry, for he recognized the apparent truth upon which later generations of Tuscan and Lombard despots would build their *signorie*: rule by one man alone will (presumably) "make his regne stable" (II, 4163). He then went on to populate Rome
with thieves, murderers and highway robbers, whom Lydgate conspicuously brands as “foreyn trespassours” (II, 4176), “peeple fro dyuers regiouns” (II, 4180) and “banshed folk off straunge naciouns” (II, 4182). These observations are alien to Boccaccio’s text and have more in common with the prose Brut’s disdain of “vnkynde bloode” in the origins of the English race. Suspicion of foreignness, though doubtless a characteristic of many peoples in many epochs, is nevertheless a defining feature of late medieval English texts that reflect on English nationhood and English national history. Lydgate concludes that foreigners entering Rome promoted chaos and tyranny and the subsequent oppression of neighboring regions:

And thus be processe gan ther cheualrie
First thoruh tirantis, rekles off werkyng,
Till al the world obeied ther biddyng. (II, 4184-86)

Premierfait connected Romulus’s and Remus’s shocking feral upbringing with the Romans’ dubious lineage. Lydgate expands this connection: he traces imperial

32 Turville-Petre’s England the Nation analyzes some late thirteenth- and fourteenth-century poems that place in the foreground the idea of English nationhood and its various discontents as caused by outsiders.

33 “Laurence [the wife of the shepherd who discovered Romulus and Remus being suckled by the she-wolf], who ceased to feed and nourish her own children for the sake of these two strangers. Thus they were brought up, and one was named Remus and the other Romulus; they killed Anulius, their uncle. It is clearly evident from what noble a lineage the Romans are descended and named after. Wrongly and without title they name themselves and repute themselves before all other peoples the noblest in the world. ... The ancestors of the Romans were clods and thieves, highway robbers and murderers of those of their own lineage” (“laurence / qui délaissa ses propres enfkns pour ses deux estranges a laicter et nourrir / tant quilz furent parcreuz dont lung fut appelle remus et lautre romulus qui tuerent anulius leur oncle. Si appert clereement de com noble lignee soient descendus & surnommez les rommains qui sans tiltre et a tort devant toutes autres gens se nomment et reputent les plus nobles du monde / ... Les ancesseurs des rommains furent bergiers & larrons assailleurs de chemins et murtriers

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Roman tyranny back to the twins' unnatural infancy but also to their invitation of foreign rabble into the city. The prestige of Rome's lofty "auncetrie" and "chevalrie" is no more substantial than a conjuror's tricks.

The practice of importing foreigners into one's territory threatens social and political order. As though this characteristic of Rome's were not bad enough, we also learn that the Romans violated the spiritual order by making gods of their rulers. A shining example of Lydgate's attitude toward classical Rome and its paganism appears in the English monk's outrage (absent in Premierfait and Boccaccio) at the enormity of deifying Romulus, an ordinary mortal and vicious tyrant. Departing from his French text, Lydgate writes that after his death Romulus "was rapt in a cloude;/ Hih up in heuene to be stellefied;/ With othre goddis estatli deified" (II, 4203-5). The Benedictine monk is at his best when railing against a proposition of this sort:

Loo, heer off paynymys a fals opynyoun,  
To Cristes lawe contrarie and odious,  
That tirantis sholde for fals oppressioun  
Be callid goddis or named glorious,  
Which bi ther lyue wer founde vicious:  
For this pleyn trouthe, I dar it riht weel tell,  
Thei rathere be feendis ful deepe in hell. (II, 4208-13)

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de ceulx de leur propre lignage" (Bergen, ed., IV, 180-81). Boccaccio never mentions Romulus by name in the De casibus; of Remus he writes simply "I will leave Remus, who maintained that he had been deprived of joint imperial rule by his brother's impiety and who was killed in front of the city walls" ("Sinam Remulum asserentem se impietate fraterna communi privatum imperio, et pro muro urbis occisum," II, xxi, p. 184).

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Pagans wrongly deify tyrants; Christians rightly praise their damnation. (Like the *Morte Arthure*’s Giant of Genoa, Lydgate’s Romulus, though doubtless better-looking, is both tyrannical and fiendish.) The only princes who deserve to reign in heaven are those who are “feithful off entent,/ Riht and trouthe iustli to meynteene ... Wrongs redressyng & poore folk susteene” (II, 4222-25). They must possess “vertuous liff, charite and meeknesse” (II, 4233); there is no “grettere ydolatrie” than the false deification of “Creatures” through sorcery: this practice is “straunge abusioun” (II, 4236-40). Lydgate proceeds to implore his audience not to imitate the Roman vice of honoring pagan tyrants in this way:

And though that Roemeyns dede worshepe & honour
To Romulus, bi a constreynt[e] dreede,
Lat no man take examble off ther errour,
But to that Lord whos sides were maad rede
To saue mankynde, and on a crosse was dede,
Lat men to hym in cheeff ther loue obserue,
Which can hem quite bet than thei can disserue. (II, 4257-63).

Allegoresis is unable to get off the ground here. From the story of Romulus and Remus Lydgate can extract no higher moral truth; he gives us not an *integumentum* but a warning: do not imitate this “errour.” Far from pointing to a higher allegorical function for Romulus, Lydgate abruptly turns to the image of Christ, described in concrete and vivid terms: his sides were “maad rede” by his own sacrificial blood, shed upon the cross. Rather than rendering unto Romulus the veneration allegedly due to Rome’s inception, we are enjoined to acknowledge the common bond of our unworthiness when praying to God (4263).
The story of Rome's roots serves a useful purpose to its medieval English readers by cautioning them against the pride of tyrants, by showing idolatry in all its sinful absurdity, and by demystifying classical Rome, the Rome of the auctores so prized by both medieval and Renaissance humanists. This is not to say that Lydgate robs ancient Rome of all of its cultural legitimacy; far from it, otherwise the very structure of the Fall of Princes would collapse upon itself. But he does question an uncritical appreciation of that legitimacy by exposing the hollowness of its religious principles and, in short, by humanizing classical Rome, i.e., by rendering it more human and more fallible, like Bochas himself. Lydgate asserts the folly of the deification of mortal "creatures" which was so common a practice in the time of the Roman emperors, and thus forces his readers to see the intellectual heritage of Rome not as something divine, not as a rival to the Christian faith, but as the product of mere human beings who sin and are punished accordingly. It is beside the point whether humanists or anyone of their party without knowing it actually wished to substitute the Roman pagan heritage for Christianity; what matters is that Lydgate thought it necessary to dissuade them from doing so.\(^{34}\) To glorify Rome's achievement as something worthy of deification and comparison to the Incarnation of Christ is "straunge abusion" and "errour." It is just as wrong as emulating tyranny itself.

\(^{34}\) It may be that in condemning ancient "paynymys" Lydgate also glances at the Lollards of his own day, whom Hoccleve in the Regement of Princes refers to as heathens: see Strohm, "Hoccleve,
wonders whether Lydgate is aiming to convince Duke Humphrey in particular to shun these two, apparently related, evils.

In the envoy to his handling of the history of Rome, Lydgate again reminds his audience — and Rome itself, interestingly — of the city’s origins in crime and sin:

Rome, remembre off thi fundacioun,
And off what peeple thou took[e] thi gynnyng:
Thi bilden gan off fals discencioun,
Off slaughtre, moordre & outraious robbayng,
Yevyng to us a maner knowlechyng, --
A fals begynnyng, auctours determyne,
Shal be processe come onto ruyn. (U, 4460-66)

These lines have been seen as the product of a humanist sensibility:

Alone the sentence that it is the scholar poets who preserve the glory of princes for posterity (II, 815) is thoroughly humanist in tone. So, too, is the envoy to Rome, in which he displays for the first time his stately sombre diction (its melancholic beauty was later to find consummate expression in Villon’s *Ballade des dames du temps jadis*). (Schirmer, *John Lydgate* 215)

The humanism that Schirmer sees appears to consist of an alluring lyrical sombreness, but it is hard to see the envoy on Rome as humanistic in the Italian sense. Lydgate condemns Rome’s “fundacioun” as a “fals begynnyng”; this foundation, both as chronological origin and as architectural underpinning, is structurally flawed. Rome’s ideological and physical inceptions were marked by murder, theft and dissent (a favorite *bête noir* of Lydgate’s: internal dissent always promises political collapse).35

Lydgate and the Lancastrian Court” 647. The likelihood of Roman pagans being used as surrogates for late medieval history is stronger in Capgrave’s *Solace of Pilgrims*, discussed below.

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These morally inauspicious beginnings offer later generations “a maner knowlechyng” of Roman treachery that shapes the English reception of Rome and instructs English readers to beware of dissension in their own realm.

The next seven stanzas of the envoy of Book II emphasize the ideological gulf between Rome and the English narrator of its history (and thus his English audience as well). Lydgate poses to Rome an *ubi sunt* form of question, though one devoid of that question’s usual nostalgia for an idealized past: “Wher be thyn Emperours, most souereyn off renoun?” (II, 4467). Lydgate’s question-and-answer method follows the same course throughout. Rome’s emperors, senators (including Scipio), its “poetis olde thi tryumphes rehersyng,” its “laureat knyhtis,” its “aureat glorie,” all “[i]s be long processe brouht to ruyne” (II, 4467-73). Lydgate asserts that Rome achieved

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35 The violence in the capital further characterizes the suburbs, particularly Ostia, the port of Rome on the Mediterranean, and the River Tiber. The town of Ostia (III, 824ff) receives no explicit description aside from mention of its founding by Ancus Marcius and its location at the mouth of the Tiber, not far from Rome; but since it was here that Ancus Marcius was killed by a “foreyn,” one Lucimio, it is used as a springboard for Lydgate’s moralization against slander, murder and poison (904ff). The Tiber River itself is mentioned but never described, yet so many civil servants are said to have ended up in it (IV, 490, 581-3; V, 3117; VI, 1278; VII, 1085, 1338) that one comes to think of this storied waterway not as Pliny’s “most placid entrepreneur of products from all over the world” but, in a way unintended by Pliny, as “a warning sign, its rising being an instrument of religion rather than of destruction” (*Natural History*, III: p. 44). The Tiber serves as a mere sewer for Rome’s illustrious corpses and serves in its exemplarity as yet another of the conduits of moralization that Lydgate builds to connect history with audiences.

36 Lydgate declares that the same fate overcame Caesar, Lucan and Octavian (II, 4474-80); Romulus’ “royall mansible” and Rome’s golden and crystal temple (II, 4481-87); “Tullius cheeff lanterne off thi toun,” “Moral Senek,” “prudent sad Catoun” and “rihtful Traian” (II, 4488-94); the “corious” building erected by Virgil to alert Rome of any rebellions in its regions (II, 4495-4501); the city’s “consuleris and prefectis oppressyng,” its dictators, decemvirs, and tribunes, with their “grete extorsion,” “fals collusioun,” deceit, fraud and “odious rauyne” (II, 4502-08); and its worldwide “dominacioun,” bolstered by vengeance and greed (II, 4509-13).
"Nothyng be grace, which that is dyuyne,/ Which hath the brouht be processe to ruyne" (II, 4514-15).

Lydgate’s invocation of divine grace in this context reminds us of his own religious calling, but it also oddly suggests that Rome has not yet become a Christian city. The imperial capital rebelled against Christ, and Lydgate urges it to abandon its pagan ways and accept Him. The urgent tone is worth remarking because with it Lydgate speaks not only to the past but to his own present, warning adulators of Roman glories to beware of deifying the transitory. In striving for the glory of tyrannical conquest and in worshipping pagan deities, Rome declared war against God Himself: “To God contraire be long rebellioun,/ Goddis, goddessis falsli obeieng” (II, 4518-19). As if Lydgate were addressing a living person, he implores the city to put away its pride and confess its sins:

Ley doun thi pride and thi presumpciuon,  
Thi pompous boost, thi lordshepis encresyng,  
Confesse thyn outrage, & lei thi boost a-doun,  
Alle false goddis pleynli diffiengl  
Left up thyn herte onto that heuenli kyng,  
Which with his blood, thi sorwes for to fyne,  
Hath maad thi ransoun to saue the fro ruyne! (II, 4523-29)

Rejecting Schirmer’s argument for Lydgate’s humanistic treatment of classical Rome, Pearsall detects in this Envoy’s “lofty elegance” “a lamentation cut through by contempt for the pagan imperial world and culminating in the call to abjure false gods and turn to Christ. … It is completely original, and in itself sufficient to dispel any illusions about Lydgate’s ‘humanism’ or admiration for the classical world” (248-
49). But there is more to Lydgate’s approach to the classical past than the very real contempt that we see here and elsewhere in the Fall of Princes. There is also a plea for repentance. Pearsall’s remark raises an intriguing question: whom does the Envoy “call to abjure false gods and turn to Christ”? Evincing hatred for the sin but love for the sinner, Lydgate treats Rome itself, and perhaps at the same time his English audience, Duke Humphrey in particular, like a fallen human being, invited to join, however belatedly, the fold of creation that Christ redeemed through his death and resurrection. Lydgate bids Rome to partake of that redemption, reminds it of Christ’s sacrifice on the cross (II, 4535-50), and concludes this book as Rome’s virtual confessor, urging “O Rome, Rome ... Cri God merci, thi trespacis repentyng!” (4579-82). The God of humility will accept Rome if it consents to abandon its haughtiness and “laboure in his vyne”; He will not fail “Eternali to saue the fro ruyne” (4584-5). Humility and repentance are difficult burdens for the self-proclaimed Head of All the

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37 In the Fall of Princes, Lydgate’s view of pagan religion is comparable to the stance he takes toward it in the Siege of Thebes; Spearing observes “a tendency to hover between the normal medieval modernization of classical antiquity and a fascinated horror at what he imagines it to have been in itself” (Medieval to Renaissance 87); “Chaucer was not really worried that his audience might think (or think he thought) that there was some truth in pagan religion; Lydgate, I believe, really was, and there is no possibility of detaching the gratuitous denunciation from the poet himself – its vehemence appears to have had no equivalent in his sources” (88).

38 Specifically, in III, 778-91; IV, 1248ff, 1408ff, 2150ff, 3613; V, 883-89, 2152ff (where he condemns suicide, even for the sake of gaining liberty from oppression); VI, 2332-2548 (on the fall of Pompey and the “hatful discencioun” within Rome; of interest is the Sybil’s prophecy concerning the three R’s and three F’s, a clear parallel to exemplum XLII in the Latin Gesta Romanorum), and VIII, 2564-2569, where Lydgate reaffirms that false ambition, pride, lechery and other vices brought about Rome’s ruination.
World to bear, but Rome must take them up if its immortal spiritual afterlife is to surpass its current state of decay.

In one of his trademark Envoys, Lydgate reminds us again that Rome serves to give England “a maner knowlechyng”: “Lat this conceit ay in your thouhtis myne./ Bexaumple off Rome how al goth to ruynel” (4591-2). Lydgate wrests Rome out of the hands of the neoclassicists and returns it to its rightful role – from Lydgate’s point of view – as an exemplary “ruyne” that warns its beholders against the dangers of self-generated spiritual ruination. Yet even as he strips Rome of its aura, the monk appeals to the humanity of the city by calling upon it to repent of its sinful pride and idolatry.

Absent is the bittersweet lament for the Roman imperial heritage voiced by Boccaccio, who proudly if sadly recalled Rome’s conquest of India, Ethiopia and other lands and implicitly compared the barbarism of the Africans with that of the Germans, who currently lord it over the city (De casibus VIII, xvii, p. 724). Absent too, at least for many thousands of lines, is any acknowledgment by Lydgate of Rome’s identity as the site of the papacy, which had returned in sinful luxury to Rome in the years following Boccaccio’s completion of the De casibus.39 The call for the Christian conversion of

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39 In Book IX, lines 792-819, Lydgate observes ruefully that after Anastasius became emperor of Rome, “fals couetise” wracked the Church; “Into the cherch whan richesse brouht in pride./ Al perfecclion anon was set aside” (797-98). “Fals avarice” caused the Greek Church to split off from its counterpart in Rome, and Lydgate’s critical tone is worth remarking: “the Grekis dide hemsilf deuide/ Fro the Romeyns for ther gret[e] pride” (818-19). Even more interesting is Lydgate’s description of the wealthy Church: “The poore staf and potent of doctryne/ Whan it wer chaungid & list nat for tabide/ In wilful pouert, but gan anon decline/ On statli palfieyis & hih hors to ride/ Sharp heiris wer[e]n also leid aside./ Tournid to copis of purpil & sangwyn./ Gownis of scarlet furrid
Rome is roughly eleven centuries behind the times, but Lydgate’s didactic urgency reveals the perpetual dangers of impiety and tyranny and the perpetual relevance of calls to repentance. As David Wallace argues, “de casibus, like any other ideological construct, is a form through which the world is hermeneutically and emotionally engaged, not a passive receptacle for predigested experience” (Chaucerian Polity 328). Lydgate’s appeal foregrounds Rome’s spiritual crisis as an immediate and present problem. I would disagree with Wallace’s claim that Lydgate, by choosing not to follow Boccaccio’s strategy of providing “modern instances” of unfortunate falls, sought to avoid “putting pressure upon princes and despots” (334). Ending the chronological sweep of the work at the English capture of Jean II of France in 1356, Lydgate, it is true, “manages to end by reminding the British Crown of past triumphs rather than of present shortcomings” (334). But Lydgate merely ends the Fall of Princes where Premierfait and Boccaccio ended their works. Moreover, the historically nonspecific and thus eternally apt moralization of Lydgate’s main

with hermyn” (799-805). It is possible that even in his envoy to Rome Lydgate had the papacy in mind: Lydgate’s appeal to Rome to “laboure in [God’s] vyne” oddly resembles Gascoigne’s complaint that the Roman Church, “like a singular and principal wild beast, hath laid waste the vineyards of the church” and “hath destroyed the vineyard of God’s church in many places, by annulling the elections of all the bishops in England” (see above, Introduction, p. 62).

And as Larry Scanlon points out, “an exemplum is a narrative enactment of cultural authority. ... In short, the exemplum is not a purely textual exchange between two discursive genres, the narrative and the interpretive, in which the narrative supports some proverb-like interpretation. In its narrative the exemplum reenacts the actual, historical embodiment of communal value in a protagonist or an event, and then, in its moral, effects the value’s reemergence with the obligatory force of moral law” (Narrative, Authority and Power 34).
contribution to the work, the envoys, repeatedly challenges rulers, especially Duke Humphrey, to live a more virtuous life.  

The textual conversation Lydgate imagines is a three-way one, in which he, the English monk, addresses Rome past and Rome present, oscillating between the two to imply that the impiety of ancient Rome still plagues the Rome of his own time, in particular its reception by contemporary humanists and, quite possibly, by overzealous humanist sympathizers like Duke Humphrey. Lydgate does not see or use classical Rome as a mere sterile abstraction; he still thinks of the ancient city as alive and existing on an unbroken historical continuum that allows and invites ahistorical or transcendental moral judgment. In both the *Fall of Princes* and the *Morte Arthure* the English narration of the self-destructive history of Rome or any other ancient city-state does not undermine historiography itself, but rather suggests that England may

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41 Lydgate does, of course, provide “modern instances” of illustrious persons who have suffered falls: these appear in “Of the Sodein Fal of Princes in Oure Dayes.” Wallace notes this as an example of “Lydgate’s willingness to experiment with ‘modern instances’” (482, n. 160), but this example challenges, even if it does not actually undermine, his argument that “Lydgate’s *Fall* is dead on arrival as a critique of princely excesses” and thus differentiates the Monk of Bury’s work from Boccaccio’s (334).

42 This way of thinking about Rome is another feature of Lydgate’s “medievalness” – the perception that the distant past exists in unbroken continuity with the historical writer’s own age. For an uncharitable view of this mentality, see Burke, *Renaissance Sense of the Past* 1-20 (but cf. Black, “Humanism” 251; White, *Content of the Form* 1-25).

43 For the opposite view, see Patterson, “Romance of History” and “Making Identities”; Strohm, “Hoccleve, Lydgate and the Lancastrian Court.”

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profit from the political catastrophes of the past and may surpass, at least in prudence and morality, the achievements of other civilizations.

The Serpent’s Homeland? Disunity in Rome and Italy

Lydgate’s contempt for classical Rome for its immoral openness to foreign influence has resonance for English cultural security. His interest in the baneful effects of foreign, lowborn blood on the civic health of Rome finds no parallel in Premierfait or Boccaccio. The Fall of Princes, the Morte Arthure and the Brut imply that such thinking about alyenes characterized England during this period, complemented longstanding anxieties over the harm which internal dissension causes realms, and could be used as an ideological bridge between antiquity and modernity. In other poems, reflecting conditions of life in the England of his own time, Lydgate shows the same interest in the place and purpose of foreigners, especially Italians, that he evinces in the Fall of Princes, and suggests that such interest is conventional and appropriate in England.

For example, the Troy Book likens Criseyde’s betrayal of Troilus to the unsteadfastness of the Lombards in London:

44 Wallace, Chaucerian Polity 333, makes the related points that Lydgate “prefers to invent a whole new category of de casibus fall: churls, or those ‘cherlissh of nature’ (4.2659), who rise to power but are then thrown down. ... Lydgate is keen to discourage the notion that the misfortunes of the great
The change is nat so redy for to make
In Lombard Strete of crowne nor doket:
Al paie is good, be so the prente be set.

