JOHN LYDGATE'S TROY BOOK: MEDIEVAL ATTITUDES TOWARD LEGENDARY HEROES AND THEMES IN CLASSICAL POETRY

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF

ENGLISH AND THE GRADUATE COUNCIL OF THE KANSAS STATE

TEACHERS COLLEGE OF EMPORIA IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF

THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF ARTS

By

BETTE L. DANIEL

August 1964

Approved for the Major Department

Charles E. Walton

Approved for the Graduate Council

PREFACE

The amount of available literary criticism concerning the interpretation of classical themes by medieval writers is vastly limited. Thus, as a result of a suggestion by Dr. Charles E. Walton, I became interested in a study of the descent of classical literature into the times of the Middle English author, in attempting to interpret the emphasis which a medieval writer placed upon the classical works. The Troy Book by John Lydgate, a noted and prolific writer, translator, and adapter of the early fifteenth century, was chosen for the study. His work is contained in four volumes which were edited by Henry Bergen for The Early English Texts Society in 1906, 1908, 1910, 1935, and include in volumes I, II, and III the expeditions of the Argonauts, the entire story of the Greek and Trojan War, the death of Ulysses, and a complete recounting of the Trojan War. Volume IV includes an abridgement of the Historia Destructionis Troise by Guido delle Colonne, which Lydgate used for his model.

I wish to thank Dr. Charles E. Walton for his enduring patience and untiring assistance in directing this study, and Dr. June Morgan for her careful criticism of the manuscript. I also wish to acknowledge the excellent typing and care of

the manuscript which is the work of Mrs. Cleda Busenbark.

Emporia, Kansas B. L. D.

August, 1964

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CHAPTER I

THE CLASSIC MYTH AND HERO: THE GREEK AND ROMAN LINE OF DESCENT

When John Lydgate explained in his Troy Book that he had been " . . . commaunded the drery pitus fate / Of hem of Troye in englysche to translate" (ll. 105-06), he was describing a task which had probably confronted many another Middle English author; namely, that of translating or adapting classical myth, legend, or lore into Middle English. The scholar who considers the line of descent of the classical story into the times of Lydgate will suddenly become aware of a different emphasis which has been placed upon these ancient works in translation or re-telling. In fact, a close study of a Middle English author's treatment of ancient myth and story is highly necessary for a clear comprehension of Middle English literary conventions. From the start, the scholar who wishes to define the route taken by these classical works into England must reinvestigate past critical statements which may have had a shaping influence upon the work of the later Middle English translator, adapter, or even author in Lydgate's time, since it is obvious that many classical works were often "refurbished" by Middle

English authors and for reasons which eventually may be made more apparent.

Major critical works in the time span stretching from Homer to Lydgate are possibly so few in number as to make the scholar's job not an untenable one as he assembles these materials for investigation and analysis. He will note, at once, that there are two possible major sources from which he may select his material, defined as (1) the internal evidence to be found in the works of Homer, Hesiod, the Greek dramatists, Lucretius, and Vergil; and (2) the critical evidence *per se* contained in the essays of Plato, Aristotle, Horace, Dante, Petrarch, Boccaccio, and others. Furthermore, a secondary force, but one of much importance, was the Christian church and its role in conveying this ancient literature and criticism into England.

A general knowledge of the events of literary history encompassed in the time span just designated may assist the scholar in his task. For example, it is known that the Greek civilization, magnificent and sophisticated, eventually was destroyed, and that its conquerors, the Romans, borrowed heavily from the already established traditions of Greek art and ethics. In many respects, the Roman arts were, in reality, merely the older Greek arts, in adaptation, as one may observe in Vergil's handling of the Homeric theme and episode in *Aeneid*. As Roman civilization matured,

verging upon the period known as the Italian Renaissance, these earlier Greek models, now Roman in adaptation, undoubtedly must have undergone a gradual reshaping in Roman thought, philosophy, and ethics, until by the time of Dante, perhaps, this borrowed Grecian culture no longer clearly resembled its older models, but, in reality, had taken on many aspects of the evolving system of Roman literary aesthetics.