(Troy Book, ed. Edwards, IV, 2154-56; Edwards’ gloss)

In satirically portraying the Lombard merchant community in England, the easiest target of English “Italophobia,” Lydgate sounds like many other writers of his time and place. Lydgate could use his literary-propagandistic skills to separate “us” from “them,” but he also knew how to create an “imagined community”\(^\text{45}\) of Italian merchants and English subjects united in their praise of the English monarch. In his view, the “alyen” merchants in London were or ought to have been enthusiastic spectators at the pageant honoring Henry VI, recently returned to London from his coronation in Paris in 1432. The denizens of London were “Alle off assent, whose kan conseyyve,/ Theyre noble kyng wern gladde to resseyve” (27-28). Lydgate continues:

> And fforto remembre off other alyens;
> First Ieneweys, though they were straungers,
> Florentyns and the Venycyens,
> And Esterlinges gladde in her maners,
> Canveyed with serjeauntes and other officers
> Estatly horsed, affter the Meire rydyng,
> Passed the subbarbes to mete with the kyng.

might prove gratifying to ‘lowere peeple.’ Such falls, he insists, should stand as a warning not just to princes, but to ‘vicious folk off eveiy comoute’ (1.206-10).”

\(^\text{45}\) The term is Anderson’s (Imagined Communities), but my use of it does not imply the same degree of what Anderson defines as an essential component of an imagined community: “Finally, [the nation] is imagined as a community, because, regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship” (7, italics in the original). Lydgate does not imagine a particularly deep bond among members of his own socio-economic class, the Italian merchants and, say, illiterate peasants laboring in the countryside.
How the foreign inhabitants of London actually responded to a pageant staged for a
king whose coronation in Paris had taken place "amidst scenes of great apathy"
(Pearsall, John Lydgate 170) we may never know, but it is clear that their approbation
formed an integral part of the image of undivided loyalty and social order that Lydgate
sought to create. Far from being representative Italian humanists, these Genoese,
Florentine and Venetian merchants and bankers assume cultural importance to English
poets and readers because they can be represented as proof of unity and support for
the king as felt by both native and foreign residents of England. The practical
vocations of the "alyens" or "straungers" are emphasized to show the undiminished
strength of the king's bond with his commercial allies.

In taking pains to represent Italian loyalty to England by having the local
Genoese, Florentines and Venetians extend a hearty ben tornato to Henry VI, Lydgate
writes not for an élite community of scholars but for the nation as a whole (albeit
exemplified in its king and his court), in which a unity-inspiring monarch elicits the
loyalty of both citizens and resident aliens. The poet in service to the state fashions
for the Italian merchants and bankers an unthreatening identity.

I am not trying to pass judgment on Lydgate for resorting to literary
propaganda; his achievements certainly addressed a real need for social unity and
support for Henry VI, and it is perfectly understandable that Lydgate, a writer-
translator in search of the patronage of the powerful, should have written literature in this vein. Furthermore, it is possible that Lydgate, in the “Triumphal Entry,” wrote what we would consider the truth: perhaps the Italian merchant community was genuinely happy to see Henry. But the truthfulness of this account cannot be determined. Written to accompany “Ordenaunces ffor the Kyng made in the Cite off London,” according to the manuscript rubric (Minor Poems 630), this poem was valued for its propagandistic qualities, its ability to mold its audiences’ attitude toward the English monarch. His own attitudes toward Italians in England as expressed in these works show how much of an ethnographic chameleon Lydgate is: the images of Italians that he can produce and disseminate depend on the audience to which he is appealing and the literary genre in which he is working. The “Triumphal Entry” is a public text designed to portray the king in the best possible light to an audience of English spectators. The Fall of Princes, on the other hand, is directed at a humanist aristocratic patron but also at learned readers generally. Italy and Italians assume multiple roles in Lydgate’s writings: in the “Disputation between a Horse, a Sheep and

"a Goose,” we hear of a Lombard sorcerer turned goose; in the *Troy Book* Lydgate compares the whimsical Criseyde to a moneygrubbing Lombard moneychanger; enthusiastically pro-English Genoese, Venetian and Florentine merchants welcome Henry VI in the “Triumphal Entry”; and the *Fall of Princes* condemns vicious Roman tyrants but also a presumptuous, untrustworthy would-be *auctor* from Tuscany.

These many faces of Italy and Italians dispel any illusion we might have about Lydgate’s “proto-Renaissance” response to its literary culture. Commissioned by Duke Humphrey to translate an Italian humanist text into English, Lydgate never abandons his pragmatism and concern for English social realities when he writes about Italy and Italians. He shows a greater awareness of Italian merchants than of Italian humanists, and I qualify even this claim by adding that the images of Lombards and Genoese that he disseminates suggest less a knowledge of actual Italians than a knowledge of familiar stereotypes, which circulated both orally and textually in works like Gower’s *Confessio Amantis*, Langland’s *Piers Plowman* and of course the alliterative *Morte Arthure*.

Lydgate provides images of Italy that address English social concerns, images not only of the spiritual and cultural life of Italy but of Italian topography and ethnic identity as well. We have seen that he knew and perpetuated the stereotypical view of Lombards as dishonest bankers, but he also understood the propagandistic value of representing the Venetian, Genoese and Florentine merchant communities as loyal, benign subjects. In the *Fall of Princes*, when translating Boccaccio’s passages on
actual Italian personages and places, Lydgate shows that he is similarly able to exploit multiple forms of ethnographic description. He occasionally offers generalizations about a city, region or race based on individual personages or events, and provides numerous examples of this associative ethnography, and here I use “ethnography” to mean a way of presenting foreign peoples that reveals social mores, characteristic patterns of behavior, the kind of information that curious readers in the Middle Ages would have expected to gather from travel narratives about distant places. For example, the vivid portrayal of internal dissension and violence that characterized Rome in Book II is recalled in subsequent accounts of Rome and other Italian cities.

Even Lydgate’s retelling of Arthur’s resistance to the Roman invasion of Britain has an ethnographic function: like the Mort Arthure poet Lydgate juxtaposes Romanitas with “hethennesse” in order to disclose information about the ancient Roman love of conquest at any cost. This story also assumes the self-reflexive participation of its English readers: in exposing the immorality of Rome, it celebrates the holiness of Arthur’s Britain and invites us to value Arthur’s steadfast Christian piety over Rome’s morally compromised grandeur.

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47 As evident in the description of Rome’s tumultuous mob (III, 2066ff; VI, 649) and the city’s wars against the Sicilians (V, 463ff) and Lombards (V, 913-15, 967ff). Violent conditions prevail and have prevailed in the following Italian cities and regions: Mt. Aventine (I, 5334, 5365-69), Taranto in Apulia (III, 2752-86), Tuscany (IV, 423, 957ff), Lucca (IV, 1584ff), the Campanian countryside around Naples (VI, 761-84; Campania’s inhabitants “fare lik a beeeste”), Lombardy (IX, 904-24, 1653-66), Pisa (IX, 2049-55, the Ugolino story). Boccaccio and his translators make Rome and Italy stand out from the rest of the world, largely by focusing often on named locales familiar to the Florentine “auctour.”
The lengthy Arthurian episode (VIII, 2662-3207) reflects not only typical fifteenth-century English concerns for moral and social order, but also the idea of England as a postcolonial survivor of chronic Roman imperial aggression. Lydgate intended to appeal to the “noble princes” of his realm, or any others who sympathized with their outlook on life. The poet lauds Britain’s “cleer[e] liht/ Of cheualrye” and recalls the renowned justness of his court (2850-56). Defying the “froward & outraious” claim of the Romans to Britain (2875ff, 2927ff), Arthur and his Round Table respond in kind to Lucius’ belligerence, and Lydgate, in a passage that recalls the *Morte Arthure* and prose *Brut*, observes that “Arture with Bretouns the Romeins gan assaile,/ Fond many Sarsyns vpon that partie” (3020-21). By citing Geoffrey of Monmouth’s *Historia Regum Britanniae*, Lydgate indicates his pride in English (conflated with British) historiography, and this Englishness animates his representation of Rome as a site of dangerous ethnic and religious negotiations:

48 “The Debate of the Horse, Goose and Sheep” suggests that Lydgate “thinks of England as a country ... in a way that Chaucer never did” (Pearsall, *John Lydgate* 202): Bi bowe and arwis sith the werr began/ Have Ynglysshmen, as it is red in story./ On her enmyes had many gret victory (ll. 215-17; cited by Pearsall, *John Lydgate* 202). In the *Fall*, Lydgate praises the nobility and virtue of the allegedly British emperor Constantine: “Royal compassioun dide in his herte myne ... / His brest enlumyned with grace which is dyuyne/ Which fro the heuene dide vpon hym spreede” (1212, 1214-15). Bergen, IV, 309 notes: “The entire chapter on Constantine is interpolated by Lydgate and has no counterpart in either Laurence or Boccaccio, who both go on immediately to Julian the Apostate. Lydgate’s chief source is the Life of St. Sylvester in the Golden Legend. He also alludes to the *Brut* (VIII. 1178). There are probably other sources besides.”

49 Bergen (IV, pp. 327-34) reprints the story of Arthur found in Boccaccio and Premierfait, but in neither writer does Arthur fight against “Sarsyns.”

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The Bretoun Gaufriede doth pleynly specefie.
As he of Arthure the prowesse doth descryue,
He slough that day of Sarsyns kynges fyue.  (3022-24)

His preference for Geoffrey of Monmouth’s authority and his recounting of the sordid
tale of the Roman-“Saracen” pairing implicitly correct Boccaccio’s Italy-centered
notion (suppressed in the Fall) that “The Britons [were] placed in the Western corner
and almost separated from the rest of the world,” a view that links Boccaccio with his
Roman predecessors.\textsuperscript{50} In heightening what in Boccaccio was an already laudatory
account of Arthur,\textsuperscript{51} Lydgate wishes to suggest that although Britain does not figure

\textsuperscript{50} “Britones angulo in occiduo positi et ab orbe fere ceteri separati” (VIII, xix, p. 728). Cp.
Premierfait: “En Europe qui est la tierce partie du monde est vne isle appellee breaigne qui est situee
en vn anglet du monde par deuers occidant. Le pays et le gens de cest anglet sont desseureus presque
de tous autres” (Bergen, IV, p. 329). Britain had long been the butt of Roman and Italian ridicule for
its remoteness from the heart of the old Empire. Boccaccio notes in the \textit{Genealogia} that Petrarch’s
“great eminence as a poet has been recognized by – I will not say merely all Italians, for their glory is
singular and perennial – but by all France, and Germany, and even that most remote little corner of
the world, England; and, I must add, many of the Greeks”; see \textit{Genealogia Deorum Gentilium}, in
Osgood 115-16. Osgood notes: “It is customary for B.’s contemporaries to refer to England after the
precedent of Verg. \textit{Ecl.} 66; Hor. \textit{Od.} 1.35.29; 4.14.47; Catull. 11.11” (p. 192, n. 15). These passages
all emphasize the virtual separation of Britain from the world familiar to most Romans: “and the
Britons, wholly sundered from all the world” (Virgil. ... \textit{Eclogues}, ed. and trans. Fairclough, vol. I,
pp. 8-9); “that savage island of the Britons/ Out at the end of the earth”; “The voice of Caesar’s
conquering power is heard/ Echoing back from the cliffs of the British island/ Over the monster-
crowded ocean’s roar” (\textit{Odes of Horace}, trans. Ferry, pp. 92-93, 306-7); “those horrible woad-
knowledge and use of the \textit{Genealogia}, see Pearsall, \textit{John Lydgate} 193-94, 239. Professor Christian
Zacher has pointed out to me that the bibliophile Richard de Bury was aware of this image of
England.

\textsuperscript{51} \textit{De casibus} VIII, ix, pp. 728-34; Bergen, IV, 327-29. On the one hand, Boccaccio brackets the
truth-claim of the British chroniclers (or English, for Boccaccio uses both “Britones” and “Angli”) by
writing that the “British ... assert in their histories that Arthur was once their king” (“Britones ... suis
annalibus asserunt Arturum quondam regem suum” [728]). On the other hand, he notes that the
name of this king was raised to such a high dignity that nothing, not even Fortune, could prevent it
from coming down to Boccaccio’s own time (“regium nomen in tam splendidam gloriam delatum est
prominently in the history of tragic downfalls present in his source, it does occupy a central position in the Christian faith as one of its principal defenders against Islam. Rather different is Rome, which risks alienating itself from the rest of Christendom. Lydgate’s story of Arthur’s exposure and defeat of the “Sarsyns” in the Roman army spreads the word about Rome’s intrigues with the East, a tale dramatized fully in the alliterative *Morte Arthure* and presented in a relatively encapsulated form in the *Brut*. Italy as a whole inherits Rome’s political and spiritual instability and becomes for English readers a land brimming with internal dissension and useful indications on how not to run a kingdom.52

The region of Lombardy conjures up striking images of barbaric behavior. We have seen that Lydgate knew the Lombards’ reputation in England for dishonest moneylending. Whether Lydgate actually traveled to Lombardy itself or anywhere else in Italy is at best uncertain, yet his rapid-fire portrait of four ancient Lombard kings will be seen to suit very well the territory from which the poet extracts the appropriate *moralitas*. After the story of Anastasius, who caused internal division within the Church and was banished from the Empire by Theodosius, there come to

> ut nec Fortuna seviens nec annosa vetustas agere potuerit quin usque in nostrum seculum claro cum fulgore devenerit” [730]).

52 Evident in accounts of the violent, malicious Sicilians, who crave a new ruler every year (V, 1629-40), and of the ravaging of the Lombard countryside by “Sarsyns” centuries earlier (IX, 591-92).
Bochas “foure myhti kingis/ Regnyng echon of old in Lumbardie” (IX, 836-37). They reveal a strange mixture of barbarity and fabulous wealth:

Afír the maner and guise of barbarie
Thei wem arraied, & in ther passage
With her forgrownen bodi and visage.

Ther berdis rauhte ouer ther nouele doun;
Ther garnementes of colours manyfold,
With brode baudrikis enbracid enviroun,
Large bokelis & pendauntis of fyn gold.
Ther brech enbrowdid afír the guise of old,
Fret with perle, leg stukkid to the kne,
Pleynyng to Bochas of ther aduersite. (IX, 838-47)

The kings’ shoes are laced with gold wire and set with “many a straunge ston,/ Geyn Phebus liht that shon ful briht & cleer” (850-51). Their appearance is otherworldly: they are the “other” because of their physical appearance, similar to what Jacques le Goff and others have identified as the medieval trope of the “wild man.” The kings are barbaric partly because they are hairy, “With her forgrownen bodi and visage.” In representing them in such an animalistic way, Lydgate is responding accurately to his French source, which has it that the four kings “seemed like babewyn men, as though playing farces” (“sembloient hommes babouinez comme pour iouer farces” [Bergen, IV, 357]).” In light of Michael Camille’s analysis in Mirror in Parchment (esp. 262-75) of the ideological significance of some of the Luttrell Psalter’s hairy “babewyns”


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or monsters, some of whom represent peasants and foreigners, it appears that the technique of conjuring up otherness by highlighting fur-like body hair enjoyed a long life. Furthermore, the Lombards are “other” not only because of their ethnicity and barbarity but because of their antiquity as well. Lydgate wishes us to perceive that these kings belong to the distant past: they reigned “of old in Lumbardie,” and their breeches are bedecked with pearls “aftir the guise of old.” However, the fact that fashions were different in their day does not diminish their savage condition, for they are rendered as beastlike by their physical description and by Lydgate’s rapid-fire history of their assassinations, one king murdering another in a mindless quest for power.54

The last Lombard king, Desiderius, receives somewhat more attention than the previous three. He had been a great benefactor to the Church and had given to the pope the “statli cite” of Faenza (907-10) and lavish amounts of treasure. Furthermore, Desiderius granted to the pope “A mihti castel which on Tibre stood” (913) within the duchy of Ferrara,

Which is a cite, pleynli to declare,
Of antiquite, myn auctour tellith so,
And stant upon the ryuer of the Po. (IX, 915-17)

54 Lupus was imprisoned and ordered killed by his successor “Grymaldus, a prince of Lumbardie.” Then Alexius, guilty of “surquedous prowesse,” plotted the death of “Compertoun,” who survived and joined forces with the people of Pavia and had Alexius decapitated. Aripertoun, another Lombard king, “lik a fool, of hih presumcioun” declared war without just cause against his neighbor, the Duke of Bavaria, but drowns while fleeing in cowardice to Pavia. See *Fall of Princes* IX, 853-96.
Lydgate, seeing two rivers mentioned in his source, did not notice the slight problem in geography— that the Tiber flows nowhere near Ferrara or the Po. In the Des cas des nobles hommes et femmes, Premierfait mentioned “Fauence qui est vne noble cite auec vng chateau seant sur la riuiere du tybre quon dit le chateau saint ange”; he then described “la duche de ferrare qui est vne noble cite sur la riuiere du po” (Bergen, IV, 358, italics mine). The Fall’s editor, Henry Bergen, comparing the passages in Premierfait with their English counterparts, notes “An apparent carelessness of Lydgate’s” (Bergen, IV, 358). I agree with Bergen’s judgment, but I would argue that the physical juxtaposition of the Tiber with Ferrara and the Po confirms a mapping of tyrannical violence that links Rome with Lombardy: the former’s tradition of strife flows spatially northward and chronologically forward to the latter. Ferrara is “a cite ... Of antiquite,” and, being a pawn in the dealings between the papacy and its Lombard ravagers, it is also implicated in the cycle of catastrophic downfalls that taints that same “antiquite.”

Roman violence looms over its Lombard counterpart just as Desiderius’ father Agistulphe, “Which to the pope did gret aduersite” (905), ultimately proves to be the model that the son will follow. Desiderius metamorphosed into a familiar image of tyranny: his earlier “goodliheed” became “pride,” his “largesse” turned into “couetise,” and he then practiced “doublenesse” in seeking to take away from the pope the lands that he previously had given to him. Allying himself improvidently with the soon-to-die Pepin, Desiderius faced the just anger of “hooli Adrian” and “grete Charlis,” who
“Cam to the pope to helpyn in this neede” (927-45). Lydgate represents this conflict between the Lombard ruler and the combined forces of Charlemagne and Pope Adrian as a religious war, for he describes the Frankish king as a “trewe protectour/ To hooli cherche, ther pauys [i.e., pavis, a large shield] and diffence” (946-47). The two men engaged each other in battle “in Tuscan,” where Charlemagne proved the victor (948-52) and sent Desiderius fleeing to the Lombard commune of Pavia. Charles then laid siege to this city and forced the Lombard’s starving forces to surrender; Desiderius was then sent in chains to France, where “Lik a wrecch” he died in prison (953-63). To underscore the startling drop in the Lombard’s fortunes, Lydgate points out that in captivity Desiderius “geyned no raunsoun,/ Which hadde afforn so gret pocessioun” (963-64).

Lydgate ends the story of Lombard tyranny with a note of unemotional finality: “Aftir whos day, as be old writyng,/ Among Lumbardis was neuer crownid kyng” (965-66). In Tuscany and Lombardy, the forces of Lombard oppression clash with “hooli” papal authority, aided by a “trewe” imperial defender of the faith. Desiderius’ defeat at the hands of Charlemagne signaled the end of unjust kings in Lombardy, and this event echoes the expulsion of the unjust Roman kings of antiquity following Tarquin’s rape of Lucrece. We cannot know with certainty whether Lydgate himself was aware of the continuity he created between Roman monarchical oppression and its Lombard reincarnation, but the highly charged moral quality of Desiderius’ fight with Charlemagne — ravager of the Church versus “protectour/ To hooli cherche” —
nevertheless follows a pattern of aggressor-vs.-virtuous victim which originated in pagan Rome, epicenter of dissension, impiety and violent misrule.\textsuperscript{55}

The last Italian episode I wish to analyze before moving on to the final and crucial dethroning of Boccaccio concerns the tyrannical usurpation of power in Boccaccio’s adoptive town of Florence. Earlier praised by the Florentine chronicler Dino Compagni as \textit{la nobile citta' figliuola di Roma} ("the noble city, Rome’s little daughter"),\textsuperscript{56} this city proves itself in the \textit{Fall of Princes} (and of course in Lydgate’s sources) to be a worthy heir to the older city’s patrimony of political instability. While recounting the tale of the would-be peacemaker Charles of Taranto, killed by a stray arrow “in the werris atween Florence and Pise” (IX, 2499-2500), Boccaccio is visited by Dante. This most famous victim of Florentine mutability “enlumyned Itaile & Lumbardie/ With laureat dites in thi flouryng daies” (2525-26) but “Mong Florentynes suffredist gret affraies” (2528). Florence disprizes its chief poet-statesman just as Rome mistreated its few virtuous, civic-minded leaders, and just as England in Lydgate’s day fails to reward its poets. Italy may well produce great \textit{auctores}, but it treats them as outlaws if they try to “enlumine” their homeland with an all-too searching critical acumen. In a spirit of self-effacing magnanimity, Dante declines the

\textsuperscript{55} What enriches this aggressor-vs.-virtuous victim image of Lydgate’s Italy is the close proximity on the peninsula between the sacred (the pope and the papacy) and the secular (the Italian communes and the proto-Machiavellian machinations that occur there). Even in his impassioned call for the conversion of pagan Rome to Christianity, Lydgate gestures toward the absent presence of the papacy.

\textsuperscript{56} Compagni, \textit{Cronica delle cose occorrenti ne' tempi suoi} (c. 1310-12), ed. Bezzola, 45.
opportunity to tell of his “pitous exil” (2535) and instead suggests that Boccaccio more profitably write of Walter, Duke of Athens, who “opressid be myhti violence/
This famous cite [which] callid [is] Florence” (2542-43).

His father having been beheaded by the Athenians, Walter vowed revenge and traveled (for reasons unspecified) to Italy. Not surprisingly, a war was raging in Tuscany, this time between Pisa and Lucca. The Florentines joined the fray, for “Florentynes to Luk wer fauourable” (IX, 2581). News of the fighting spread throughout Italy and, interestingly, among mercenaries in particular:

The noise and fame of this gret bataile
Gan spreede ferr bi report of langage
In Lombardie and thoruh[out] al Itaile
Mong soudiour[e]s lusti of corage (IX, 2588-91)

One could argue that Lydgate adds the emphatic “bi report of langage” because he wishes to create the opportunity for rhyme (with “corage”). But I think that Lydgate wishes to emphasize the fame, or infamy, of Italian wars and their power to attract unsavory characters who foment yet more chaos. Lydgate is representing not Italians generally but Italian mercenaries, “soudiour[e]s,” as speakers of a shared language of bloodshed-for-profit.

Although “discendid of the blood of France” (2563) and son of the “lord and gouernour” of Athens (2566), Walter, we may assume, has learned this idiom. He was in Naples but, “feynyng a pilgrimage” (2592), stole into Florence to succor that city. He secures absolute power there, not because the Florentine Parliament longed for
peace and serenity within the city walls, but rather because “The gret estatis, reulers of
the toun, Callid magnates,” wished to oppress the “comouns” and take the money of
the merchant class (2605-8). In league with Rainieri (“Reyneer”), an opportunistic
town official whose mercenaries (“soudiours”) force the city to do his bidding, Walter
wins enormous concessions from the Parliament, including the city’s remaining
liberties. Lydgate deems it especially dangerous “Whan too tirauntis be bothe of oon
assent/ With multitude tacomplisshe ther entent (EX, 2655-57). Tyrants in themselves
are evil, but their achievement of power in Florence owes something to the
credulousness of the Florentines. Walter told the Tuscans that a quail had once
informed him that he was born to be lord of their region and indeed most of Italy:

By his owne furious dyuynaille,
Saide he was borne to be lord of Tuscan,
With a gret parti also of Itaille;
Tolde he was lad, conueied be a quaile,
Saide ouermor[e], wer it riht or wronge,
That was the sentence of the birdis songe. (2694-99)

As in the story of the she-wolf’s suckling of Romulus and Remus, this story is hard for
Lydgate to accept. The phrase “furious dyuynaille” aptly reveals Lydgate’s suspicion
that Walter was assisted by a kind of necromancy. But the veracity of Walter’s quail
story matters less to Lydgate than the gullibility of the Florentines who believe him,
and the pernicious influence of flattery on the city-state. In reporting that the quail
itself had lavished unctuous praise on him (2705-06), Walter revealed his own tastes in
political advisers. The Florentines apparently did not take appropriate steps against
him, and before too long Walter seized power and "Drouh to hym flaterers & folk that
koude lie,/ Baudis, ribaudis wher he myht hem espie" (2712-13). This same
centripetal movement of lowborn scoundrels into the innermost circles of urban power
recalls Romulus' recruitment of villainous outsiders to Rome.

The results for Florence are predictable, given the founding example of the
Eternal City. The "abhomynable" Walter (2720) practiced "tiranye" and created the
internal strife for which Italy had become an infamous object lesson to England:

\[
\begin{align*}
tiranye doon in the contrees, \\
Which was cause of gret discencioun \\
And of ther cite almost subuersion. \\
\end{align*}
\]

Thus thei wern among hemsilff deuided \\
For ther sodeyn greuous oppressioun; \\
Lak of forsiht, that thei wer nat prouided \\
To seen myscheeuys that sholde falle in the toun. \\
This verray soth: wher is dyuysioun, \\
Be witnesse and record of scripture, \\
May no kyngdam nor cite long endure. (2725-34)

The "discencioun" among the Florentine nobles occasions Lydgate's classic
pronouncements upon "dyuysion" everywhere. The Florentines are incapable of rising
above Walter's level of bloodthirstiness: their univocal cry, "'Lat sle this tiraunt! lat
vs pulle hym doun!'" (2746), indicates that law and order will not be used as the basis
for any new government in their city. In fact the Florentines succeeded in
banishing
Walter but not the essential violence of the northern Italian city-state. Lydgate
describes their war-whoop as "an hidous soun" (2745) and their siege of Walter's
palace as "mythi violence" (2747); in their "rage" they slew the hated Guglielmo
d'Assisi, his son and a certain Errico, whom Walter had sent out of the palace to feign promises to restore the liberties of the town. The execution of these three men "the rancour did appese/ Of Florentynes, to staunche the[r] cruelte/ Ageyn Gauteer" (2778-80), who managed to escape to France. Following Jean II's capture by the English at Poitiers in 1356, however, Walter flees yet again, "ilk a coward" (2796-97), only to be captured by Lombard mercenaries formerly in the employ of the French king Jean II. He is eventually beheaded, appropriately enough, by an anonymous Florentine (2796-2804). That he was captured by Italian mercenaries only sweetens the justice served him, for it was news of the Tuscan wars spread among mercenaries that had drawn him to Florence in the first place, and it was Italian mercenaries who had managed to keep him in power while he ruled it. The Roman envoy's advice to the Emperor Lucius in the alliterative *Morte Arthure* resonates: "Be seker of thy soudiers." Apparently the Tuscan and Lombard mercenaries portrayed in Lydgate are no more dependable than Lucius' Genoese giants and the Genoese crossbowmen who make such a *brutta figura* in the pages of Froissart. Mercenaries are soldiers of fortune, and like Fortune, they show themselves to be very much in their element in Italy.

A person familiar with the alliterative *Morte Arthure* or, better, the life of the English mercenary John Hawkwood would have seen further textual evidence that tyrannical rulers and violent mercenaries are part of the Italian landscape. As Lydgate suggests in his last story, concerning Jean II of France, they are alien to England. Like
the story of Walter, Jean's narrative too shows Lydgate writing with energy, not with fatigue. Jean was taken prisoner at Poitiers by the peerlessly chivalrous Edward the Black Prince, but just as important as this battle between French and English royalty is the conflict between English writers (and their audiences) and "Bochas ... This noble poete of Florence & Itaile" (IX, 3058-59).

Jean comes to Bochas "Cursyng Fortune with al hir variaunce,/ Makyng his compleynt" (IX, 3135-36), but Jean's "Cursyng" is soon placed in the background of Lydgate's praise of "Brutis Albioun," where "Ther floured in soth noblesse of cheualrie,/ Hihe prowesse and prudent pollicie" (IX, 3151-52). This "traditionalistic" promotion of certain conventional, laudable, national traits in England sounds like bland praise, but in the Fall of Princes Rome and Italy have failed to merit it. Although Dante himself had been "Ground and gynner of prudent policie," he "Mong Florentynes suffredist gret affraies" (IX, 2527-28) and was subjected to "pitous exil" (IX, 2535). Things were better on Lydgate's side of the Channel. Mars, Mercury and Minerva "Gouerned" in Britain (3153-56) with a supernatural guidance that we evidently are to find preferable to the "furious dyuynaille" with which Walter of Athens communed with the flattering quail. Moreover, these classical deities fostered excellence both in the churches and on the battlefield:

Mars for knihood, ther patroun in bataille,
And Minerua gaff hem influence,
Meynt with the brihtnesse of shyning plate & maile,
To floure in clergie and in hih prudence ... (3155-58)
Pagan deities are to be condemned as devils when they elicit worship in ancient Rome, but they deserve praise when they bestow favor upon fourteenth-century England. Immediately after the mention of “clergie,” Lydgate notes that “Prince Edward be marcial violence” captured Jean despite the latter’s great power (3159-61). The Fall of Princes’s juxtaposition of, and exultation in, clerical and martial excellence in the realm of “Brutis Albioun” is not as striking as, say, the Song of Roland’s combining of similar virtues in the person of Archbishop Turpin, but Lydgate’s synthesis does forcefully reassure the reader that English violence, like the blessing shown to England by pagan deities, is singularly laudable. Furthermore, it lets us know that the English “clergie” is involved in this cultural enterprise.

Lydgate, a member of this “clergie,” seeks to recuperate, at the literary level, the prestige of England. Bochas duplicitously and foolishly sided with the French against the English:

    Thouh Bochas yaff hym fauour bi langage,
    His herte enclyned onto that partie,
    Which onto hym was but smal auauntage;
    Woord is but wynd brouht in be envie.
    For to hyndre the famous cheualrie
    Of Inglissh-men, ful narwe he gan hym thinke,
    Left spere and sheeld[e], fauht with penne & inke. (IX, 3162-68)

Although Bochas praised Edward in word, he inwardly approved the cause of the French. His evaluation of the English in the De casibus — “the very weak and panic-stricken English, men of no worth at all,” a sentiment that Premierfait translated
without quarrel — amounts, in Lydgate’s opinion, to “wynd.” The universal, encyclopedic sweep of Boccaccio’s auctoritas fails him at the border of English national glory. Lydgate tells us that the Italian’s thinking became “narwe,” his powers feeble; Boccaccio fought not like a warrior but like a mere writer. Lydgate instead takes up the pen more vigorously, demonstrating an English resistance to the traditional Italian relegation of England to the margins of cultural respectability and European civilization. Although a poet, Lydgate is also a monastic warrior who fearlessly opposes England’s enemies, whether they be Tuscan mercenaries or Tuscan auctores:

Thou he seide Bochas floured in poetrie,  
His parcial writyn gaf no mortal wounde;  
Kauht a quarle in his malencolie,  
Which to his shame did aftirward rebounde . . . (IX, 3166-72).

Lydgate presses “Bochas” further, judging that “His fantasie nor his oppynioun/ Stood in that caas of non auctorite” (3178-79). The Italian’s authority and perhaps even his virility come under attack: “Wher was Bochas to helpe at such a neede?/ Sauff with his penne he made no man to bleede” (3178-82). Lydgate equates the abandoning of “spere and sheeld[e]” with “narwe” thinking in historiography: both activities are shameful defects in character. What the English translator perceives as an

57 In Boccaccio, “anglis inertissimis adque pauidis et nullius valoris hominibus”; in Premierfait, “des angloys hommes faillis et vains & de nulle valeur” (Bergen, IV, 396).

58 See above, p. 199, n. 50.
unauthoritative treatment of history belies whatever positive values the poetry of
Bochas may have: his inefficacy and virtual impotence in the battlefield of
historiography negate his having “floured in poetrie.” Having drawn both
epistemological and geographical boundaries to Boccaccian authority, Lydgate can
then instruct the reader on the proper use of poetry.

In offering moral instruction, Lydgate is aware that he is a professional writer,
a loyal subject of England and a dutiful servant of his aristocratic betters. First, he
insists on the crucial importance of objectivity in the writing of history. Second, he
maintains the justness of Prince Edward’s cause during a particular moment in history
(the Hundred Years’ War, ll. 3183-96). Last, he argues that it is the responsibility of
the English nobility to weigh English historical matters properly:

Noble Princis, your hertis doth applie
Iustli to weie this mateer in ballaunce.
Alle thynges peised, ye may it nat denye,
Yiff ye considre euery circumstaunce,
In rihtful iuges may be no variaunce:
The feeld darreyned, deemeth who hath riht,
For which Prince Edward fauht lik a manli kniht. (3225-31)

59 Beyond singling out Boccaccio for partisanship, Lydgate also restricts Boccaccio’s claim for the
universal authority of Italian poets. In the De casibus (VIII, i, p. 653; IX, xxiii, p. 834 ff) Boccaccio
praises Dante and Petrarch without mentioning their Italian ethnicity: his Italian poets assume the
status of universal auctores. Premierfait associates Dante with his place of birth: “dant noble poete
florentin” (Bergen, IV, p. 386). But Lydgate goes beyond Premierfait’s identification of Italian poets
as Italians to make assertions, laudatory though they be, about the geographical extent of their
influence. Petrarch had “Itaille ... Most souerayni elunymyned bi [his] lyue” (VIII, 68-70); Dante was
the “cleerest sonne, daysterre and souereyn liht/ Of ... Florence” who had “elunymyned Itaille &
Lumbardie/ With laureat dites in [his] flouryng daies” (IX, 2522-26).
The audience that is being asked to judge history is intended to be English and of noble birth, most likely Duke Humphrey himself, unlike the Italian and presumably non-noble Bochas, who showed excessive "fantasie" (3178) and insufficient "rihtwisnesse" as a "cronicleer" (3183) and in short weighed history badly.60

Humility, the signature Lydgatean trait, appears in the Black Monk's view of himself and his own writing. It appears to be lacking in that of the Italian Bochas. The *Fall of Princes*, a work translated "be constreynt and no presumpcioun," may, in the lowliness with which its compiler faces his commissioned task, compete in solemn, pious dignity with the efforts of the humanists. Lydgate claims to be a writer of humble talents but emerges victorious in his clash with the overweening "auctour."
His own village of Lydgate serves as a foil to Boccaccio's Certaldo, primarily because of its history of grandeur followed by crushing humility as

Be old[e] tyme a famous castel toun;  
In Danys tyme it was bete doun;  
Tyme whan Seynt Edmond, martir, mayde and kyng,  
Was slayn at Oxne, be recoord of wrytyng. (IX, 3432-35)

The pillaging Danes had destroyed the town's fortifications and martyred Edmund, the king and eventual saint who had been a "mayde" for the love of Christ. Lydgate wishes to identify the place of his birth not with transcendental greatness but rather with victimization and consequent spiritual glorification at the hands of foreign invaders.

Something of this conceptualizing of Lydgate the village informs Lydgate the poet's view of England. His is a land beaten down by the disparagement of foreigners, poets and princes alike, yet vindicated by Prince Edward's "mihti marcial puissaunce" (IX, 3208), King Edward's "riht" to the French throne (3194, 3209), and the exposure of Jean II's false claim to it. The situation of Duke Walter, "descendid of the blood of

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61 Scanlon, Narrative, Authority and Power 334; Lerer, Chaucer and His Readers 36.

62 This rendering of Lydgate's birthplace as a humble village reveals an important strategy of moralization that we see elsewhere in the Fall of Princes. The English poet emphasizes the humility of the craftsman, a trait evident in the very physical space that conditioned his artistic development and outlook on the larger world. He demonstrates virtue by serving God and the political embodiments of God's authority in the ruling powers of England, and he is alive to lapses in virtue shown by those, like Boccaccio, who write beyond the geographical limits of those powers. Connected with this moralization is Lydgate's defense of the homely but earnest simplicity of English places, the English language and the English race.

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France,” resembles that of Jean II: both men received Florentine assistance in their unlawful pursuit of tyrannical power. Just as Walter behaved like a tyrant, so too “Bi collusioun King Iohn did occupie, / Set out of ordre the roial alliaunce” (3211-12). Edward III, on the other hand, ought to have ruled France because the crown and regalia came down to him through lineal descent (3213-16) and because, quite simply, God supported him (3219): his victory over Jean was “An heuenli signe be influent pursueiaunce/ Sent from aboue to shewe Edwardis riht” (3222-23). In defending Edward’s claim and victory from detractors, Lydgate places himself under God’s banner, and presumably sees Boccaccio too as a potential enemy of both God and England. Lydgate makes an apparent connection between England’s Providential victory over foreign kings and their armies and the English poet’s scholarly triumph over an immodest foreign auctor. If Boccaccio represents the falling-off of an Italian tradition of poetic and cultural greatness that spans from Virgil to Petrarch, Lydgate seeks to prevent a similar fate from befalling him and English writing by articulating the high standards of historiographical inquiry from which English audiences should learn and over which English “noble princes” should preside. It is Lydgate’s English nationalism and his hostility toward Boccaccio that make him want to envision his patron Duke Humphrey as “fortune-proof,” notwithstanding his knowledge that, even in England, “historical developments elude and exceed the exertions of even the most
temporarily successful princes.” If Humphrey Duke of Gloucester, England and the very text of the *Fall of Princes* will learn humility and virtue, then they may avoid the precipitous falls that marked the greatness and doom of older civilizations with their richer cultural inheritances.

It has been said that Lydgate’s shorter work *The Siege of Thebes* “represents much of what is best in Lydgate – deep moral concern, good sense, a sober solemnity of style – indeed, something of what is best in English” (Pearsall, *John Lydgate* 156). There is a quasi-ethnographic observation here: the qualities of practicality and didacticism typify not only English literature of the late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries but the English temperament at its “best.” Although as a generalization Pearsall’s remark may not be easy to defend, late medieval English audiences responded enthusiastically to Lydgate’s “deep moral concern, good sense [and] sober solemnity of style.” Readers coming to the Englished *De casibus* experienced a work translated into the English language and modified to suit the English aristocracy’s and English gentry’s apparent fondness for sententiousness. For over a century after the death of its English translator, these readers of the *De casibus* came to know Boccaccio and the neoclassicism he helped to promote, but the poet and his movement appeared in an altered guise. The Italian author was known exclusively in the garb

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63 Strohm, “Hoccleve, Lydgate and the Lancastrian Court” 656 (on Humphrey as “fortune-proof”), 655 (on Lydgate’s understanding of political realities).
and hood of the English Black Monk. Defending the veracity of the existence of the British King Arthur, for example, Caxton cited as an authority Lydgate’s “Bochas”: “Ye shal se also in th’ystorye of Bochas, in his book De Casu Principum, parte of his noble actes, and also of his falle.”^  One could say that, in the end, Boccaccio won out over Lydgate rather than vice-versa, for the name of the Italian was superimposed upon the translation completed by the Englishman. But this victory is only apparent. Whether in accord with Lydgate’s wishes or not, the English poet’s name was effaced, yet the substance of his compilation, the intensified didactic strain and English nationalism of the *Fall of Princes*, finally makes Caxton’s “Bochas” an Englished Italian *auctor* in a cultural as well as linguistic sense. Lydgate ensured that his heavily moralized versions of Italy and Italian writers would at once find and create audiences ready to appreciate Italy’s new “humanistic” qualities, according to the older sense of the word. In doing so he probably contributed to the delayed English embrace of the Italian Renaissance by depicting one of its earliest exponents as a bearer of generally familiar ideas about sin, Providence and even Italy itself. Ironically, the later reception of Lydgate’s work as that of “Bochas” admitted the Italian writer with his far-ranging, self-advancing poetic authority, but only after that occasionally presumptuous authority had been properly “Lydgated.”

CHAPTER 3

"THE DYUERS PARCELLIS OF THIS PLACE":
JOHN CAPGRAVE'S AUTHORIZATION OF ROME IN
THE SOLACE OF PILGRIMS

John Capgrave's *Solace of Pilgrims* is a guide for pilgrims to Rome written shortly after its author visited the city, either in 1449 for the General Chapter of the Austin Hermits, or in 1450 during the Papal Jubilee. The work shows strong evidence of first-hand knowledge of Rome's monuments and churches, evidence absent from the twelfth-century *Mirabilia Urbis Romae*, Capgrave's chief source, which by his time "no longer satisfied the demands of pilgrims." The eyewitness

1 The claim that Capgrave visited Rome during the Jubilee is made by Parks, *English Traveler* 350, 596; de Meijer, "John Capgrave, O.E.S.A."; Roth, *English Austin Friars* I, 112; Lucas, "Author and His Works" xxii. Fredeman and Seymour posit 1449, citing the Augustinian council (see, respectively, "Life of John Capgrave" 231-32; "John Capgrave" 227-28). Capgrave could have been present for both events. For more on Capgrave's life and writings, see the above studies by de Meijer, Lucas, Fredeman and Seymour, and now Lucas, *From Author to Audience*, especially the chapter "John Capgrave... Scribe and ‘Publisher.'" Throughout this chapter I use Mills's standard edition of the *Solace*. For a description of the *Solace* and of some of its highlights, see Zacher, "Travel and Geographical Writings" 2244-45; see also 2458-59 for bio-bibliographical information.

2 Sumption, *Pilgrimage* 243. On this work, see Parks, *English Traveler* 254-68. Parks attributes the earlier guide to one Master Gregory, but this attribution was questioned long ago by the first translator of the work into English. See *The Marvels of Rome: Mirabilia urbis Romae*, ed. and trans. Nichols, 2nd ed., by Gardner, xix-xx. "Capgrave's admitted uncertainty about the authenticity of much that he sees and hears, along with his general inquisitiveness, makes the work more a personal narrative and less a reprise of earlier guides to the Roman *mirabilia* and stations" (Zacher, "Travel and Geographical Writings" 2245).
quality of the work notwithstanding, Capgrave attends to his audience's textual expectations by retelling edifying saints' legends and by attesting to the same violent "historical" relations between pagan Rome and England made explicit in Lydgate's *Fall of Princes* and especially the *Morte Arthure*. Capgrave first and foremost intends his text as a topographical and spiritual guide for English pilgrims in Rome, but in guiding those pilgrims he also wishes to shape their national identity as participants in and contributors to the city's long history. Like the *Morte*-poet and Lydgate, Capgrave reminds his audience that *Britannia* conquered the Roman Empire. He also emphasizes, however, the spiritual glory that England has acquired from Rome's saints, a glory subsequently imparted to Rome by men like Constantine the Great and St. George, who in the *Solace* become honorary Englishmen. The subjects of what Capgrave explicitly refers to as his "nacioun" (1) now stand to profit further from the spiritual benefit that Rome offers in its material indulgences and relics. With some exceptions, the Romans, on the other hand, are portrayed as an impious and atavistic race. Unable to free themselves from their pagan heritage, many of them do not and apparently cannot imitate the English pilgrims, who know how to make better use of the city's "spirituale tresour."