With Dante, Petrarch, and Boccaccio, however, one comes into contact with perhaps the first great force affecting the dissemination of classical literature--that is, the appearance of the use of the vernacular in Italian literature. Here, the problem would appear to divide into two categories: (1) the vernacular and its "transliterations" of older stories into Italian from the Latin; and (2) the continued presence of (a) the Latin translation of the Greek legends and (b) the Latin writings of Dante's own contemporaries, many works of which still persisted into the time of Lydgate and the Middle English period under investigation. By Lydgate's time, therefore, one may safely conclude that a Middle English author had access, at least, to many of the Latin versions of these older literary works and, in addition, to similar accounts of these same works, now possibly in the French or Italian vernacular. Of the presence of the Latin versions in England, however, one may

be fairly certain, since a study of the curricula of the two universities in England at this early period will reveal that many of these works were being taught in their Latin forms to the scholars in attendance.

The problem, then, concerns an investigation of the major works of literary criticism which affect this literary trend throughout this entire period, to observe, whenever possible, the literary pronouncements which may have had an effect upon the problem as one confronts it in Lydgate in the Middle English period.

In applying an evolutionary type of approach to this subject, one, of necessity, must observe, first, the earliest extant forms of Greek literature which have persisted into the Middle English period. One considers, first, the internal evidence contained in the epics of Homer and Hesiod or in the dramas of the major Greek playwrights.

Greek mythology had its inception with Homer about one thousand years before Christ, and the Iliad and the Odyssey, the first written documents of Greece, contain the oldest known records of Greek mythological literature. Perhaps, the second principal Greek writer was Hesiod, who lived in the ninth or eighth century B. C., and wrote his Theogony in which he told of the creation of the universe and recounted the generations of the Greek Gods. Several centuries later, the Latin poet, Ovid (43 B. C. - A. D. 17),

who, although he borrowed from the Greeks, compiled so vast an amount of material encompassing almost all of the extant mythological stories that most mythologists since his time have made use of his documents as their primary source. His contemporary, Vergil, was also a prominent Roman contributor to the mass of extant classical mythology, although like Ovid, he relied upon the earlier Greek myths as sources for his Aeneid.

It is clear, then, that these Greek and Roman mythologies provide one with an ancient literary record of man in nature. An investigation of these documents and others in this early period reveals that primitive man, perhaps in all ancient societies, expressed a fear of the supernatural and was concerned with the lore of magic and witchcraft, and was filled with anxiety about the horrible punishments which might accrue to him as retributions from the unknown. While the Greeks were no exception to this pattern, the myths from an early period in Greek civilization show how society elevated itself from the level of this mundane world of horror and terror and endeavored to discover a more joyful and animated philosophy of life, all of which effort resulted in the formation of an ideological society in which human actions would not have to be justified. Consequently, life for the early Greek developed into an existence that was carefree and delightful, in which man's imagination was

unshackled. Imagination was vividly and consistently employed, and, judging from the evidence one finds in Homer and others, almost no effort was made to distinguish between the real and unreal.

Poets, as one would expect, revelled in this strange world of imagination unrestricted by the dictates of sound, logical thought which Plato was later to advocate. This atmosphere produced a concept of the Gods which differed in most respects from that which uncivilized people before this time had professed. For example, the Greeks by Plato's time experienced no fear of their Gods because they had made their Gods human.[1] On the other hand, the Gods of primitive man had been terrifying and inhuman. No matter how unbelievable or fantastic some of the early myths were, the characters involved never appeared to be apprehensive nor fearful for their lives. The ever-present nymphs and deities--often like supernatural, capricious beings--were involved in earthly circumstances, or at least they were located in a credible, real domain, which lent a kind of verisimilitude to the mythology. At the same time, the Greek Gods were more like men because they were endowed with human elements. On the other hand, man did not attain to a divine stature simply because, in reverse, the Gods were

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[1]Edith Hamilton, Mythology, p. 16.

like men: that is to say, whereas Gods were man-like, men were not God-like.[2] Society was composed of the Gods and aristocratic men--without consideration for the so-called common man. The highest order in this aristocracy was the Gods who were very man-like in character and who had a code of ethics to which they strictly adhered.[3] The connecting human link between the society of the Gods and the realm of mankind was possibly the poet. This early poet or minstrel was thought to have been inspired by the Gods; therefore, that which he sang was held to be true. But his primary duty was to give pleasure to his people.[4]

The time was to come, however, when these myths would no longer hold such a prominent position in the philosophical or religious thought of the Greeks. By the latter part of the fifth century before Christ, the Greeks had come to think that the world was old. To them, the early legends and myths concerning the wars between the Gods and men were records of antique history. The battles between the East and West, which had begun at Troy, were now over.[5] However, the poems of Homer and Hesiod were still important to the

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[2] W. K. C. Guthrie, The Greeks and Their Gods, p. 120.