True to its form in other medieval writings, Rome in the *Solace of Pilgrims* has a split identity. It is the "Other" in that topographically it is *terra incognita*, containing foreign and somewhat exotic sights and customs (i.e., in comparison with those of the fabulous East as reported by Mandeville); on the other hand, as the
*communis patria*, the institutional source of England’s spiritual identity, it also holds itself up as a spiritual mirror to the English “Self.” Of course, Rome is a site of contemplation in which devout pilgrims may find themselves transported out of themselves by the Beatific Vision: God as the phenomenological “Other” leads the contemplative to mystical union with Him, as He does for Margery Kempe, an important foil for Capgrave (even if he never knew her), as I point out near the end of this chapter. But the Austin friar does not explore the mystical aspect of Rome in any depth. Rather than overtly encouraging rapture by the phenomenological Other, Capgrave guides his readers along established paths of sanctity towards various churches, shrines, indulgences and relics, and away from sinful barbarity as exemplified in the Romans. His Rome induces and regulates a highly materialistic spirituality based on palpable and visible objects, even as its inhabitants tempt pilgrims with unregulated and misleading anecdotes. The Romans themselves resist the pious attempts of foreign pilgrims to learn the truth about the holy city they have come to visit.

Embodying conflicting influences, the city and the *Solace of Pilgrims* conform to the ambiguous image of the late-medieval pilgrimage itself, which inspired and accommodated devotion to God and the saints but also aroused curiosity about new

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3 For a discussion of this use of the word “Other” in the context of male and female forms of mysticism, see Bynum, “Female Body and Religious Practice,” in *Fragmentation and Redemption* 191-92.
sights in physical places. In Stephen Greenblatt’s account, Mandeville’s journey to Jerusalem shows the author being lured away from the “immobile and immobilizing center” of spiritual fervor by the pull of the “rim,” the physical world at large in which human beings wander without a stable center or system of reference points (Marvelous Possessions 3, 42f.). The journey Capgrave underwent is different, but even his work pits the fulfillment of the English spiritual “dream of recovery” against the “endless circulation” of the Romans, many of whom adhere to pagan error and show no desire to arrive at the “center,” to which pilgrims from the periphery of England travel and pay homage. Spiritual attractions must compete with spiritual distractions.

In the first part of this chapter, I discuss Capgrave’s authorial strategies, the actual and imagined “nacyon” to which he directs his Solace, and his presentation of

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4 See Zacher, Curiosity and Pilgrimage; Howard, Writers and Pilgrims. In Image and Pilgrimage, Turner and Turner argue that all pilgrimages challenge the official, hierarchical structures of society. The contributors to Contesting the Sacred (ed. Eade and Sallnow), especially McKevitt and Bowman (in “San Giovanni Rotondo” and “Christian Ideology,” respectively), maintain instead that pilgrimages promote “the reinforcement of social boundaries and distinctions in the pilgrimage context, rather than their attenuation or dissolution” (Eade and Sallnow, “Introduction” 5). I hold that Capgrave saw the subversive potential of pilgrimages and for that reason sought to contain the energies of devotion within traditional and officially approved forms.

5 I borrow and adapt the phrasing of Greenblatt, who analyzes the displacement of the mystical center Jerusalem effected by Mandeville’s imaging of a spherical earth: “In the passage from the center of the earth to its curved rim, from the Dome of the Rock to the sphere, from the dream of recovery to an endless circulation, the metonymic has been transformed into the metaphoric” (Marvelous Possessions 43). That is, Jerusalem as a stable and central part of a larger whole — the earth itself — becomes simply a metaphor for the Heavenly Jerusalem. The earthly Jerusalem is reduced to the
Rome as a text built by its own “auctoris or ellis the makeris” (3). Rome awaits explication for an audience in need of protection against error in general and the falsehoods spread by the city’s inhabitants in particular. The second part of this chapter considers the hierarchical, institutional and material Catholicism of Rome that Capgrave purposefully parades throughout the Solace of Pilgrims. Shaped by his “traditionalistic” narrative strategies, sacred Rome offers itself as a source of tangible holiness which pilgrims can commodify for themselves.

Capgrave’s Textual Rome: English Readers, Roman Tempters

Capgrave makes his scholarly presence felt throughout his literary peregrinations in Rome. His roles are multiple: he is tour guide, teacher, textual commentator and representative of the institutional Church, and demonstrates his authority in all of these roles. No mere compilator, Capgrave reveals a vigorous engagement with texts and people that suggests aspirations to auctor status. He

status of a mere city on the map. For an intriguing counter-argument, however, see Higgins, “Defining Earth’s Center in a Medieval ‘Multi-Text.’”

6 For Brian Stock’s use of this term, see above, chapter 2, p. 158.

7 Tim William Machan’s discussion of literary authority is relevant here. “[Authority] can be used in reference to the individual or individuals who created (or “authored”) a literary work; to the legal or cultural entitlement certain individuals or institutions may have to a particular work or text (their “authoritiveness”); to the claim imputed to certain texts to represent accurately the original texts from which they are judged to derive (their “authenticity”); to the validity of what a work or text states about a certain topic and of its right to make such statements in the first place (its
represents his authority as an ability to read Rome's legends correctly and to winnow out true, pious and text-derived accounts of Roman saints from false, popular anecdotes about the city's pagan monuments and gods. More than a hint of criticism and moral disdain flows from Capgrave's pen, and it is aimed at Roman paganism, past and present. Modern Rome has not become fully Christianized: pagan practices, a pagan mentality and a penchant for passing on deceptive fables still exist there, as we shall see. We shall also see that Capgrave's quarrel with paganism is related to his hostility toward all threats to spiritual and temporal order, and that his crusading zeal leads him to condemn religious decay in England even as he scrutinizes Rome's mixed bag of treasured saints and living sinners.

Capgrave begins his work by invoking the examples of past authors — Pythagoras, Plato, Livy, St. Jerome — who wished to leave behind testimony about what they had heard and seen in their travels (1). Not limited to ancient works, the list also includes texts by well-known travel writers of recent times, such as "a man of uenys whech thei called marcus paulus" and "jon maundeuyle knyth of yngland," the latter of whom "made a book ful solacious on to his nacyoun" (1). In using the word "solace" in his book's title and again in this description of the intent and effect of

“authorization”). While each of these references is distinct from the others, they clearly can and do overlap and occur simultaneously” (Machan, *Textual Criticism and Middle English Texts* 93). Capgrave demonstrates all of the above forms of authority. Machan's discussion of *auctoritas* in his chapter “Authority” (93-135) is indebted to Minnis' illumination of the term and its contexts in his *Medieval Theory of Authorship*. Minnis discusses the roles of *auctor* and *compiler* on pp. 112-117 and 190-210; I return to this distinction below.
Mandeville's Travels, Capgrave hints at the spiritual and cultural purposes behind his own work. "Solacious" here means "pleasant, agreeable, enjoyable," but also, I would argue, "affording spiritual comfort, spiritually beneficial"; Mandeville, Capgrave supposes, wrote in a spirit of public service to edify, entertain and instruct his fellow Englishmen. Capgrave writes in a similar spirit but also wishes to arouse his readers' curiosity. By invoking Plato's pilgrimage-like journeys "to lerne strange thingis namely in straunge cuntrees" (Egypt and southern Italy), and especially by citing Marco Polo and Mandeville, Capgrave hints that marvelous accounts of the Other are forthcoming. Rome is "strange," a place where one can expect to encounter things unfamiliar and out of the ordinary: "Aftyr all these grete cryeris of many wonderfull thingis I wyl folow with a smal pypying of swech straunge sitis as I haue seyn and swech straunge thingis as I haue herd" (1). Capgrave's evocation of strangeness links his own work with earlier exotic travel tales, but he cannot conceal the obvious: papal

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8 For the first set of meanings, see MED S.9, p. 126, "solacious," 1(a), for which the editors adduce Capgrave's remark about Mandeville's Travels. The second set of meanings is found under heading 1(c), with the following quotation from Bokenham's Mappula Angliae given as an example: "To sey for me the shorte preyinge ... folowinge, The which I hope may be to me solacious & profitable." Capgrave's use of the word to describe the effect of Mandeville on his nation seems similar. A Greenblattian analysis of Capgrave's representation of Mandeville would ask how the latter's text could possibly be understood as "solacious" in either sense of the word, since it uncomfortably destabilizes the reader's sense of epistemological and spiritual certitude in the world. See Marvelous Possessions 26-51.

9 As Higgins points out, Mandeville had rather more complex intentions, for he wished to reassert the centrality of Jerusalem to medieval Christians, spur them to reform their societies and induce them to espouse the crusading ideal with new seriousness ("Defining Earth's Center in a Medieval 'Multi-Text'" 44-45).
Rome is not the Asia of the Khans or Prester John’s Land. Possibly recognizing the relatively limited geographical scope of his travels and the semi-familiarity of their location, Capgrave claims to regard his work as a “smal pypying,” different from the celebrated narratives of “grete cryeris.” But Capgrave knew very well that his work would fire not only the traveler’s curiosity but the pilgrim’s piety: although a limited and imperfect manifestation of the Eternal Jerusalem, Rome nevertheless channels the divine grace that flows from the City of God. His seemingly self-effacing phrase “smal pypying” recalls Capgrave’s description in the *Life of St. Norbert* (1440) of the inspiration of the Holy Spirit:

It feseth no man ne maket3 no grete shoue
Of no boystous stormys; but as a spirit of loue
It comth ful esily as a pipelyng winde. (879-81)

Sanctifying grace, despite its potency, enters the world in gentle and humble guise, as the example of St. Norbert himself demonstrates.

In spite of the grandeur of his subject in the *Solace of Pilgrims*, Capgrave introduces himself as a straightforward and humble narrator in service to both nation and patron:

On to all men of my nacioun that schal rede this present book and namely on to my special maystr sir thomas tudenham undyr whos proteccioun my pylgrimage was specialy sped I recomende my sympilnesse praying hem of paciens in the redyng that thei take no hed at no crafty langage wher non is but at the good entent of the maker. (1-2)
Capgrave simultaneously offers himself as an interpreter of Rome for English pilgrims and as a self-effacing “maker” who speaks plainly in order to inform them. But what sort of people does this “nacyoun” comprise? Capgrave uses this word to mean his guidebook’s implied audience, readers of Polo and Mandeville who expect to find a “straunge” Rome, yet one rendered profoundly personal by monetary payments for forgiveness of sins. Capgrave’s audience may also have comprised those persons from the same general social class as the book’s explicitly named dedicatee, Sir Thomas Tuddenham: provincial aristocrats who may or may not have been especially pious but who may have thought of the commissioning of a pilgrimage guide as a good work in itself, despite its merely material nature.

Honest, humble, but not incompetent, Capgrave’s narratorial persona in the Solace differs noticeably from the excessively self-abasing persona adopted in the slightly earlier Book of the Illustrious Henries, probably due to the fact that the patron of the latter was Henry VI. The Solace-narrator differs also from the personae created by Lydgate, Bokenham and other fifteenth-century poets, who protest their ineptitude when comparing themselves with Chaucer. For more on this topic, see Lerer, Chaucer and His Readers. On Capgrave’s own relation to Chaucerian influence, see Pearsall, “John Capgrave’s Life of St. Katherine”; Stouck, “Chaucer and Capgrave’s Life of St. Katherine”; Winstead, “John Capgrave and the Chaucer Tradition”; Delany, Impolitic Bodies 170-72.

“One of the benefits that a patron may at least have thought he was getting was what may be called spiritual preferment. By causing the composition of a religious work the patron may have hoped to notch up a ‘good work’” (Lucas, “Growth and Development of English Literary Patronage,” in Author and Audience 262-63). Perhaps Tuddenham sensed that he needed more good works in the ledger-book of his soul. On Tuddenham and his reputation as bully and extortionist, see Bennett, Pastons and Their England 5, 9, 170, 171, 185; Paston Letters, ed. Davis, 91, n. 1; Lucas, “Growth and Development of English Literary Patronage” 262, 271-72; Mills, “Ye Solace of Pilgrimes: An Unpublished MS” 444-45; Seymour, “John Capgrave” 227-28, 232; Winstead, “Preface” to her TEAMS edition of Capgrave’s Life of St. Katherine, forthcoming. I am grateful to Professor Winstead for allowing me to read a draft of the preface and her edition of Book 1. Tuddenham’s social class appears to be signalled in Capgrave’s choice of script, what Lucas identifies as the “Y” type, appropriate to a member of the gentry, i.e., someone non-magnate and non-royal ("Growth and

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Capgrave astutely appeals to the many-sidedness of his readers' interests and reveals similar sophistication in his concept of himself as an author. Underlying the simplicity of Capgrave's self-presentation, the "compilatorial" policy he establishes at the beginning of the work actually blurs the distinction between auctores and compilatores: "No man blame me thow he be leue not that I schal write for I schal not write but that I fynde in auctores & that is for a principall, or ellis that I sey with eye and that is for a secundari, or ellis that I suppose is soth lete that be of best auctorite" (1). Capgrave directly confronts his readers' possible skepticism: although he apparently concedes that the Rome he is about to describe generates incredible stories, he asserts their validity by citing written sources, his own eyewitness experience, and his capacity to discern truth from falsity. He asks us to accept that which he supposes to be true: "that I suppose is soth lete that be of best auctorite." This assertion reveals Capgrave's neat synthesis of the roles of teacher, pilgrimage guide and textual

Development of English Literary Patronage" 261-62). It is not out of the question, however, that Capgrave, having dedicated a commentary on Exodus to Humphrey Duke of Gloucester, may have imagined an extended audience for the Solace that comprised similarly bookish readers, those with at least a passing interest in ancient Roman culture and Christian moralization.

12 This statement shows greater self-conscious authoritativeness than what we find in the conclusion of Osbern Bokenham's Mappula Angliae: "I of no thyng seyde there-yne chalengeth ne desire to be holdyn neythur auctour ne assertour, ne wylle aske no more but to byn holdyn oonly the pore compilator and owte of Latyne in to ynglyssh the rude and symple translatour" ("Mappula angliae von Osbern Bokenham" ed. Horstmann, 34, quoted by Minnis 193). "By the mid-fifteenth century," Minnis observes, "this type of protestation had deteriorated into cliché, something to be reiterated mechanically" (193).
commentator: he possesses, and later will demonstrate enthusiastically, the ability to provide "solace" by distinguishing the true Rome from the Rome of fables and rumors.

The authentic is, at least in part, the authoritative, and Capgrave has researched venerable texts that purport to explain the origins of Rome. According to the "cronicaler" Estodius, "whos book is not now redyly founde" but is nevertheless the work of "a trewe auctour," Noah and some of his friends embarked on a sea voyage after God had destroyed the Tower of Babel and created diversity of language. The seafarers "seyled in to itayle dwelt and deyid in that same place whech we clepe now rome" (3). Capgrave reports other accounts which we would now judge as mythological, such as Higden's opinion that "of iaphet come the romaynes" (3). These are standard stories, and ones that have at least some relation to the Bible, and so Capgrave does not present them in a critical light. When presenting pagan accounts of the city's origins, however, he intertextually aligns himself with Lydgate and actively challenges the Romans' paganism and its larger propagandistic mythmaking.

Like Lydgate, Capgrave is drawn to the account of Romulus and Remus, for he too sees it as an opportunity for moralization and for the "eschewing of grete errouris that poetis feyne of hem" (4). One of these errors holds that the two brothers

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13 The editor of the Solace, C.A. Mills, notes (3, n. 3) the corresponding account in Higden, Polychronicon I, 208 (ed. Babington).
were fathered upon the Vestal Virgin Rhea by the god Mars; this at least was what contemporary commentators believed, and consequently Rhea “confessed” to the same truth: “all the clerkys in thoo dayis feyned that these too men wer be gotyn of a god celestiall and so the woman hir selue confessed that mars god of batayle had be goten these childirm” (4-5). Capgrave explores this story at some length because of the importance of these two brothers in the minds of the Romans: “these too bretherin mad rome & sette it in a perfithnesse” (4). Underlying the “perfection” of Rome, however, is an anecdote of the history of its founders that Capgrave plainly distrusts: in spite of Rhea’s account of the twins’ mysterious birth, “the trewe jugis at that time condempned hir to be doluyn qwik [i.e., buried alive] for swech deth was ordeyned thann for maydenes that wer consecrate to the templis if thei broke her chastite” (5, italics mine). Capgrave thus takes away the veil of mystification from Rome’s founding by suggesting that Romulus and Remus were born not by the intervention of the god of war but as a result of common adultery, the breaking of Rhea’s vow of chastity to Vesta. “Clerkys” who “feyne” cover up the truth of this offense, while “trewe jugis” reveal it and punish the crime with death.

This expose’ of Roman history continues with Capgrave’s refusal to believe Roman and Italian stories about the she-wolf that supposedly nursed the twins. The king’s shepherd Faustulus discovered them lying on the bank of the Tiber; the judges who had sentenced their mother to death apparently had ordered that the infants be left as food for “doggis and woluys” (5). Faustulus brought Romulus and Remus
home to his wife Laurence, who then proceeded to raise them as her own children. In order to square this story with the legend that a she-wolf suckled the twins, Capgrave demonstrates that in fact Laurence was known by two names and seems to have led two lives:

> It is seid comounly that thei wer fed of a wolf for this same laurence was called lupa whiche soundith in our langage a wolf rith for this cause fer sche was fayr and lecherous and grete appetite had to many men and therfor was sche likened on to this stynkyng beest” (5).¹⁴

Lydgate recounted that the shepherd Faustulus had entrusted the care of the twins to Laurence after taking them from the “real” she-wolf (*Fall of Princes* II, 4047-53); in that version of the story, Laurence appeared as a virtuous, duty-bound Roman matron. Capgrave claims that the real reason the Romans can say that a wolf fed the twins is that Laurence was in fact a prostitute who possessed a wolflike prurience. Like the adulteress Rhea, she is the object of Roman mythmaking; in Capgrave’s judgment, however, she merits nothing but scorn, for she was guilty of ordinary, non-mythic lasciviousness.

This censorious attack against the adoptive mother of Rome’s foundling founders recalls St. John’s figuring of the Roman Empire as the whore of Babylon: “The kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the earth’s

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¹⁴ Capgrave may also have had in mind the Galician Queen Lupa, “whose name, which means she-wolf, fitted her well”: she had been persecuting the disciples bearing the body of St. James until the miracles they worked induced her to convert to Christianity. See Jacobus de Voragine, *Legenda Aurea*, trans. Ryan, II, 5-6.
inhabitants have grown drunk on the wine of her lewdness” (Revelation 17:2). Capgrave’s criticism of the city’s pagan origins hardly reveals apocalyptic urgency, but it forcefully questions the auctoritas of the whole pre-Christian layer of Roman civilization. Capgrave further suggests that the “stynkyng beest” at Rome’s founding exudes an influence still detectable to the modern pilgrim: “And 3et on to this day the celles that comown women dwell in thorw oute the latyn tonge be cleped lupanaria that is to sey houses of wolys” (5). The emphatic, almost geographically visual phrase “thorw oute the latyn tonge” suggests the universal testimony given by the Latin language — still in use among the city’s residents, Capgrave would have us believe — to Rome’s preservation of sinful tradition. This story sounds highly suspicious, but in the very next sentence Capgrave sidesteps the question of its veracity and instead shifts our attention to the euphemistically literal attempt by Roman chroniclers and Italian painters to conceal the seamy side of the she-wolf myth:

But who so euyr it be of these exposiciones the cronicles of rome and pictur[es] thorw ytaile bere wytnesse that a wolf 3ave soke on to these childyrn perauenture or faustulus had founde hem (5).

In considering peninsular images of Romulus, Remus and the she-wolf, Capgrave casts a jaundiced eye upon the over-literal attempt by Roman and Italian cultural mythmakers to cover up the uncontrolled bodily lust associated with the founding of the “head of the world.”

Attempts to include England within Rome’s historical, cultural and spiritual sphere of influence appear throughout the Solace and signal another crucial aspect of
Capgrave’s authority as a cultural mediator between Rome and England and between his subject and his audience. Capgrave begins his second chapter, “Of the 3atis wallis and towris,” by stating that he will examine those features of Rome “folowyng euyr the steppis of oure elde” (7). In spite of this deferential vow of fidelity to his sources (or to earlier pilgrims), Capgrave introduces his own subjective and aesthetic responses to the ruins around him and compares them with similar ruins in England. He notes that although the city walls are somewhat “appeyred [impaired] of age,” they nevertheless are “strong and hy for the most part as touris be in inglond of the townes that stand there” (7). Some of the ancient Roman theaters “wer called ampheatrum [sic] that was a place all round swech as we haue her in this lond” (17). Capgrave is not merely following the steps of older authorities but finding equivalent images in England. This strategy reveals several things: his authority as a writer, his bond with his specifically English audience, a hint of pride in what “we haue her in this lond,” and the implication that peripheral England is not outlandish with respect to Rome. The Roman past is intelligible in terms of England’s own material history, and those walls and amphitheatres still in existence in English towns are comprehensible in an international context in which the margins of Europe resemble the center.

15 Perhaps “writeris” should have followed “oure elde” here, as it does twelve lines later when Capgrave writes “the elde writeris.” Capgrave occasionally skipped words, which he later added in the margins when revising (noted by the editor Mills; e.g., p. 2, n. 2; p. 7, n. 1; p. 9, nn. 1 and 2; p. 11, n. 4; and passim).
Capgrave admires the antiquity of the physical city’s many architectural
remains, whether pagan or Christian in origin, but he is less favorably impressed by
the Romans themselves and their deceptive versions of their city’s history. He
frequently juggles misinformation as well as information; unfortunately for the English
seeker of authentic Roman history, the curious pact between the “lesyng” and the “sad
soth sawe” that Chaucer witnessed in the *House of Fame* (2089-2109) seems
particularly resistant to dissolution on the streets of the Eternal City. Capgrave will
seek to break that pact: in Victor and Edith Turner’s phrasing, he separates the official
written “legends” about Rome from the somewhat destabilizing, orally-transmitted
“folklore” that the locals attempt to pass off as true narratives. What emerges in his
exposure of the “credibility gap” between texts and interlocutors is not only the
authority of texts, which accurately preserve the Rome of popes and saints, but also

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16 For example, the Capitol “had many templis and houses hanging up on him as 3et is sene” (28)
and “is now and euyr hath be as principal place of the cite” (26). Many of the city’s walls, arches and
vaults built centuries ago “stand at this day” (123). Rome conquered the town of Tiburtina in ages
past, “and 3et the romaynes haue it in subieccioun” (10). The two wells of oil that sprang forth at the
church of Santa Maria in Trastevere when Jesus was born “be 3et there in ful grete reuerens” (111).
Describing a solemn church built in Constantinople in honor of Mary, Capgrave notes that pillars for
austere edifices in Rome were built entirely of stone, both in the time of Constantine and now (151).
He assumes that the quarter in which the church of San Lorenzo in Damaso stands was as densely
populated in the fourth century as in his own day (129).

17 Turner and Turner discuss the “rich superstructures of legend, myth, folklore, and literature” that
attach to all pilgrimages. “Legend may be defined as the corpus of written accounts of the marvels
and miracles connected with the genesis and development of a pilgrimage system; ... and folklore, as
the assemblage of unsystematic (and often locally idiosyncratic) tales and yarns about happenings of
an unusual sort along the pilgrimage way and about its saints” (*Image and Pilgrimage* 23).
the authority of the textual critic, who exposes the fallibility of orally-circulated fables and their manufacturers.

A few examples will illustrate Capgrave's attitude toward those who circulate Roman "folklore." To the right of the Porta Capena and joined to one of its walls is a large hill "in whiche remus is byried as thei sey there" (8). Although he does not openly question this rumor, Capgrave distances himself from it by adding the qualification that he is merely reporting what is said by present-day inhabitants of the city. Happenings that are more secular and marvelous than sacred and miraculous are usually prefaced by phrases that neither charge falsehood nor affirm truthfulness, but merely suggest that verifying such marvels lies beyond the province of the compiler:

_Othir men sey_ that [the Lateran Gate] was clepid laterane of the frosch [frog] that was in nero wombe whiche frosch at his comaundment was byried ther for lateo is for to hide rana is a frosch in latyn tunge whiche soundith hidynge of the frosch._\(^{18}\) (9, italics mine)

That place whiche is cleped now s[an]c[t]a m[aria] de penis infemi where the dragon lyuyth 3et undyr the ground _as thei sey_ was sumtyme templum ueste._\(^{19}\) (21, italics mine)

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\(^{18}\) The editor Mills notes (9-10, n. 1) that "[t]he derivation of the word Lateran from lateo-rana seems to have been universal in the Middle Ages." For the story about Nero's frog Mills cites Jacobus de Voragine's life of St. Peter the Apostle (cp. _Legenda Aurea_, trans. Ryan, II, 347) and Higden, _Polychronicon_, IV, p. 396.

\(^{19}\) Later in the _Solace_ Capgrave apparently accepts the story of St. Silvester and the dragon, though not without adding an impressive _moralitas_ to it. See the account on pp. 165-67, and the source in the _Legenda Aurea_ (trans. Ryan, I, 70-71).
Capgrave reports everything, even the yarn about the dragon under the church, because all-inclusiveness “schal make the boke mor perfith” (94; cp. 100). This attitude recalls Ranulf Higden’s defense of pagan texts as potential servants of Christian doctrine\(^{20}\) and Chaucer’s more general unwillingness to “falsen som of my mateere” (Miller’s Prologue 3175); like those earlier authors, Capgrave does not equate inclusiveness with uncritical servility. And like the Morte-poet and Lydgate, the Austin Friar grapples with Roman pseudo-history while at the same time appropriating its majestic cultural authority for England. Capgrave is as adroit a manipulator of texts as any of his predecessors: he knows, for example, that fifteenth-century England is a spiritual colony of Rome, but, as I have pointed out above, he also reminds his readers that Rome once (purportedly) belonged to pre-Christian Britannia. Although it is true that Julius Caesar “conquered grete brytayn which thei clepe inglond erlond & many othir” (24), the British warriors Belinus and Brennus, “longe be fore crist was incarnate ... wonne a grete perty of rome” (28). This is not the delusion of insular rustics living in a cultural backwater, for “Of this story not only our cronicles ber witnes but the cronicles of itaile” (28). This time, Italian chronicles transmit the truth that enables England to penetrate the aura of Roman “history.”

\(^{20}\) Higden defended his use of “gentile figments and pagan sayings” by claiming “that it was a sign of great strength to take the mace from the hand of Hercules. ... [T]hese have been incorporated in order that they may serve the Christian faith” (Minnis 113, paraphrasing Polychronicon, I, pp. 10-12).
Moreover, the invocation of those same chronicles will allow the Romans to come to know themselves. Even now they mistakenly believe that the Christianization of the Empire brought uninterrupted misery to their city. Addressing his English readers, Capgrave imagines himself engaging in a scholarly dispute with these erroneous quasi-apostates:

And for the romanes sey that thei ferd neuir weel ne neuyr stood in prosperite sith cristendam cam therfor wil I schewe hem that othir naciones conquered hem longe be fore crist was incarnate. (28)

Like Lydgate, Capgrave takes great pleasure in waging textual warfare against Italians who falsify the historical record, particularly when the accurate reporting of relations between England and Italy is at stake. Conveniently, “[t]he cronycles of grete brytayne ly now nexte hand whech is cleped inglond therfor out of thoo wil I take my testimonie” (28). Capgrave’s legalistic reference to the “testimony” of chronicle history confers legitimacy upon his presentation of the story of Belinus and Brennius, two British kings who figure prominently in Geoffrey of Monmouth’s *Historia Regum Britanniae* and subsequent chronicles, such as Higden’s *Polychronicon*. Capgrave reminds his readers that not only did these British rulers conquer Rome but that Brennius “made the cytees in lumbardye both melan and pauye” (28). In Capgrave’s mind, then, Rome and the Lombard communes of Milan and Pavia are related to one

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21 In *Solace* p. 28, n. 3, the editor Mills cites *Polychronicon* ch. 17, vol. 3, pp. 264-70, and also ch. 19, vol. 3, pp. 294-306. It is interesting that in the later *Abbreuiacyon of Cronicles*, a universal history, Capgrave makes no mention of these British kings.
another because a British king intervened critically in their history and, in the case of
the latter cities, made history possible.

But Britain and Italy are related to each other by more than the far-reaching
attempt by Brennius to reverse the direction of Roman imperial conquest. It at first
seems strange that Capgrave makes no reference to what Chaucer’s Alceste refers to
as the infamous “tirauntz of Lumbardye” (Legend of Good Women, F 374); given his
frequent criticism of Roman folly and barbarity, Capgrave has a perfect opportunity to
criticize Lombard tyranny. He certainly knew of Lombardy, for it appears in his Book
of the Illustrious Henries as the place where, in January of 1077, the Holy Roman
Emperor Henry IV stood for three days in the snow awaiting absolution from Pope
Gregory VII, only to declare his loyalty three years later to an antipope elected by
“many excommunicated bishops and promoters of sedition assembling in Brescia.” Capgrave
condemned this Lombard-born threat to ecclesiastical order, but later in the
Illustrious Henries he recounted the sojourn of Henry, Duke of Lancaster (the future

22 “But the aforesaid Gregory the Seventh, in a council of ninety bishops, excommunicated the
Emperor Henry, because he had desired to destroy the unity of the Roman Church. But, afterwards,
the same Henry came into Lombardy, and standing with naked feet on snow and ice for many days,
with difficulty obtained his absolution. After this again, many excommunicated bishops and
promoters of sedition assembling at Brescia, elected Guipert, bishop of Ravenna, to be Pope, and
called him Clement, and to him Henry, prostrate on the earth, with all the others, immediately did
homage” (Illustrious Henries 30). Writing much later, in the Abbreviacyon of Cronicles, Capgrave
has not changed his mind about the justness of Pope Gregory’s cause and the unjustness of Henry
IV’s: “Gregorius VII ... cursed the Emperour Herry for the scisme he set in the Cherch, and
compelled him to com barefoot in frost and snow and aske his absolucion” (100). In this thumbnail
sketch of the life of Gregory, Capgrave omits the account of Henry’s eventual victory over the pope.
Henry IV) with an infamous tyrant of Lombardy, “the duke” Giangaleazzo Visconti. While on pilgrimage to the Holy Land in 1392, Henry stayed with Giangaleazzo at Pavia and Milan, the same cities described in the Solace as having been founded by the British conqueror Brennius:

At Pavia and Milan [Henry] lodged with the duke, and refreshed himself after the hardships of his pilgrimage in his most pleasant society. For the “Comes Virtutum,” of which the title the then duke of Milan boasted, led him to the castle where the body of the blessed father Augustin [sic] rests, which our duke regarded with long contemplation. There, too, he beheld the body of that great philosopher and theologian Boethius, and he also saw the body of Lionel, the late duke of Clarence, his uncle, who had been buried there. For this Lionel, just before his death, had given commandment to his attendants that his heart and his bones should be conveyed to the convent of the Hermit Friars of S. Augustin, at Clare, in England, but that his flesh and entrails should be solemnly interred beside the grave of that distinguished doctor. (Illustrious Henries 105)

Capgrave evokes a scene of deep piety in Lombardy. Far from being a tyrant—or a collaborator with Turkish forces that ultimately massacred a Christian army at Nicopolis in 1369 (Benson, “The Date” 28)—Giangaleazzo Visconti appears as a “count of virtues” who gives Henry of Lancaster a piety-inducing tour of Milan’s famous dead. The bodies of St. Augustine, Boethius and Lionel, Duke of Clarence alike inspire Henry’s pious meditations. The Austin Friar Capgrave must also have been moved by the deathbed request of Lionel to have his body divided between two sites associated with Augustine, one English, the other Italian. This request strikingly

23 In the Dedicatory Epistle to his commentary on the Book of Genesis, Capgrave reminded that work’s patron, Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester and uncle of Henry VI, that the Augustinian convent
illustrates the efforts of an Englishman to appropriate for himself sanctity housed in
Italy; the *Solace of Pilgrims* will instruct its English readers on how to follow this
precedent, though in a less dramatic and intimately final way.

Henry is not significantly less pious than Lionel; in Capgrave’s words, the
former “spent the whole of this year [1392] in a solemn pilgrimage; and, indeed, in this
labour, so prudently did he govern both himself and his companions that he was
declared to be pleasing to God, and honour to this realm, and friendly to all with whom
he associated” (104-5). Capgrave had good reason to portray Henry of Lancaster in a
positive light, for he would one day have a grandson who would become King Henry
VI and the patron for Capgrave’s *Book of the Illustrious Henries*. It is for this reason,
I think, that Capgrave in the *Solace of Pilgrims* not only does not scorn Lombardy for
its tyrants but claims that a British king founded Pavia and Milan. Capgrave may have
thought it possible that his pilgrimage guide might reach a wider and nobler audience
than Sir Thomas Tuddenham, an audience with memories of the hospitable Lombard
welcome shown first to Lionel and later to the future Henry IV. His urbane treatment
of Lombardy and of his imaginary Roman interlocutors reveals an impressive sense of
tact, which Capgrave knew how to show when writing the history of Italo-English

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at Clare was founded in 1248 by an earlier Duke of Gloucester named Richard de Clare (*Illustrious
Henries*, Appendix I, p. 231).
When broaching the topic of Italian locales made memorable to English people by illustrious Englishmen, Capgrave evinces a diplomatic skill worthy of comparison with Chaucer. Yet when he returns to the subject of ancient Roman paganism, he demonstrates an almost Lydgatean penchant for making religious error and immorality look utterly ridiculous. English and Italian histories alike record not only the British defeat of the Romans at the River Albula, but the Romans’ idolatrous fondness for geese. A gander had awakened the guards of the Roman Capitol (atop the Capitoline Hill) and thus prevented Brennius’ forces from taking that last remaining part of the city (28). Capgrave then cites the authority of St. Ambrose, whose Italian and specifically Milanese identity he makes explicit (“seynt ambrose bischop of melan”): this doctor of the Church wittily observed that the Romans “wer mor bounde to do worcep on to her gees thann to her goddis for the gandyr was wakyng and warned hem whann her goddis slept” (29). Ambrose implied that the ancient Romans had worshipped absurdly; Capgrave makes the criticism explicit by declaring that they worshipped erroneously and so soiled their dignity: “And in uery soth whan this brennus had receyued a grete summe of gold and was goo the fonnyd [i.e., foolish] puple defouled in errour ded make a gandyr of white marbUl and ded to it worchip as to a god” (29). The Romans may have been able to buy Brennius’ good will and induce him to depart, but they apparently acquired no good sense out of the deal. In
telling this story, Capgrave allies himself with Lydgate and the *Morte Arthure*-poet by pitting superior British military might and historiographical accuracy against inferior Roman forces and the chronicles “of itaile.” Rome has not always been the object of English veneration; in its earlier pagan incarnation it was an object of English conquest. In effect if not in intention, Roman absurdity also becomes the target of English laughter, and this English cicerone suggests that both the conquest and the laughter are justified.

Capgrave evidently sought, like Chaucer’s Harry Bailly, to bring forth “[t]ales of best sentence and moost solaas.” 24 One of the most entertaining passages in the *Solace of Pilgrims* attempts to trace the “history” of the Coliseum, apparently a gathering place for some of Rome’s especially wild folkloric rumors. Capgrave does his best to shape highly titillating, fabulous-sounding and thus potentially subversive material into a story about the victory of Christian sanctity over pagan deviltry. “The collise eke is a meruelous place,” we are told (33), which “as 3et is sene for the moost part of it stant at this day.” This assurance of the survival of a pagan marvel into the Christian era is followed by a description of its walls and arches and then by a scholarly investigation of the origins of the name. Promising compilatorial fidelity and concealing his impressively authoritative detective work, Capgrave tells us that “we

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24 *Canterbury Tales* I (A) 798. In his 1911 lecture “Ye Solace of Pilgrimes: An Unpublished MS.,” Mills noted Capgrave’s “quaint sense of humour” and “native shrewdness combined with caution” (447).
will iustly write now what ye elde auctores sey in yis mater” (34). In ages past, the Coliseum, dedicated to the sun and moon, contained elaborate mechanical structures, “wondirfiil werkis,” and ingeniously painted ceilings made to look like stormy skies (35). In the center of the building there stood a statue of Phoebus Apollo with his left hand holding a ball “as thou3 he had al this world in gouemaunce” (35). After setting out “as a gramarioun” to explain the name of the sun god, Capgrave recounts the fascinating story of the destruction of “al this fayre werk.” In the days of St. Silvester, after Constantine the Great had transferred imperial control to Constantinople,

mech cristen puple come to rome in pilgrimage and whann thei seyn this gaybildyng and this meuyng of these planetis as I haue declared thei left mech of her deuocioun and stood and gased on these uanities rith for nouelte of the site. Tho mad seint siluester this maunmentrie to be broke and spent in to betir use. Al this haue I red, that whech folowith in this mater haue I herd. (35-36)

Capgrave probably sensed the relevance of this story to “cristen puple,” who came to Rome in his own time and beheld the architectural marvels of the empire’s heyday. The moralistic and scholarly tone is unmistakable: although a “fayre werk,” these pagan contraptions were (and are) but “vanities” whose “novelty” lures people away from their meditations on Christ and the saints. The term of abuse “maunmentrie” (that which pertains to Mohammed) is applied anachronistically but conventionally to this pagan statue, which in an Augustinian vein Capgrave describes as having been “spent in to betir [i.e., Christian] use.” The authority that Capgrave then establishes for this account derives from books and common report, two sources of significantly differing authority.
So far, what Capgrave has "red" strikes him as plausible and useful for moralization, but what he has "herd" arouses his suspicion. "Men sey" that St. Silvester approached the statue of Apollo, which was endowed by "the deuele" to command the saint: "Colis eum that is to sey in englisch worchipis thou him" (36). The devil's agency figures prominently in this story: "The deuele spak yoo wordes at that tyme to stere the puple whech was redy to distroye that maumentrie that for very fer of thoo wordis thei schuld lette [i.e., stop, abandon] hir werk." Undaunted, St. Silvester replied to the devil "Colis deum that is to sey thou worchipest god."

Capgrave's account of the comical shouting match that follows is heavily qualified with reminders that this is merely what people say about the Coliseum:

So cried thei oft sithis as it is told the on colis eum the othir colis deum and of this dialoge in returnyng of a terme roos the name of this place as sum sey that it was called collise. Whethir this be treuth or nout I make no meyntenaunce. (36, italics mine)

Scholarly protocol prevents Capgrave from dismissing this story outright as pure fiction, as he apparently would like to do. The victory of a saint over a devil, of Christianity over paganism, merits reporting, however, and it is this spiritual kernel that Capgrave preserves. Adding the evidence of his senses to that of anecdotes and texts, he furthermore makes rational use of the available physical traces of this encounter between St. Sylvester and "Apollo": "But this haue I red in this mater that siluester ded distroye it and in tokne that ther was swech a thing sumtyme the grete heed and the left hand in whech he held the ball he sette at laterane and 3et stant it
ther” (36, italics mine). Distancing the reader from common report, Capgrave cites a written account that finds at least partial verification in the still-extant remains of the statue (which ironically appears to be that of Constantine the Great). It is not necessary to concede the intervention of Apollo or the devil.

As fabulous and as potentially distracting as the Coliseum story may seem, it destabilizes no Christian truths and signals no self-deconstructing tremors in Capgrave’s textual edifice. His reluctance to affirm the truth or falsity of the story does not affect the moral: Rome’s saints have always managed to put pagan “maumentrie” (whether harmless statues or devil-filled ones) to “betir use.” Capgrave registers his awareness of the distinction between Rome’s marvels and miracles most sharply when he perceives that the stories contribute nothing to an understanding of God’s Providence working through history. I have said that usually Capgrave shows enough politesse not to accuse taletellers of lying outright, but sometimes even he is taken aback by the audacity of the Roman raconteurs. Either by disputing the Romans’ claims or by scrutinizing their temperament, he further reveals his authority and points out the narrative traps with which the Romans lure credulous pilgrims to distraction.

25 Cf. the Italian desire to resurrect antiquity: “Boccaccio had already called the vast ruins of Baiae ‘old walls, yet new for modern spirits’... Ciriac of Ancona (d. 1457) ... travelled not only through Italy, but through other countries of the Old World, Hellas, and the islands of the Archipelago, and even parts of Asia and Africa, and brought back with him countless inscriptions and sketches. When asked why he took all this trouble he replied, ‘To wake the dead’” (Burckhardt, Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy I, 188).
For example, the locals seek to persuade him that the Seven Sages of Rome lived contemporaneously and arrived together in the city. Capgrave is not convinced:

The romanes sey that their dwelt [in the Septisolium] the uii wise men whech thei clepe the uii sages. ... But these men leued not all at ones at o tyme and thou3 thei had be at o tyme I wene that thei come neuyr at rome. To this sey the romanes that this place was mad for othir seuene but thei haue not her names rydyly. Wherfor I 3eue no grete credens to this tale for this cause namely for al the grete clerkis of rome for the most party had places of her owne ... (44)

Capgrave himself provides no authoritative sources for his theories but rather practices the principle he laid out at the very beginning of his work: “that I suppose is soth lete that be of best auctorite” (1). In response to Capgrave’s unflagging scholarship, the Romans struggle lamely to find another explanation that will support their original anecdote. Ultimately the citizens of Rome, who are best situated to provide accurate historical guidance to the city’s wonders, prove unreliable. Capgrave again disprizes oral reports and live (Roman) human beings in favor of written texts and, one assumes, the authority of his Solace of Pilgrims.

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26 According to the Middle English Seven Sages of Rome, the Emperor Diocletian summoned “[t]he vij sagys that were yn Rome” to come together to provide instruction to his son Florentyne (l. 23 [Egerton MS. 1995]). In Balliol College MS. 354, Diocletian calls to his court “Seven the wyseste that were in Rome” (l. 23). Both versions appear in The Seven Sages of Rome (Southern Version), ed. Brunner, p. 1. The story Capgrave heard could have circulated in Italy independently of the Seven Sages or it could have been based upon it. It is not out of the question that Capgrave is eliding the boundaries between texts and people by attributing the report from the Seven Sages to the people of Rome. If so, he is displacing the “erroneous” version of the story from the English textual tradition to the benighted Romans themselves.
Capgrave is not yet done with the duplicitous Romans, some of whom provided him with unhelpful information after he had inquired about the marble boat in front of the church of Santa Maria in Navicellis. Certain people told him that a saint had rowed to Rome in it, "but the seyntes name thei told not ne mech othir thing whech I inqwyryd" (105). Evidently, pilgrims already accustomed to the mysteries of the faith will encounter no culture shock in Rome, for the Romans shed no helpful light on mysteries whatsoever. Somewhat put off by the Romans' lack of cooperation, Capgrave reports another tale he heard about the boat, but dismisses it because the tellers could furnish him with neither proof nor credible documentation:

Othir men seid that the uernicle cam in the same schip ouyr the se fro ier[usa][e]m probacioun ne writing alegged thei non and therfore 3e schul haue these opiniones rith as I haue. I may wel be leue that be the grete powere of god a ston myth flete on the watir but wheither this ston ded so or nowt I put it in dout. (105)

Capgrave may be underscoring his suspicions simply because the Romans treated him uncivilly, but more importantly he places in the reader's hands the responsibility of weighing the trustworthiness of the fabulating locals and their "opiniones." Although both stories about the marble boat center on important objects of medieval piety, a saint and the Veronica, Capgrave rejects the spiritual profit they might bring because they lack textual authority.

While he was at "the cherch clepid marie transpodium" (St. Mary Transpontina), Capgrave again provoked the locals with his scholarly inquiries. Reflecting later on the encounter, he notes: "whi it is called transpodium treuly I
coude not lerne for the dwelleres are wroth a non if men ask ony questiones” (161).