[3] Ibid., p. 119.

[4] R. A. Scott-James, The Making of Literature, p. 34.

[5] Ibid., p. 26.

Greeks and remained their conventional religion--in reality their Bible. Because their religion or morality was inseparable from literature, their poetry, in turn, assumed the status of religion in Greek society.[6] Although the Greeks had borrowed from the Asiatic civilization for their learning and their skills in crafts, they depended upon their own native abilities and instincts for the aesthetics of language and literature.[7] Of course, the spoken word was still the important medium for entertainment and the dissemination of learning in the fifth century B. D. Scholars have shown that Greek literature, both in poetry and prose, was conceived of in the oral-formulaic tradition. However, during the fifth century B. C., Greek poetry was gradually becoming less secular. The great philosophers and dramatists of this period were asking questions about knowledge, virtue and speech, and their influence was largely responsible for poetry's eventually being adopted by both church and state in the centuries to come. In essence, the epics of Homer and Hesiod told the truths about Greek religion and morality, and naturally the works of these two poets came to be accepted by the people as divine truth. In these accounts, the Gods dictated to man, and because that which the Gods

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[6] Ibid., p. 27.

[7] Ibid., p. 31.

said was always shown to be right, these works tended to prove there was truth in what the Gods had willed.[8] Homer became the model because his epics told the truths about Greek religion and morality, and now the poet not only entertained--he also was the source of truths. This idea sustained itself through the centuries.[9]

In the latter part of the fifth century B. C., therefore, the Greeks had accepted Homeric ideas as truth, but a few of the great dramatists and philosophers had begun to show an independence in thought and belief and to question whether or not life was ideal, whether man's will made his law acceptable, and whether or not that which the poet said was always true. While many of the great literary men who followed Homer--Aeschylus, Euripides, Sophocles, Aristophanes, Plato, and Aristotle--had different theories on the knowledge, virtue, morals and functions of poetry and speech, all nevertheless, agreed that poets must "teach," and asserted that the poet's aim was always to improve man's station.[10]

Aeschylus, a Greek tragedian, believed that an author should appeal to man's moral and patriotic senses. He did not agree with Homer's idea that life could be free from care and that the past was not important. Aeschylus, to the

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[8]Guthrie, op. cit., p. 123.

[9]Scott-James, op. cit., p. 34.

[10]Ibid., p. 36.

contrary, believed that uncontrollable forces were always present with man and that man never ceased to be at war with these forces. These external forces, whether physical or spiritual, were entirely beyond man's control--his parents, his time and place of birth, and his social status. A Greek's inheritance so obviously affected his moral senses that, if in maturity he should try to alter this pattern of life, he had been so conditioned previously by his environment that a change, if any, was governed by a sense of duty.[11] Aeschylus believed that fate controlled man, and, in turn, man's ever-present conflict with all forces produced the tragedy of life. He argued that even if man tried to shape circumstances to his liking, he was always aware of the facts that his life on earth was ephemeral and that fate ordained human life must eventually end.[12] He emphasized that man was always aware of a goal for which it was necessary for him to strive and, that whatever man could accomplish alone was for him a moral and dutiful obligation.

Euripides, another dramatist of the fifth century B. C., brought a new aspect to the philosophy of poetry. He thought that everyday problems should be handled in a more

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[11] Barrett Wendell, The Traditions of European Literature, p. 56.

[12] Loc. cit.

humanistic manner.[13] He knew that, heretofore, the language of poetry had not been the vernacular; yet he proposed that all poetry should be written in the common language. Thus, he stressed the importance of the human element to aesthetics. Although he was sympathetic to human nature, he felt, in addition, that man had moral responsibilities to himself. Consequently, the Gods in his tragedies did not assume the important stature which they were accorded by Aeschylus.

On the other hand, Aristophanes produced comedy in a period in which tragedy was dominant. In the past, anything which had bordered on the comic had dealt with the obscene, and, as a consequence, moralists who had objected had arrested the development of the comic tradition in literature.[14] Aristophanes plainly favored Aeschylus, and, in The Frogs, rather unjustly presented Euripides, whom he accused of using unworthy subjects, of degrading the language, and of promoting sentimentality--but it is important for one to recall that he did not accuse Euripides of not knowing or subscribing to a poet's moral obligations. Therefore, one sees that while these three dramatists possessed different views about the importance of the Gods and the moral responsibilities of man, they all believed that man

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[13] Scott-James, op. cit., p. 35.