“This mech” he was able to see, however: two pillars to which Peter and Paul had been bound as punishment “for thei taute the feith of our lord ihu” (161). The memory of these pillars elicits a reflection that is curious in light of its proximity to the complaint against the irritable Romans:

Thus were the holy apostoles ofte tyme serued whan thei cam first on to a cyte and prechid the name of crist a non thei were had in to the councel and betyn naked and forbodyn that thei schuld no more nemel [take] cristes name on to the puple. (161)

Capgrave suggestively juxtaposes an image of persecuting ancient Romans with an image of irritable present-day ones. If he or she bears faith in Christ, a curiosity about the past, and an unwillingness to accept as definitive the city’s own specious self-mythologizing, the pilgrim must remain on the alert. Like fragments of Rome’s walls, temples and arches, Roman hostility toward pesky and pious outsiders survives in degraded form from the distant past.

By drawing attention to the abundance of “folklore” circulating in Rome and to the deceptiveness of its oral authors, Capgrave demystifies the Eternal City’s “bad part of town,” the non-holy world of the permanent residents, who resist the truth-seeking of pilgrims. Rome’s antiquity and authority surely impress visitors, but the citizens themselves retain traces of behavior inimical to the search for Christian holiness. I have already pointed out Capgrave’s fascinating claim that some of the Romans still resent the rise of Christianity and insist that the city has never thriven since its arrival: I
find it fascinating because this resentment may well have been expressed by Italian
humanists in Rome, the Latin-speaking interlocutors with whom Capgrave actually
would have been able to have a conversation. This sentiment, if true, would preclude
their ever benefiting from the spiritual rewards offered by the shrines in their midst.
Presumably the English readers of the *Solace of Pilgrims* face no such impediment,
despite their weaker attachment to the glories of the ancient city.

Capgrave comes close to equating the Romans' attachment to their city's
pagan marvels with sympathy for the devil. The *Morte Arthure* and Bokenham's
*Mappula Angliae* mentioned marvels from Britain's pre-Christian past, but they also
made it clear that Britain's "giants" and their paganism had died out long ago: the
*Morte* graphically contrasted Genoa's fiendish giants, who continued to be born, to
those of Britain, who had long since disappeared and left only their towers. In Britain
and Italy, the farther below the surface the monstrous lies, the more progress the
nation has made toward moral regeneration. In Italy, the past of pagan fiendishness is
never over and done with, and primeval monsters still lurk below the surface.
Regardless of the truthfulness of Capgrave's report of Romans champing at the bit of
Christianity, the city's idolatrous barbarity, like the dragon under St. Mary *de Poenis
Inferni*, apparently "lyueth 3et undyr the ground."

Many of the Romans themselves seem to be nothing more than baptized
pagans. Even in the fifteenth century they are said to walk with spears in their hands
"in worship" of Romulus, whom they long ago deified as "Quirinus" (7). As the
Romans in the time of Emperor Alexander “took euyr mor heed at temperall ioyes than goostly” (18), so too this tendency persists today. On the hill called “Omnis Terra,” a reference to Rome’s former world domination, modern Romans “on fasting Sunday” (Quinquagesima) assemble with swords and armor and chase cartloads of swine down the hill, “for he that may cacch a mussel of flesch that day he is a man for euyr” (51). In light of the conquests of the swine-chasers’ more illustrious ancestors, the spectacle sounds not only ridiculous but pathetic; Capgrave’s phrase “a man for euyr,” with its suggestion of immortal and virile fame, exudes irony. The chaotic ritual is itself “a ful onlikly game,” since rusted swords are used to cut the meat and human casualties result from the hunt, “but this is her elde game whech thei can not leve” (51). Although they enjoy “A nothir game ... of mor gentill sport” in which the best rider is awarded a cloth of silk (51-52), the Romans have not yet freed themselves from their pagan past, to their moral harm and risible discredit in the eyes of English readers. The image of the scholar-ethnographer Capgrave, dutifully following old written authorities but exercising his freedom to go beyond them, makes an amusing contrast with the greatly debased Romans, compelled to play “her elde game” and apparently unable to enter Christian modernity.28

27 A full description of the game appears in Magni, Discorso sopra gli spettacoli, le feste, ed il lusso degli Italiani nel secolo xiv (Rome, 1818), pp. 28 ff., quoted by Mills, 51-52, n. 2.

28 Capgrave was not the only English visitor to frown on the swine chase custom. Having journeyed to Rome in 1404, Adam of Usk described this and other games and condemned the participants who “run riot like brute beasts in drunkenness (the feast of misery), with unbridled extravagance, like to
Such lingering pagan elements suggest that modern Rome, beyond the walls of the churches and shrines, suffers from spiritual as well as physical decay. The challenges that the Romans pose to the pilgrims’ search for renewed sanctity may not seem serious, but Capgrave alerts his readers to them because he knows that pilgrims are curious and will ask questions about the sacred and profane marvels that they encounter. If they find some tales suspicious, they may come to question approved legends about Rome’s images, relics, indulgences and belief in Purgatory. Skepticism of these aspects of the faith were associated with Lollardy, and it is this kind of skepticism that Capgrave wishes to guard against. By voicing his own doubts about certain clearly fabulous stories and by emphasizing their local, “folkloric” origins, Capgrave preserves the integrity of more important, “verifiable” text-based narratives about the holy city.

the sons of Belial and Belphegor” (“Eodem ludo tabernae crepula, sed miserie epula, cum indomita luxuria, ut Belial et Belfagor filii, quam bestialiter discurrent Romani”): Chronicon Adae de Usk 270, Latin text on p. 95. Also quoted by Mills, 52, n. 1. Both Capgrave and Adam invite comparison between the past age of Rome’s majestic supremacy and the present time of the Romans’ self-consuming barbarism, but Capgrave rather explicitly points out that even Rome’s past age was a time of barbaric pastimes. What is “elde” is not necessarily good.
Capgrave's Institutional Rome: The Material Piety of the English "Nacyoun"

In the *Solace of Pilgrims* Rome's classical version exists as a subterranean stratum of history that occasionally, and with alarming effects, pokes through the modern Christian surface. The very structure of Capgrave's text indicates progression from non-sanctity to sanctity:

The forme of our werk schal be ordred thus. The first part schal declare the disposicioun of rome fro his first makyng. The secunde part schal declar the holynesse of the same place fro his first crystendam. (2)

Promising the supersession of holiness over its absence, this announcement of the work's structure also allows for shock when the readers learn that the actual inhabitants of the city do not always conform to the spirit of its "first crystendam.” The architecture, on the other hand, is remarkably well-behaved. Manifesting Rome's current ecclesiastical supremacy, it offers many examples of the Christian capital's successful appropriation of its classical past, a “conversion” passionately urged in more general terms by Lydgate in the *Fall of Princes*. What once were pagan temples are now Christian churches: for example, a "fayr arche," whose wall paintings depict Christ telling Peter to accept martyrdom in Rome, has replaced the former Temple of Mars. Capgrave moralizes the rededication as follows: “Thus the temple of the fals feyned god of batayle is turned on to a memorial of trewe fiteres for our lord ihu

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29 On Lollard objections to the doctrine of Purgatory, images ("stokkes and stones and ded mennen bones," in the words of Margery Baxter of Martham), the sacraments, the Church as “Satan's
which wold rather deye than forsake his feith” (21). This temple stands for sacred Rome generally: once the city celebrated expansionist aggression, but now it glorifies the self-sacrifice of Jesus for the salvation of all. Underscoring with martial overtones the spiritual significance of a “converted” building, this story appeals to the materialistic piety of late-medieval English readers. The tangible structures of the caput mundi came to accept and defend the true faith; the members of the body of Christendom should do likewise.

To enhance Rome’s didactic appeal to his specifically English “nacioun,” Capgrave frequently points out connections between England and Rome. These are not limited to the famous gesta Britannicorum against the Romans or Italians described above: they include the spiritual triumphs of British saints or specifically Christian rulers expressed in concrete and readily apprehensible terms. While Capgrave was in Rome, “an englisch monk” showed him a written account describing Pope Gregory the Great’s introduction of scholars to the monastery that bears the saint’s name, near the “Septisolium” (45). St. Gregory is near and dear to the hearts

synagogue” (and presumably Church mediation through indulgences), see Justice, “Lollardy.”

30 For a sampling of studies of late medieval English piety, see Aston, The Fifteenth Century 117-203; Beckwith, Christ’s Body 76-77, 102-111; Carpenter, “Religion of the Gentry”; Duffy, Stripping of the Altars; Finucane, Miracles and Pilgrims; Fleming, “Charity, Faith, and the Gentry of Kent”; Richmond, “Religion” and “Religion and the Fifteenth-Century Gentleman”; Scanlon, Narrative, Authority and Power, passim, but esp. 3-26, 322-50; Sumption, Pilgrimage; Swanson, Church and Society, 252-329; M.G.A. Vale, “Piety, Charity and Literacy”; Walker Bynum, Fragmentation and Redemption; Winstead, “Piety, Politics and Social Commitment in Capgrave’s Life of St. Katherine” and Virgin Martyrs, esp. 10.
of the English, as Capgrave is well aware, for it was “seynt gregorie pope be whom inglond was neuly convurted on to the feith” (58). Constantine the Great receives even more praise: the emperor who introduced Christianity to the Empire was himself born in Britain. Using conventionally pious language, Capgrave later explicitly praises Constantine’s devotion and his founding of the Church of St. Laurentius:

We redyn in martines cronicle that constantine the emperour let make this cherc of seint laurens and all that uoute be neth the auter wher seint laurens lith with mech precious thing whech is not there now for as we seid ofte a boue these cherches haue be spoiled of tirauntes that haue conquered rome. This blessed emperour constantine that spent so mech good in worship of god and seyntis hat ful grete reward therfor as we suppose. (114-15)

The “precious thing[s]” would have been venerated along with the body of Laurentius if not for the depredations of Rome’s conquerors through the centuries. Invaders of the temporal city were simultaneously plunderers of the spiritual city who despoiled its churches and diminished its supply of relics for veneration. In its conventionality, Capgrave’s emphasis on Constantine’s worship of God and the saints asserts “traditionalistic” religious practices that challenge Lollardy, still a potent threat (whether imagined or real) in the fifteenth century. Although Capgrave does not make explicit reference in the Solace to Wyclif or Lollards, for whom he elsewhere displays

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31 This belief is erroneous but commonplace in the Middle Ages. Capgrave writes: “constancius ... aftir tyme that he had conquered all spayn he went in to grete brytayn and there he wedded heleyn a kyngis doubtur of whom he be gate grete constantyn and this same constauncius deyd in britayn & is byryed at 3ork as martyn seyth” (55).
violent hatred, the corpus of his works suggests his belief that the church-defiling ravager of times past and the religious iconoclast of the fifteenth century are both “tirantis.” The achievements that make Constantine distinctly untyrannical, we may assume, were his Christianization of the Empire, his founding and building of churches, his veneration of the saints, and his proscription of “blaspheme” (95): in fact, the newly Christianized emperor passed a law treating any despiser of Jesus “as a traitour” (94-95). Capgrave expresses the “debt of interchanging neighbourhood” between the ruler of the empire and the dwellers in Heaven in terms suggestive of a commercial transaction: Constantine “spent so mech good” for God and the saints that

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32 See, e.g., Cronicles 188, entry for 1384: “In the ix 3ere of this kyng, Jon Wyclif, the orgon of the deuel, the enmy of the Cherch, the confusion of men, the ydol of heresie, the norcher of scisme, be the rithful dome of God was smet with a horibil paralsie thorwoute his body. ... And worthily was he smet on Seynt Thomas day, ageyn whom he had gretely ofendid, letting men of that pilgrimage; and conueniently deied he in Siluestir fest, ageyn whom he had venemously beridd for dotacion o f the Cherch.” The author finds nothing troubling about the passing of De comburendo haereticorum in 1401: “In the third Sere o f this Heny was a parlement at London, wher was mad a statute ageyn Lolardis, that where-euyr thei were founde preching her euel doctrine, thei schuld be take and presentid to the bischop, and if thei meyntened her opiniones, thei schuld be committed to seculer hand, and thei schuld brenne hem and her bokes. This statute was practized in a prest [John Badbyl that sone aftir was brent in Smythfeld” (p. 218). For other examples of Capgrave’s loathing of Lollards, particularly Sir John Oldcastle, see Illustrious Henries 125-28, 141-42 (Oldcastle as the “satellite o f the devil”).

33 Capgrave also describes Julian the Apostate as a “tyraunt”: “be cause he was passing couetous he coloured his couetise with the gospell whech seith to cristen men. But if 3e forsake al that 3e haue 3e may not be my disciples. Thus robbid this tyraunt all cristen men” (90).

34 In the phrasing of the Golden Legend noted by Eamon Duffy, pilgrims who honor the saints pay “the debt of interchanging neighbourhood”: “As the saints rejoice in Heaven over us when we repent, so it is right that we ‘make feast of them in earth’, and in doing so we procure our own honour, ‘for when we worship our brethren we worship ourselves, for charity maketh all to be common’” (Duffy, Stripping of the Altars 160-61).
they surely have given him “ful grete reward.” Constantine may not be a saint, but “[t]his blessed emperour” almost merits a saint’s veneration. His monetary charity to the Church – he ordained that “the tithes of all his possessiones schuld be gadered and treuly expendid in edificacioun o f cherchis” (95) – has exemplary value to pilgrims. Capgrave does not presume to tell them that they need to imitate Constantine’s “Donation” of temporal power to the papacy, but he does link the veneration of saints, the giving of material gifts to churches, and the receipt of spiritual rewards in a way that would not have been lost on his readers.35

From the time of Constantine to Capgrave’s own day, Rome continues to offer spiritual protection to those peregrinating Catholic “men of my nacioun,” and Capgrave in turn offers his textual defense of Rome-centered piety and the primacy of the pope.36 His promotion of charitable giving to the Church is one example of his

35 In Illustrious Henries, Capgrave explicitly praises “the deeds of the pious prince Constantine, which ought to be imitated by future generations” (152). In Capgrave’s view, Henry VI has already proved himself a worthy imitator of Constantine in that he honors ecclesiastics and venerates the sign of the Cross (150-52). In comparing Henry with Constantine, Capgrave resembles older chroniclers who praised Clovis, Charlemagne and later Byzantine emperors as “new” Constantines. On this earlier fashioning of Constantine as a paradigm, see Burke, “History as Allegory” 342.

36 Capgrave defends pilgrims and pilgrimages in his account of the fall of the Duke of Austria, who inflicted “gret hurt” on persons bound for Rome. In 1386 “the duke of Ostrich, enmy to the Pope Vurbane, troubled wrongfully the pilgrimes that went to Rome, and constreyned hem to pay grete tribute, to this entent, that men schuld not desire to go to Rome. And for his puple ros ageyn him in this cause, alleging that it was gret hurt onto hem, he gadered a strength and kyllid many o f hem; but their left not her rebellion, for thei risen ageyn and killed the duke and many othir lordis” (Cronicles 189-90). Capgrave’s order, the Augustinian Friars, defended the Augustinian notion of absolute papal dominion as formulated by Giles of Rome, whose pronouncements the Austin friars had long held as doctrine. See Knowles, Religious Orders in England, II, 149; Gwynn, English Austin Friars in the Time of Wyclif 38, quoting Analecta Augustiniana, ed. E. Esteban, O.S.A.
loyalty to Rome. His zealous condemnation of schism, heresy and unbelief appears to a more limited degree in the Solace than in the earlier Book of the Illustrious Henries and the somewhat later Abbreuiacion of Cronicles, as discussed above, but even in this work Capgrave preaches against spiritual decay, particularly “a mongis us.” In one instance, Capgrave castigates England for its spiritual flaws by citing Constantine’s good example. This “holy emperour” (94) did “a notable thing” for the Church every day for eight days after his baptism.

The u day mad he this lawe that who so euyr fled to ony cherch for sauacion of his lyf he cherch schuld saue him and this lawe is nowe ful euel kept a mongis us, god ney seyntis ne eke her houses are not hold in reuerens as thei schuld. (95)

Just as shrines and relics in Christian Rome inspire the fervor of pilgrims, so too textual examples of piety in late imperial Rome teach modern Englishmen how to revere holiness, particularly the church as a haven for all human beings, even criminals.

What makes this example all the more pertinent to Capgrave’s readers is that, yet again, it enshrines the piety of Constantine, whom Capgrave identifies as a native of Britain. Parallels to Constantine’s defense of the Church are hard to find nowadays, Capgrave informs us; one infers that the influence of Wyclif and his followers has

[Rome, 1907-14], II, 275. Delany suggests that fifteenth-century Augustinians such as Osbern Bokenham may have adhered more closely to St. Augustine himself than to Giles (Impolitic Bodies 46-49). Even if intended to be applied to Capgrave, Delany’s remark does not imply that late medieval Augustinians denied the centrality of papal authority.
helped to diminish the "reuerens" for saints and their churches in England. Lollard sympathizers, though lacking organization and real power around 1450, still condemned the veneration of images and relics and provided the secular authorities with the incentive to legislate and enforce orthodox spirituality. Wyclif earlier had denounced the Roman Curia with particular nationalist vigor as a "worldly aduersarie to oure lond" (i.e., England) and a source of "gostly ennemyte." But one need not have been a Wycliffite to be disturbed by the many fault lines that threatened the Curia's authority, such as the Avignon Papacy (1309-78), the Great Schism (1378-1413), perennial complaints about simony and the futile fifteenth-century debate over conciliarism. Capgrave's pilgrimage guide to Rome is a reactionary attempt by a supporter of the universal Church to clarify Rome's meaning to pilgrims and to regulate their piety. If it is true, as Victor and Edith Turner claim, that "there is

37 Strohm, England's Empty Throne 32-62, argues that the Lollards were always weak and that church officials helped to create the threat of an organized menace where only bumbling ineptitude existed. In the view of Pearsall, "Lollardy was perceived not only as a heresy but as a form of sedition and treason and therefore a dangerous threat to both church and state. It remained a potential threat throughout the fifteenth century, long after the execution of Sir John Oldcastle in 1417; it was also, perhaps, a threat that was convenient to exaggerate at moments of political crisis in order to rally support to king and church" ("Lydgate as Innovator" 18, citing Anne Hudson's Premature Reformation).

38 Of Prelates; see above, Introduction, p. 64, n. 67.

39 It is reactionary in that it defends, or presupposes the defense of, the traditional reverence of saints, relics and Rome itself against those who, like the Lollards, "rejected the authority of the church, dismissed the papacy as a corruption of the Devil, and specifically denied the church's power to grant indulgences" (Tyerman, England and the Crusades 262). Criticism of the institutional Church is an extreme form of a more general, and often benign, trend toward private devotion from 1350 to 1540. For discussions of the alleged antithesis between private and public forms of piety, see Carpenter,
something inveterately populist, anarchical, even anticlerical, about pilgrimages in their very essence,” then Capgrave epitomizes “those who control and maintain the social structure,” “religious specialists [who] have attempted to domesticate the primitive, spontaneous modes of peregrination, with their freedom of communitas, into orderly pilgrimage, more susceptible to ecclesiastical control” (Image and Pilgrimage 32).40

In the Solace the Church Militant emerges in Capgrave’s warnings against “blaspheme” and in his proto-Tridentine defense of extra-Scriptural “good usages,” earlier praised by St. Augustine.41 The Austin Friar’s extolling of St. George as an English national saint will enable him to indulge in Church custom (i.e., veneration of the saint) and to provide an example of resistance to heresy.

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“Religion of the Gentry” 63-67, 72-73; Richmond, “Religion” 198; Swanson, Church and Society in Late Medieval England 284-92, 335.

40 Eade and Sallnow critique the Turners’ “associational” and carnivalesque theory of pilgrimage (Contesting the Sacred, “Introduction” 4-5), but the interactions among the characters in Chaucer’s Canterbury Tales convince me of the continued usefulness of the Turners’ insights. On the “associational” nature of the Chaucerian pilgrimage, see Wallace, Chaucerian Polity 65-103, but especially 65.

41 “Blaspheme is undirstand her, whan men sey of crist othirwise that treuth as summe heretikes seid that he took no ury flesch ne blood of mary but the body which he took was formed of the eyr which body he myth transmute as he wold. Blaspheme is eke cleped whan we sey of crist othir wise than is to his worship as that he schuld do ony forfete or ony synne or giue meytynauns to ony swech thingis” (95). “For seint austin 3euith us swech a reule in his book de moribus ecclesie that alle thoog good usages which ar worship to god and encreees [“of good” in margin] when we can not se hem groundid in scripture we schul suppose that crist taut hem his apostoles and thei aute hem othir faderes and so is the good custome come down to us”(147).
Capgrave's materialistic idea of devotion embraces love of nation as well as longing for the Eternal Jerusalem. This kind of piety appears clearly in the militant, nationalistic legend that Capgrave selects as the most authoritative account of the life of St. George, another illustrious holy man remembered in Rome but honored chiefly in England. "[B]e cause this lond [England] haldith him in grete reuerens sumwhat of his lyf wil we touch" (88): the issue of St. George's importance to Englishmen moves Capgrave to write about the reasons "Why yat the region of ynglond hath this seynt in so special reuerens that thei make him a principal capteyn in her batayles and trost up on him moost aftir god" (88-89). Capgrave does not fault England's appropriation of this saint for the temporal realm. Several years before his journey to Rome, he reported that at the Battle of Agincourt "[t]here were some who asserted that they saw S. George fighting for the king [Henry V]" (Illustrious Henries 134). Capgrave voiced neither approval nor suspicion of this account, but its placement in an encomiastic miniature life of his patron's father suggests that he could not have objected to it too strongly. In the Solace, St. George similarly takes up the sword, not merely for England but for all Christendom. Capgrave explains England's special veneration of him by pointing out his success in vanquishing Moslems, a quality for

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42 Capgrave's aggressively iconophilic defense of Rome does not necessitate a weak concept of the English nation or of English nationalism, as pro-modernity theorists of nationalism sometimes maintain. In opposition to the religious insularity advocated by Wyclif's followers, the Solace of Pilgrims suggests that what Julian of Norwich called "my moder Holy Church" nurtures and makes possible the "divinization" of the English nation. Wycliffite nationalism is dangerous because it attempts to cut away the spiritual legitimation of the English nation.
which he has "a special tuycioun ouyr all cristen men." The Historia Antiochena tells of a spirit-like youth, apparently the saint himself, who led the Christian army to victory in its siege of Jerusalem: "So dede thei and wunne the cyte to ye grete honour of cristen men and grete confusion of sarsines" (89). Implicitly, the English above all other races honor St. George partly because the saint showed such exemplary piety as a Crusader. Capgrave has heard other stories about this saint but discredits them as potentially false: "Many thingis haue I herd in this mater but of non auctorite." It is clear that the "auctorite" he perceives in this legend derives from the saint's spiritual and temporal victories over the forces of Islam.

Capgrave's exuberance for Crusade-like expeditions against the enemies of Christianity permeates a slightly earlier work, the Book of the Illustrious Henries. Writing of this book, Christopher Tyerman has argued that "[t]o John Capgrave, writing in the 1440s, all battlefields on Christendom's frontiers with the pagans, Turks, and Saracens were of equal merit for, whether in Prussia, the East, or Granada, the enemy all held Christ and his cross in contempt." Capgrave's heroes are those who

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43 England and the Crusades 266, and 427, n. 28, citing Hingeston's Latin edition of Capgrave's De Illustribus Henricis, 161. Cp. Hingeston's English translation: Henry, nephew of Henry III of England, and the future Edward I traveled to "the regions of the Saracens, considering that they should be paying honour to God, if they expelled the enemies of the Cross from the borders of the Faithful" (177). Henry, Duke of Lancaster (grandfather of Henry IV) "eagerly sought the foremost place in all engagements with Pagans, Turks, or Saracens. Hence at first in Prussia, then at Rhodes, next at Cyprus, and many places in the East; then passing over Granada and parts of Spain, he either put to flight, or slew those who held in contempt the Cross of Christ and Christ Himself" (186-87). Cp. 104, 181. For a similar sentiment in the Abbreviacyon of Cronicles, see 174-75.
do not turn the other cheek to violence and do not turn their backs on the values of this world; rather, they raise the True Cross and the banner of chivalry over the bodies of slaughtered pagans and Muslims. St. George embodies the highest virtues of the ideal Englishman, who fights for spiritual Rome and thus confers glory on his local homeland and the *patria communis*. There is a connection between Capgrave’s severe treatment of pagan Rome, Britain’s one-time enemy, and his textual persecution of religious heterodoxy and Islam. Both stances accord well with the militant Christianity that he elsewhere shows when condemning threats to political and spiritual order. In defending either the realm of England or papal Rome, Capgrave insists on the destruction of physical threats as a necessary and laudable feature of the struggle of truth against falsity.

When championing the efficacy of material stimulants of piety such as saints’ relics and indulgences, Capgrave never presents sacred Rome as an object of doubt or

44 For example, in *Illustrious Henries*, Capgrave sees Oldcastle’s rising as a threat to England’s spiritual and national security. He condemns Oldcastle not only for his “heretical wickedness” (127) but for “secretly lurking about in various parts of the kingdom” and assembling “a great crowd of his traitorous associates, purposing to slay the king at the feast of the Epiphany” (128). Capgrave again pairs political and religious treachery when he reports that in 1417 the Duke of Bedford “held a Parliament in England in which provision was made against the Scots and the Lollards, who had risen in the king’s absence” (140-41). Later Capgrave praises Henry le Despenser, Bishop of Norwich, as one who “warred solely against schismatics and perturbers of the peace, or enemies of the faith” (203). For Capgrave’s apparent belief that the forces of Heaven support England, see 133, 137, 146-49. The *Abbreuiacyon of Cronicles* signals no change of outlook: see, e.g., Capgrave’s description of “these Lolardis, tretoures to God and to the kyng,” 205.
suspicion. If we knew nothing about the medieval history of Rome except what Capgrave tells us, we might think that the papacy had never faced any grave challenges to its authority or posed any serious crises to the community of the faithful. This Rome is a city of flawless institutional purity and power: Capgrave omits all reference to the Schism, the controversy surrounding indulgences that Chaucer’s Pardoner immortalized, and the debate over conciliarism. When raising the question why Rome has enjoyed such great honor “that the hed of alle cristendam schuld dwelle ther as for the most part” (60, italics mine), he barely hints at the Church’s “Babylonian Captivity” in Avignon. As a result of his selective treatment of history, Rome’s spiritual authority, from Constantine’s time to Capgrave’s, has suffered none of the calamitous reversals of fortune that, in Lydgate’s Fall of Princes, have made pagan Rome and communal Italy the graveyard of secular ambitions. The source of error in Rome is translated from the often corrupt papacy to the seemingly pagan and barbaric Roman people. Because of their spiritual wandering, many of the Romans (but not all, as we shall see) have alienated themselves from the center of Latin Christendom whose authority foreign visitors come to acknowledge. This authority, however, made palpable in the “ruins” of the saints housed in Christianized ruins of temples, remains undiminished.

45 This “crusade ideology,” in Tyerman’s view, “supplied a distinct impetus towards the creation of a quasi-religious ideology of nationalism which sustained English politicians and people into the sixteenth century and beyond” (England and the Crusades 2).
As mentioned above, Capgrave emphasizes the "betir use" that Christian Rome has made of its pagan heritage. Alongside fragmentary views of spiritually decaying modern Romans, Capgrave records scenes from an aesthetically beautiful city infused with religious life. These are not really contradictory images, because it is the religious buildings that possess this beauty. The stairs leading up to the Church of Santa Maria in Ara Coeli "are the fayrest greces [steps] of white marbil that be in the world" (42), while near the Church of SS. John and Paul "is a fayr place that longith to a cardinal" (90). Santa Maria de Palma "is a praty litil cherch" on the way from the Porta Appia to the Church of St. Sebastian (162). These and other sites see no dearth of pilgrims. In spite of the fact that Jesus was sentenced to death by Pontius Pilate on the steps of what later became the Church of St. John Lateran, the faithful ignore the memorial marker and kiss the steps: "the devocion of pilgrimes is not content therby but thei knele up on alle and kisse all for uery sikirnesse" (75). This show of attachment to the material reality of the place where Christ stood seems to have elicited from Capgrave some surprise, but no real disapproval.\(^\text{46}\) Capgrave viewed a wealth of relics at St. Lorenzo in Panisperna but is now unable to recall them, "for I wrote hem nowt for the prees that was there" (102), the "prees" comprising native

\(^{46}\text{Capgrave may well have resigned himself to an acceptance of the material dimension of the piety of his age. In studying the behavior of late twentieth-century Catholic pilgrimage groups in Jerusalem, Bowman points out a different kind of reaction to physical places, one that stresses "the images of Christ's procession" conjured up in the mind, rather than "images of the literal place" ("Christian Ideology" 115).}
Romans as well as pilgrims. At the Church of Santa Maria del Popolo, the image of Mary painted by St. Luke is displayed for veneration,

and grete multitude of puple is there at yat openyng and so is it kept open on day lith on to the Sunday aftir pas whech is called in albis, euery day that tyme is there grete pres of romanes but moost on Satirday aftir noon for be for noon thei uisit the saluatour at seynt ion lateranensis. (165)\(^{47}\)

As this description suggests, there is no shortage of pilgrims – even among the Romans – flocking to behold tangible evidence of the holy. On the Thursday before the first Sunday of Lent, the head and the dragon-killing spear of St. George are put on display at the church dedicated to him. His head is placed "in a tabernacle of syluyr and gilt mad soo that a man may lyft up certeyn part therof and touche and kisse the bare skul" (87-88). On the Friday after Ash Wednesday, "grete indulgences" are offered at the station at the Church of SS. John and Paul (89-90), and at the stacion of St. Peter \textit{ad Vincula} pilgrims kiss and put around their throats the chain with which Peter was supposedly bound in Jerusalem (96). This Rome bursts with spiritual energy; this is the city of the "hunthred kyrkes fowrty and seuen/ Chapelles ... Terne thousand & fyte" that inspired the author of the \textit{Stacyons of Rome} to note that "Pardon ys the sowle bote,/ At grete Rome ther ys the Rote."\(^{48}\)

\(^{47}\) For other instances of popular devotion, see pp. 89, 96 and passim.

\(^{48}\) \textit{Stacyons of Rome}, II. 18-20 and 3-4, respectively, in \textit{Political, Religious and Love Poems}, ed. Furnivall, 143.

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Capgrave describes a vast number of churches, stations and their indulgences, ample evidence to warrant the devotion of pilgrims. This image of Rome sits oddly with the city’s violent and pagan history, however, and Capgrave considers the question of how Rome ever came to be chosen as the capital of the new faith. This problem is taken up in the introduction to “the secunde part whech tretith of the cherchis of rome and of the spirituale tresour conteyned in hem” (60). Here Capgrave demonstrates his skills as a peculiarly authoritative compiler of pious attitudes toward Rome. In a phrase reminiscent of Julian of Norwich, he clings to ecclesiastical Rome as “principal moder and norcher of our feith” (60), but he concedes that it is not obvious “whi rome hath swech grete pryulege.” Presumably, longstanding complaints (from Lollards and non-Lollards alike) about Roman curial corruption make it necessary for the teacher to remind his readers of Rome’s importance. Capgrave airs several perfectly reasonable-sounding theories before accepting the one that he knows will please his audience, a theory that associates Rome’s “grete pryulege” with its great numbers of saints’ bodies.

The first theory that Capgrave analyzes assumes that a sort of retributive, cosmic irony penetrates human history: “Summe men sey it was conuenient that there schuld god be principaly honoured wheer he was principaly despised and that cyte whech was heed of all errour schuld be mad aftirward heed of al lernyng” (60). Capgrave does not explicitly approve this interpretation, but there is no reason to suppose that he disagrees with it, in spite of his use of the qualifying phrase “Summe
men say.” Capgrave has given plenty of textual evidence attesting to the fruitful transformation of Rome’s pagan temples, originally inspired by error, into the Lord’s churches, hence it is appropriate that this theory should at least receive sympathetic consideration in the *Solace of Pilgrims*.

Furthering the image of a true Church correcting an erroneous Empire, Capgrave appeals to the authority of St. Augustine: “So can oure lord as seith seint austin make his gode thingis of our evele” (60). This comparison of Rome’s Christianization to a personal relationship between God and sinners reveals the Augustinian bent of Capgrave’s thinking. In his *Life of St. Augustine*, Capgrave enthusiastically translates the famous passage from the *Confessions* in which the saint perceives the effortlessness with which God transforms evil into good:

> Why not now, Lord, whi schal not this same houre make an end of all my filth? Whil he lay thus with grete contricion of hert and with ful sobbyng voys uttirryng all these wordes, al sodeynly he herd a voys, as thou3 it had ben at the next hous, soundyng these same wordes: Tak and rede, take and rede! ... Thus ded he, and these same wordis red he: ... Not in grete festis ne in dronknesse, not in soft couchis and in schalful dedis, not in strif a[n]d envye, but be clad with our Lord Ihesu, & fulfille not the bisinesse of the flesch in his desires. ... this same texte put in his hert a lite of swech a grace that alle the derk errouris whech he had hold wer passed a-wey fro him.49

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49 *Life of St. Augustine* 22. The Vulgate text, also in Capgrave, reads “Non in comessacionibus & ebrietatisibus, non in cubilibus & impudiciciis, non in contencione & emulacione, sed induiimi dominum ihesum christum et carnis curam ne feceritis in desideriis.” The printed text’s *schalful* may be an editorial error for *schamful*.  

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The Scriptural text which Augustine read was Paul's injunction to the members of the Christian community in Rome to abandon the earthly delights that they so highly prized there. Like Paul, Augustine experienced an inner conversion and used it as the basis for his larger teaching mission. Capgrave's first theory concerning the reason Rome became the seat of the papacy harks back to this Pauline-Augustinian narrative of conversion: God's grace makes possible a transformation from "errour" into "lernyng" within the sinner (or sinning city), whose native intellectual potential God retains and turns to "betir use."

"Conuenient" though it may be, however, this theory is not the one that Capgrave finally settles upon; its positing of a God who makes His home in the place that chiefly persecuted Him lacks sufficient emotional impact. He then carefully considers and passes over other historical and worldly explanations for Rome's current status. He does so possibly to cut short historical analysis that would discover the Church's worldliness and corruption; perhaps he simply wants to build up the reader's expectations, which will only be fulfilled when Capgrave focuses on the most affective of the material embodiments of Rome's sanctity, the actual bodies of holy persons.

"Othir men ... that grounde hem in the gospell" maintain that "the cherch of Rome is worthier of dignyte" than the church of Antioch — though the latter is the older of the two — because Jesus entrusted plenary power to Peter in Rome (60). One supposes that Capgrave would have favored this scholarly opinion; another worthy and characteristically learned theory recalls Constantine the Great's decree "that lich as the
emperour of rome is lord and principall ouyr all kyngis so the bischop of rome schuld be principal [sic] ouyr all bishoppis” (60-61). This argument recalls St. Augustine’s belief that the Roman Church could justifiably appropriate the glory of imperial Rome but turn it to better use. This theory, however, does not deeply satisfy Capgrave, nor does the claim that Rome achieved its supremacy after long competition with Constantinople. These bookish attempts to explain Rome’s great “pryulege” miss the real target, the emotional piety of Capgrave’s readers.

The real reason Rome became the capital of Western Christendom is that more martyrs had spilled their blood in that city than in any other place. Blood, not scholarly speculation, expresses the devotion of the ideal Christian:

Men think ferthermore of grete reson that it schulde be soo [i.e., Rome should be the capital of Christendom] for the multitude of martires whech spilt her blood in confirmacioun of our feith in that same place. Than wil we speke of this holy place and of the dyuers parcellis of this place undir this forme. (61)

Emphasizing the importance of martyrs, Capgrave commodifies holiness in easily consumable portions for his readers. Textual, physiological and architectural spaces, “the dyuers parcellis of this place,” overlap in the Solace of Pilgrims and

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50 For example, St. Augustine praises the behavior and philosophical views of some Romans in order to goad Christians to aspire to a devotion to God that transcends the Roman love of liberty and praise. Augustine knows how to appropriate Roman virtus while rejecting its secular context. See City of God, trans. Bettenson, 196-212.

51 Capgrave’s use of the word “parcellis” connotes a range of meanings. MED, part P1, offers several definitions, of which the following three seem relevant: 1a.(a): “a part or portion of something,” with
accommodate the institutional and organic unity of Rome's vast "spirituale tresour." To borrow Sarah Beckwith's apt formulation: "The emphasis here appears to be on divinizing the material rather than materializing the divine" (Christ's Body 25). Just as, in Beckwith's analysis, Margery Kempe valorized the body of Christ as "the place where Christ materializes" (25), so too does John Capgrave privilege the bodies of the martyrs as the spaces in which Rome is most truly itself.

Capgrave's image of Rome, as well as his own auctoritas as a writer, depends on the skill with which he engages the piety of his audience. The compiler of narratives about Rome is simultaneously a reader of texts and a reader of the sometimes conflicting religious attitudes that inform them. It is everywhere evident that Capgrave seeks to channel back towards its institutional source the genuine devotion that many English people of the late medieval period continued to express in pilgrimages and the veneration of saints. In their structure, theme and "cultural work," these material instanciations of devotion engender solitary reflection and desire

the above-quoted passage from the Solace given as an example; 1a.(c): "a plot of land"; 1a.(d): "a section or portion of a book or written document; a division of a general topic" (p. 601).

52 Cp. Walker Bynum: "Behavior in which bodiliness provides access to the sacred seems to have increased dramatically in frequency in the twelfth century and to have been more characteristic of women than of men" ("Female Body and Religious Practice" 186).

53 I here draw on a more complex formulation by Winstead, Virgin Martyrs, which analyzes "authors not only as producers of new narratives but as readers of a larger tradition, engaged in a contest over meaning both with that tradition and with their own readers" (4).

54 On Capgrave's understanding of fifteenth-century piety, see Winstead, "Piety, Politics and Social Commitment" and Virgin Martyrs.
for indulgences but presuppose communal participation. Piety directed to the visible Church takes precedence over the invisible and difficult-to-control life of inward contemplation.

In a number of anecdotes, Capgrave authoritatively subordinates private meditation to public devotion, which centers on relics, physical signs that have been literally enshrined by Church authority and imbued with clearly-defined anagogical meaning for the beholder. While talking about the station at the Church of St. Sabina, he first explains the stations, which are held in Lent according to the decree of St. Gregory, who preached them and visited them himself (85). “Station” suggests a period of standing after a period of walking,

For pilgrimes walkyn the sercle with grete labour and summe rest neuyr tyl al her labour be don. Wherfor this holy doctor gregory ordeyned that euery day schuld be a masse in a certeyn place and there schuld men rest and her that masse. (85)

The use of plural “pilgrimes” and “men,” as well as the importance of daily mass, should be noted: Pope Gregory envisioned public observance of and participation in scheduled ritual worship, whose sanctity flowed from institutional authority. Capgrave recognizes the contemplative value of resting and hearing mass but also understands these as duties. Along with the visit to the stations, one’s presence at the masses becomes a form of active devotion undertaken communally: “Eke for to encrese her [i.e., their] deuocyon mor on to this dede [i.e., the act of walking the circle] he graunted on to that cherch wher the stacyon is as mech pardon as is in al
rome as for that day” (85, my italics). A day’s worth of all Rome’s pardons may be had for walking the circle of stations and hearing mass at each church along the way. Pardons increase individual devotion, and of course they direct it along communal lines back to the institutional Church itself. According to the eyewitness Capgrave, St. Gregory granted a day’s worth of all the pardons in Rome to the Station of St. Sabina in order to stimulate the piety of the apparently slothful Romans: “this is the cause as I suppose that fewe romanes walk the sercle but the stacioun, as a man may pleynly se” (85). This frank criticism of the Romans’ lack of wholehearted devotion further contributes to Capgrave’s image of the Romans as an imperfectly Christianized people.\(^\text{55}\) In drawing attention to the divide between the holy city and its less-than-holy inhabitants, a divide which, like the behavior of the Romans themselves, “a man may pleynly se,” Capgrave assumes that non-Romans, such as the English, can and ought to do better.

“Now wil we telle 3ou what we haue red of this same sabine” (86), Capgrave announces after a brief account of the surroundings of her church. The reader is then treated to a prose \textit{vita} of St. Sabina (86-87). Daughter of a man named Herod, Sabina married a certain Valentinus (“ualentine”), who died at some unspecified time after the wedding. Sabina became the friend of a devout Christian named Seraphia and dwelled

\(^{55}\) It also implies the truth of Christ’s own remark that a prophet receives no honor in his homeland. See McKevitt, “San Giovanni Rotondo,” for relevant insights into the lukewarm homage – at least in
with her “in holy conversacioun.” Eventually Seraphia was “a restid led on to the iuge and condemned on to the deth only for sche beleued in our lord ihu crist.” A dutiful follower, Sabina witnessed Seraphia’s passion and death and buried the martyr in a grave that had been already prepared. Before Seraphia died, however, Berillus, “a grete president of rome,” had summoned Sabina before him and demanded to know why Sabina insisted on shaming herself by associating with the lower-class Christians and abjuring the state gods:

Why considerest nowt what thou art an whens thou cam. Thou hast ioyned the in felauchip on to thes cristen folk and hast forgete the noble birth thou came of and the worthy man whech weddid the eke thou art not aferd of the wreth of our goddys. Tume a geyn woman to thin owne hous & fle the cumpany of that wicch whech hath deceyued the and many othir.

In response, Sabina voiced her wish that the official had heard his own advice turned against him by Seraphia, “that thou myth forsake the fals ydoles and knowe the uery god that calleth good men to euyrlasting lyf and sendith euel men to euyrlasting payn.” The criterion for salvation indicated here is the abandoning of “fals” objects of veneration in exchange for a knowledge of the true God of Christianity. Capgrave accentuates the tyranny of the Roman Berillus by having him heap scorn upon this particularly subversive form of associational polity (which ultimately will prove victorious): the “noble birth” of Sabina ought to make her flee the deceitful Christian

the eyes of foreign pilgrims – accorded Padre Pio by the native inhabitants of the Apulian village of San Giovanni Rotondo.

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"cumpany," "felauchip" and "folk." In this legend, Sabina is the solitary heroine of this anecdote, but she suffers the oppression meted out to all Christian martyrs, such as Seraphia. Like that larger community, she resists tyranny by placing her hope in "the fredam of our lord" (87).

On hearing Sabina's advice, the president releases her and says nothing more to her, but Sabina's apparent freedom ends after Seraphia is executed. Arraigned and brought before a judge named Helpidius, Sabina praises Jesus, who "be the labour of seynt seraphia hath brout me fro the onclennesse of the delues power on to the fredam of our lord." Within the short space of time between Seraphia's death and Sabina's arraignment, Seraphia has already become a saint and a fit model for *imitatio*. Her example leads Sabina away from the pagan religion, "the uncleanness of the devil's power," to its opposite, the true faith. Helpidius sentences her to death by beheading, and the date of her death is given along with mention of her secret burial, under cover of darkness and by Christian men, alongside the body of Seraphia. In death as in life, Sabina is not alone: she followed Seraphia to the company of the Christian saints and receives solemn burial near her thanks to the company of the Christian living. Subtly opposed to this underground community (literally and figuratively) of saints and their...