[14] Wendell, op. cit., p. 98.

did have a moral obligation. Furthermore, each made clear that the duties of the poets were "to teach" and "to make men better."[15]

The significant influences of Homer, Hesiod, and the early dramatists, therefore, may be simply stated. The poet came to be thought of as a man of divine instinct and eventually as a prophet and seer, so that his utterances or written statements were accepted as truth. The character of Odysseus, for example, was, if not a religious, at least an ethical model, upon which mankind might pattern its own behavior. A strong sense of morality and truth was ever present in the minds of the Greeks. Countless investigations of early Greek drama have revealed that the Greek audience was always acquainted with the plots of these plays, yet it derived an aesthetic pleasure, and certainly received instruction, as it watched the unfolding of a most familiar story. It is also possible for one to interpret Homer's Odyssey as a guide to moral behavior, in which the character of Odysseus becomes that of Everyman and his exploits become those representative of mankind.

The great influence of tragedy upon the Greek way of life was a religious one. In the earlier epics the Gods or fate had decided man's ultimate condition. But drama

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[15]Scott-James, op. cit., p. 36.

brought an element of reality into Greek poetry, and man was taught to be more responsible for his actions. He still possessed awe for his Gods, but he was beginning to exercise his powers of reason and to be aware of his own obligations in seeking that which was right. It was at this time that Plato, philosopher and poet, introduced his theory and, in reality, became the first major literary critic of the western world.[16] He bridged the gap between poetry and philosophy by challenging poets to write philosophically, and, by imitating appearance, to arrive at the truth. He first made the artist conscious of the fact that the living world was an imitation of the world of the Gods; therefore, when an artist imitated the living world, he was actually "reproducing a copy," and truth became third in rank. Because Plato felt that perfection was possible only in the "super-celestial realm," he concluded that reality itself was an imitation.

Plato and Aristotle had great followings as philosophers, yet they differed vastly in their poetic criticism. Plato, for example, was unable to accept Greek poets as teachers of truth. He would excuse neither the poets nor their followers who praised beautiful lines which, he believed, were often filled with imaginative and unreal embel-

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[16]Erich Auerback, Dante: Poet of the Secular World, p. 4.

lishments. Plato was not favorably impressed by the theories that poets were inspired by the Gods and, thus, were "possessed," and that they attained to a state of not being "in their right mind" when uttering their beautiful statements. The truth, with reason, was Plato's requirement for good writing, and he believed that anything which was written as a result of an inspiration from the Gods was not truth. He admitted, however, that he respected Homer because Homer was the "original master," but he failed to see that Homer deserved any eminent regard or deference, because he felt that Homer had disregarded truth.[17]

Plato was convinced that it was his obligation to reject imitative poetry, and he clearly expressed this view in The Republic:

> Well, I will tell you, although I have always from my earliest youth had an awe and love of Homer, which even now makes the words falter on my lips, for he is the great captain and teacher of the whole of that charming tragic company; but a man is not to be reverenced more than the truth, and therefore I will speak out.[18]

However, most of Plato's Greek contemporaries considered Homer to be the "greatest of poets" and believed that because good poets were also good teachers, Homer was, as well, the greatest of teachers. The moral laws of the early Greeks were the moral laws of poetry, and the virtuous Greek

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[17] Scott-James, op. cit., p. 38.

[18] Plato, The Republic, p. 378.

accepted them as authority. One must realize that Plato did not argue that either Homer or the people who followed Homer's teachings had interpreted the epics incorrectly; he merely questioned whether or not they understood correctly the "conception of virtue" contained within them.[19] Plato was interested in virtue in behalf of society and the individual, and he concluded that morality was the goal of society and that truth was the goal of the individual. He was interested in literature only from the moral standpoint of whether or not its influence and teaching made man a better citizen.[20] He attacked Homer, therefore, and other poets because he felt that they represented the honorable and kind Gods as cruel and revengeful deities, and to him these "lies" were unacceptable.