56 On the Chaucerian opposition of "felaweschip" to tyranny, see Wallace, *Chaucerian Polity*, especially chapters 2-4.

57 Mills suggests "devil's" for MS "delues" (p. 87, n. 1).
followers is the pagan society that Helpidius invokes while proclaiming the fate of Sabina's material possessions following her death by beheading: "and all hir godes to be arested on to the comown profith" (87). An astute student of language, Capgrave here shows the linguistic sleight-of-hand to which Roman tyranny, and perhaps tyranny everywhere, will resort: Helpidius claims to be benefiting the people of Rome by putting the saint to death, but of course in appropriating the elastic phrase "common profit" he is merely trying to legitimate his desire to protect the gods of the state, guarantors of his own power.

Capgrave does not dwell on Sabina's story; in fact, he moves on abruptly to consider a memorial to St. Dominic located in St. Sabina's Church. This seemingly jarring shift to the next significant saint reveals several things: 1) Capgrave's very real and practical need to compress large amounts of information for easy presentation to and absorption by his audience,\(^8\) 2) his belief that martyrdom is not the tragic death of an individual but the joyous beginning of new life in an ever-swelling "cumpany" of the blessed, in which private religiosity finds its proper context; 3) his strategic piling up of edifying anecdotes, not to present a holy site as an incoherent aggregate of fragments, as Mandeville does when describing Jerusalem, but to suggest that Rome is

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\(^8\) Professor Nicholas Howe informs me that this trait is commonly found in medieval martyrrologies.
protected by interlocking chain links of sanctity that, to appropriate Greenblatt’s phrase, declare “the Holy Spirit’s gradual expansion through the world.”

Capgrave’s legends of “these cristen folk” show the pilgrim-reader a Roman populace that, though dead, is knit together by its faith and possesses greater spiritual life than do some of the modern Romans, who still honor Quirinus with their spears and chase pigs downhill in order to prove their masculinity. So great is the power of the communal Church that not even individual popes can transcend it. In the Jerusalem Chapel of the Church of Santa Croce there “fel a wondirful case” of Pope Sylvester II, who had been elevated to the Papacy through sorcery (“enhaunced on that dignite be / fals menes of nygromancie” [77-78]). The Devil promised Sylvester that, unless he traveled to Jerusalem, he would never die. Accordingly, the pope decided never to visit that city, and so he assured himself of a long life, or so he thought. One day, while singing mass at the station of Santa Croce, “the wedyr wex blak and meruelous tempestis aryse crowis innummerable eke appered.” Both the cardinals and the churchgoers fell down in fear, suspecting what many people at the time would have perceived, that this natural calamity revealed the presence or imminence of some unspeakable evil.

59 In Greenblatt’s view, Mandeville’s Travels destabilizes the holiness of the lands it describes by producing “chronicles of exploration [that] seem uncertain of their bearings, disorganized, fragmentary” (Marvelous Possessions 2). Greenblatt perhaps would not even consider the Solace of Pilgrims a “chronicle of exploration” similar to Mandeville’s Travels, my point is that the rapid-fire
Pope Sylvester inquired as to the name of the chapel where he had been saying mass, and was told “Jerusalem,” at which point he burst into tears:

Thoo wept the pope and had grete repentauns of his wikkid lyf and be fore the puple mad open confessioun what conuauntis he had mad with the deuele and who [how] he was deceyued in sophisticacioun of this name ier[usa]l[e]m” (79).

Capgrave emphasizes the public quality of Sylvester’s repentance even more dramatically in the punishment that he urges the congregation to inflict upon him:

Wherfor he comaunded hem that thei schuld dismembir him ioynt be ioynt and throw it owt to the crowis the same schuld thei do of his hert eke if thei bor a wey his hert thei schuld neuir pray for him he seide, and if thei bor it not a wey than myth thei trost that he stood undir proteccioun of goddys mercy. Thus as he comaunded it was doo for the hert of him wold thei not touch whech hert in tokne of this myracle hangith in the roof on to this day. (79) 60

This story is indeed a “mervelous case,” but far from being questioned (Capgrave proceeds abruptly to describe the three crosses that stand before the church), it is given the name of “myracle” and is verified by Capgrave’s eyewitness assurance that Sylvester’s heart is still suspended from the roof. The dependence of the individual upon the community receives special, even exaggerated emphasis, but it is clear that if the Roman pontiff can humble himself and efface his pride by confessing his sins
telling of anecdotes about sacred places in a medieval travel narrative need not undermine the sanctity of those places.

60 The repentant weeping and request for dismembering recall St. Thomas Aquinas’ explanation of the word “contrition” as, literally, a fragmenting or crushing into small particles. See Summa Theologica III, Supplementum, q. i, a.1, responsio, noted by Singleton, trans. and ed., Dante Alighieri: The Divine Comedy, Purgatorio, vol. 2, Commentary, 759.

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publicly, so too can the faithful pilgrims confess theirs. Only by doing so can they avail themselves of the “spiritual tresour” of St. Croce, where, at the altar in which the martyrs St. Anastasia and St. Cesarius are entombed, “there to is graunted xl 3ere of pardon and as many lentons. And in the festis of these too martires is graunted remission of the iii part of synne” (76-77). The authority of Rome’s bishops and martyrs underwrites the effectiveness of indulgences but also that of tearful confession, the self-abasing spirit in which Capgrave’s readers ought to obtain them. Whether the worldly popes of Capgrave’s day were this eager to see punishment visited upon themselves by their flocks is a question that the *Solace of Pilgrims* does not raise.

The above anecdotes stress the intimate bond Capgrave attempts to forge between private devotion and communal practice, and the importance of Rome as the site that makes that balance possible. Admittedly, readers of the *Solace of Pilgrims* who expect to find vivid descriptions of Roman life and the Roman people will be largely disappointed. Capgrave memorably slights some of the Romans’ barbaric pastimes and bitter resentment towards foreigners and Christianity. Nevertheless, it is with a didactic purpose that he describes the impiety of the citizens of the temporal Rome: he apparently wishes to shock the ostensibly more virtuous English pilgrims journeying to the spiritual city. Like the foreign travelers to the modern shrine of Padre Pio in Apulia (McKevitt, “San Giovanni Rotondo”), the English faithful at Rome probably found the Romans cold-hearted ingrates who responded inadequately
to their own city's many means to enhancing personal sanctity. Capgrave certainly encourages this kind of critical, even sanctimonious, response. But it does seem odd that he identifies many of the sinful Romans with their sins; the kind of piety he wishes to stir in his readers is not one that goads people to minister to, say, the Roman poor in the streets. In concluding this chapter, I wish to suggest some contrasts between Capgrave's and Margery Kempe's imaging of Rome and the Romans, for Margery did circulate among the Romans and found them immensely important, as human beings, to her own form of piety.

David Wallace has recently called for a new approach to investigating Margery's piety: "Margery Kempe may be studied in her movement through Europe and the world, rather than simply as a wife of Lynn and a subject of Lancastrian England" (Chaucerian Polity xiv); "for Margery, domestic and foreign spheres form part of a continuous religious, cultural, and political experience" (392, n. 3). Although the textual relations between Capgrave and Margery merit further commentary than is possible here, I wish to suggest a few ways of exploring these relations and so initiate a response to Wallace's appeal. Margery's travels in Rome and among its citizens tell us much about her spirituality, but they also provide us with a way of understanding the effects of the papal city's institutional sanctity on the faithful that differs radically from a more overtly official representation such as Capgrave's. For example, the destitute, infirm and hungry Romans have no place in the Solace of Pilgrims but play a prominent role in the Book of Margery Kempe. In pointing this fact out I intend no
condemnation of Capgrave or his priestly vocation; I merely suggest that, both because of and in spite of his wish to stimulate the piety of his English readers, he sees only the churches and shrines as objects of religious affection or of charitable donation. These objects cannot inspire heretical devotion: the only divergent Christian voice in fifteenth-century England was Lollardy, which attacked the materialism of the Church and its focus on material things—on images, for example. Poor people, on the other hand, are at least potentially more dangerous than shrines or relics because they elicited Lollard assertions that almsgiving mattered far more to God than the veneration of “dead images.” If Capgrave unconsciously omitted mention of the poor, it is because he was focusing, quite understandably, on those sources of spiritual healing or inspiration (relics, shrines, indulgences) that worshippers traditionally had recognized as authentic and stable vessels of holiness. If Capgrave consciously excluded the bodies of the poor from his pilgrimage itinerary, it is because he may have wished to steer his English readers away from ideologically charged and disputed territory.

Although both are “divinizations of the material” (to borrow Sarah Beckwith’s terminology again), Capgrave’s Rome differs from Margery’s Rome in that while Capgrave appeals to an increasingly privatized form of communal piety, Margery seeks to make her private spiritual struggles communal by writing the Church and the inhabitants of Rome into her own visionary drama:
And than sche ros up & went forth in Rome & sey meche pouerte a-mong the pepyl. & than sche thankyd God hyly of the pouerte that sche was in, trostyng therthorw to be partynyr wyth hem in meryte. ... God yaf hir grace to haue gret lofe in Rome, bothyn of men & of women, & gret fauowr a-mong the pepyl. (Book of Margery Kempe, ed. Meech and Allen, 94)

The impoverished Romans evidently merit grace in God’s eyes; Margery envisions herself suffering along with them in a way that must have been unthinkable to Capgrave, who objectifies what he sees and keeps himself at a critical distance from it. Generally the two travelers’ contrasting views of Rome reflect their different ideas of devotion. In the Solace of Pilgrims Capgrave assumes that the saints offer sanctity to all the faithful even as he markets it specifically to English pilgrims; in her Book Margery records Christ’s mystical wedding to her alone (95). Their difference in outlook is partly one of temperament, but it also owes something to their different places in the social hierarchy. Capgrave belonged to an ecclesiastical community and was well-acquainted with texts and their production and circulation, as Peter Lucas’ many essays make abundantly clear. He sought and enjoyed the patronage of the powerful; whether Duke Humphrey of Gloucester, Henry VI and Edward IV conferred real recognition upon him or were simply the intended beneficiaries of his written works, Capgrave believed that he could enhance his status as a courtly writer or moralistic adviser by presenting scholarly books to them. The Book of Margery Kempe tells a very different story, about a woman from a business background who constantly, even at times desperately, seeks serious acceptance and legitimation by those around her. Her almost commercialistic desire for “mor,” as David Aers has
noted (adapting Kempe’s Middle English), transforms even the sanctification offered by pilgrimage into a commodity.\textsuperscript{61}

Capgrave’s and Margery’s different perceptions and appropriations of Rome thus arise partly from their different stations in English society. They of course derive also from differences in gender identity,\textsuperscript{62} they cannot have resulted exclusively from Capgrave’s “literacy” versus Margery’s “non-literacy,” as though Capgrave’s Rome-centered piety were textual and Margery’s were not.\textsuperscript{63} Capgrave would probably have recognized the textuality of Margery’s mysticism and have been alarmed by Margery’s appropriation of hagiography for her own private use. As Karen Winstead has argued with reference to the “conservative social message” of the \textit{Life of St. Katherine}, “Capgrave suggests that reading may indeed foster ambitions that undermine tradition and destabilize the community.”\textsuperscript{64} Winstead is speaking about Capgrave’s unease at the notion of female rule, but Capgrave would have felt a similar unease at the control that Margery attempted to exert over the public meaning of Rome and the Roman

\textsuperscript{61} See Aers’ provocative essay on Margery Kempe in his \textit{Community, Gender, and Individual Identity: English Writing 1360-1430}.

\textsuperscript{62} For a fascinating exploration of the sensuality of female mysticism, see Walker Bynum, “Mysticism and Asceticism of Medieval Women” and “Female Body and Religious Practice,” in \textit{Fragmentation and Redemption} 53-78 (esp. 66), and 181-238.

\textsuperscript{63} Margery’s spirituality and outlook on her experiences were conditioned by her familiarity with, among other religious works, Hilton’s \textit{Scale of Perfection}, Rolle’s \textit{Fire of Love}, the lives of the Blessed Mary of Oignies, St. Elizabeth of Hungary, and St. Bridget of Sweden, and excerpts from Holy Scripture. See Windeatt, “Introduction” to his edition of the \textit{Book of Margery Kempe}, 16-19.

\textsuperscript{64} Winstead, “Perils of Gynecocracy” 362.
Church: for example, Margery's claim that she, as the agent of Christ, saved the city of Rome from a devastating thunderstorm would probably have made him question her credentials for such a feat. Capgrave prefers to employ non-visionary written texts in seeking to expound sacred Rome's authority. This same Roman authority inspires Margery to legitimate her visionary experiences and to imagine herself in a quasi-domestic role as the city's protector and nurturer.

If Capgrave portrays himself as the object of Roman annoyance and ill will, it is because he wants to be remembered as a scholarly pilgrim who, although no martyr, nevertheless braves low-level persecution to find universal truth and institutionally-sanctioned holiness. Most of the Romans he encounters seem to be the antithesis of the ecclesiastical soul of Rome; they are the sinful, still-pagan flesh that needs to be disciplined in order for the spiritual city to stand revealed in its authentic glory. Margery does not shun the spiritual city's flesh-and-blood inhabitants but rather sees them as a complement to the spiritual legitimation she seeks from the Church. Eagerly mingling with the vernacular-speaking poor who live in Rome's humble houses, she

65 In 1414, the year of Margery's visit to Rome, God sent such a powerful thunderstorm to the city that "ryth eldemen that tyme dwelling in Rome ... cryed thei vp-on the forseyd creatur to prey for hem, fully trustyng that sche was was the seruawnt o f almyghty God & thorw hir prayerys thei xulden ben holpyn & socowryd" (95). Margery offered prayers to God, and "owr mercifhl Lord Cryst Ihesu, as it plesyd hym, wythdrow the tempestys, preseruyng the pepyl fro alle myscheitys" (96).

66 Walker Bynum's analysis of women mystics' translation of their domestic roles to their spiritual lives applies very well to Margery's experiences in Rome; see "Female Body and Religious Practice" 197-98.
makes a journey different from that of Capgrave, who, in order to guide his readers’ piety, travels among the city’s Latin-inscribed monuments and ancient legends. Roman people matter to him if they can shed light on the city’s past. Unlike Margery, he does not receive the benedictions and emotional support of the city’s modern “folk,” who for him cut a poor figure in comparison with Seraphia and Sabina’s primitive Christian “felauship.” But then again, Capgrave authorizes Rome almost as much as Rome authorizes him: he traces the seamless Christianization of its physical places, presents their pagan histories as incomplete or absurd, omits reference to contemporary evidence of spiritual decay in the papacy, and cites early British saints or saintly rulers to appeal to his English audience.

All their differences notwithstanding, Margery and Capgrave envision Roman sanctity as a means to respond to and shape its English counterpart. Margery contrasts the accepting and kindhearted Romans to the scornful and censorious English pilgrims and clergy who oppose her. Capgrave has in mind an English “nacyon” more genuinely (if materialistically) devout than the contemporary, sometimes faithless and quasi-pagan Romans. He expects his readers — whether or not they ever left England — to derive “solace” from the “spirituale tresour” of Rome and from authoritative texts describing it. English pilgrims, on the move toward institutional sanctity, are also meant to take advantage of the piety that has spurred them to undertake their pilgrimage. It is a piety that seems to be lacking in a large number of Romans, who remain trapped in their pagan antiquity, unmoved and
unmoving in their physical location, and obdurate in their confabulating resistance to foreign seekers after truth.

Concluding Remarks

This dissertation has explored the ways in which three works, the alliterative *Morte Arthure*, Lydgate’s *Fall of Princes* and Capgrave’s *Solace of Pilgrims*, present images of Rome and Italy to late medieval English readers. Individually these works have not previously occasioned sustained analysis along these lines, and larger surveys of English perceptions of Italy have paid scant attention to them. My goal, however, has been not merely to say something new about these three works but to contribute to critical discussions of late medieval literary nationalism and racism in general and English attitudes toward Italy in particular. In doing so it does not seek to end discussion of this topic but rather to indicate further avenues of inquiry.

A deeper exploration of medieval racism would consider the intra-European Other in conjunction with, but also apart from, familiar categories of different peoples such as the Jews, Muslims, Basques, Sardinians, Welsh and Irish. It is my contention that Italy occupied a distinct and possibly *sui generis* place in the English cultural imagination, even before it became the land of passionate crime for Elizabethan and Jacobean playwrights, and the sensualist’s haven of the Victorian and Edwardian grand tour. In the works examined here, Italy was known as the landmass surrounding the
center of Latin Christendom, but it also comprised or lay near territories either
currently or formerly in Muslim hands: Sicily, Calabria and Apulia, sites of power
struggles among Lombard lords, Muslim emirs, Byzantine emperors and Norman
mercenaries; and North Africa, only a stone’s throw away from the peninsula.

The use of the word “Other” to describe Italy is problematic, of course. Its
inhabitants were Catholic in religion and formed a vital part of the larger universal
Christendom that certain of the popes wished so ardently to defend against Turkish
encroachment. But, as the three works I examine here suggest, the nature of Italian
religiosity eluded clear definition, at least in the minds of many non-Italians. In the
Morte Arthure, the Roman emperor Lucius is apparently another Julian the Apostate
and has turned away from the Christian faith inaugurated by Constantine; additionally,
the alliance between the Roman Empire and the pagan forces of Outremer and the
depiction of the grotesque Giant of Genoa further hint at the otherness, even the
otherworldliness, of Italy.

In the Fall of Princes, Lydgate emphasizes Roman paganism, the hairy
otherness of Lombard kings, the magical interests of Walter Duke of Athens, the
hostility to the truth shown by Boccaccio, and even offers a tiny thumbnail picture of
magical happenings in Sardinia that conform to the spirit of Mandeville’s travels in the
Orient. All this with only a passing reference to papal Rome, which is generally
submerged beneath the pagan Rome that Lydgate excoriates so passionately. In Rome
and Italy, folly and strangeness outweigh piety.

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In the *Solace of Pilgrims* Capgrave brings papal Rome to the surface but never lets his English readers forget that Roman paganism lurks underneath: not in the form of the corruption and materialism of what would soon become the “Renaissance Papacy,” social ills that Capgrave conceals almost without a trace, but rather in the form of the Roman *vulgus*, the mob. Capgrave’s portrayal of them as confabulators who practice strange, pre-Christian rituals makes it easy to fathom the violent and stormy Roman temperament condemned by chroniclers such as Walsingham and Adam of Usk.

Although I did not intend to do so, I have presented these works in a way that suggests a movement toward an ever more intimate English contact with Italy. The *Morte Arthure* takes its readers from the Alps to just outside Rome, but considers Italy through the highly literary, mediating discourse of the Arthurian legend and, more importantly, the story of Arthur’s poignant death. Lydgate escorts us leisurely, if moralistically, through Roman and Italian history but brings us face-to-face with a Florentine humanist author, who lived more recently than Arthur’s enemies and who unjustly belittled England in a historical work. This offense against truth and professional responsibility strikes Lydgate as a problem in cultural relations with real pertinence to his fifteenth-century audience. Capgrave finally leads us to Rome, explains to us the city we are expected to visit, and encounters actual Romans who, although presumably more real than the *Morte* poet’s senators and mercenaries and more “modern” in outlook than Lydgate’s long-dead emperors and statesmen,
nevertheless continue the tradition of pagan resistance to Christian values and
historiographical truth-telling. In spite of the time that has elapsed between the *Morte*
and Lydgate's and Capgrave's works, and in spite of these authors' different purposes,
audiences and means of showing "Italy" to those audiences, that culturally charged
peninsula reveals similar ambiguities and problems for English readers and travelers.

These features of the three works considered here suggest that the connotation
of Other, when used in discussions of medieval perceptions of strange and unfamiliar
cultures within Europe, should be broadened to include a historical as well as a spatial
dimension. English writers understood the difference of Italy as embracing its pagan
past as well as its present customs. Insular spectators of the growing humanist
movement in Italy, the *Morte*-poet, Lydgate and Capgrave nevertheless did not allow
themselves to be enslaved by the cultural self-fashioning of the Italian *auctores* and
their milieu. Rather, they sought to point out to their English readers the historical
connections between Rome and *Britannia*. Roman imperial prestige is appropriated for
the Britain of Belinus and Brennius, a Britain that rejects the peripheral role assigned it
by Rome-centered authors and their Italian descendants. Interestingly, the *Britannia*
of the distant past unproblematically becomes becomes England without any hint that
"Britain" originally denoted exclusively Celtic, i.e. Welsh, territory. Fatal divisions and
tensions are reserved for the non-English enemy.

What ultimately puts England on a par with, or even above, Rome and Italy is
the greater English attention to the life of the soul. Arthur, unlike the Romans and
Italians with whom he does battle, offers himself piously to the Roman Church. Lydgate identifies “Jesus,” not merely Boccaccio’s less personal “God,” as the ultimate audience of all virtuous writing, in which the English translator evidently surpasses his Florentine original. Capgrave addresses an implied audience of English pilgrims whose devotion transcends that of the hostile Romans they are to meet. The appeal to English piety reveals strategic attempts to displace the self-importance of the cultures in the Italian peninsula while at the same time remaining silent about the pernicious effects of the “serpent of division” back home on the island. Even the Morte Arthure introduces an attractive re-reading of the legend of Mordred’s betrayal: had dissension and treason not broken out in Britain, Arthur never would have shown the good sense to leave the city of the emperors where he had found it, return home to vanquish his enemies, and die a pious death as a virtual crusader. Arthur’s pious death as a virtual martyr imparts an odor of sanctity to England itself. Undoubtedly medieval Italian readers of these texts, if any there were, would have been fascinated by their depiction of diminished Romanitas and of the most-favored-nation status enjoyed by the English in the civitas Dei.
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