In two passages in The Republic he clearly presents his attitude toward the Gods, stating that he believed " . . . the good is to be attributed to God alone; of the evils the causes are to be sought elsewhere, and not in him."[21] First, he refers to Homer's Iliad:

> If a poet writes of the sufferings of Niobe . . . or of the house of Pelops, or of the Trojan war or on any similar theme, either we must not permit him to say that these are the works of God, or if they are of God, he

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[19] Scott-James, op. cit., p. 38.

[20] Ibid., p. 39.

[21] Plato, op. cit., p. 76.

> must devise some explanation . . . he must say that God did what was just and right, and they were better for being punished.[22]

Plato could not sanction poetry because he believed that poets failed to deal in reality, and because they imitated and dealt in illusions. He also believed that the dramatists deserved censure because some of their characters were not examples of noble men. He admitted that an artist had to imitate, but he was convinced that his fellow artists imitated appearances--not reality.[23] According to him, the Gods alone made reality; man imitated this reality; and, in turn, the artist made copies of man's imitations. Perhaps, his clearest statement of this position is contained in his bed image:

> Beds, then, are of three kinds, and there are three artists who superintend them: God, the maker of the bed, and the painter. God, whether from choice or necessity, made one bed in nature and one only. And what shall we say of the carpenter? - is he not also the maker of the bed? Then you call him who is third in the descent from nature an imitator? Certainly.[24]

While no one doubted Plato's thinking that the poet and the artist imitated, many have since noted that he failed to give credit either to the poet or the artist for the pleasure which they imparted or for the life or beauty which

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[22] Ibid., p. 77.

[23] Scott-James, op. cit., p. 40.

[24] Plato, op. cit., pp. 381-382.

they instilled in their creations. Plato firmly believed that the ideal man or the good citizen was he who sought only truth.

Aristotle differed from Plato in his approach to the problems of the poet. Whereas Plato was concerned with the moral values, Aristotle, on the other hand, believed that morality was not necessarily involved in art and stated that " . . . a work of art was a thing of beauty."[25] He believed that the fundamental purpose of art was to impart pleasure to the individual; therefore, he thought that a poem or picture which contained the quality of goodness was beautiful and a source of pleasure. Although Aristotle agreed with Plato in believing that art was imitation, he insisted that this fact did not make art unsavory in any way; rather, he asserted that the artist was highly successful who satisfied the intelligent man by an appeal to the imagination:

> The instinct of imitation is implanted in man from childhood . . . thus the reason why men enjoy seeing a likeness is, that in contemplating it, they find themselves learning or inferring, and saying perhaps, 'Ah, that is he'."[26]

He also thought that poetry should be given more serious consideration than history, because history dealt with the par-

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[25]Scott-James, op. cit., p. 50.

[26]Aristotle, Poetics, p. 21.

ticular, while poetry dealt with the universal: "Poetry, therefore, is a more philosophical and a higher thing than history: for poetry tends to express the universal, history the particular."[27] Aristotle believed that the poet should select representative material and sincerely present it, utilizing truth and stressing the unity of poetry. He also admitted that a degree of illusion was necessary, but not to the extent that it dismayed or appalled the individual. He believed that a poet transcended himself when he was emotionally or sympathetically conscious that his characters should be rationally presented: "Hence poetry implies either a happy gift of nature or a strain of madness."[28] He also knew that certain events might be represented in epics which would appear ridiculous when dramatized. For example, he explained that journeys which transported persons to a far-off locale would be impossible to present realistically upon the stage, but that in the epic, through the use of imagination, they would be entirely plausible. The idea of the "realistic slice of life" did not appeal to Aristotle. He believed that the artist who presented poetic truth cared little whether the event actually happened, and he was opposed to Plato's theory that the good poet always was he

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[27] Ibid., p. 25.

[28] Ibid., p. 30.

who presented reality. Aristotle believed that the artist's only concern was for the answer to the question, "Ought it to have happened?" Thus, Aristotle defended Homer's use of the imagination. He felt that Homer had the ability to tell "artistic lies" and had taught other poets how to do the same.[29]

For centuries, men have given various meanings to the term, wisdom, and Plato and Aristotle are no exceptions. In all definitions, a desirable connotation is ever present--a quality for which man should proudly strive. Both Aristotle and Plato believed that wisdom was the highest attainment of man, and that man by achieving wisdom would experience an almost divine status.[30] Plato believed that the Gods were wise and that man, therefore, strove to become wise, because by such action "man becomes like God."[31] But Plato did not make allowances for the imperfections or imitations in human life which Aristotle believed man could have and yet strive for the truth: "Wisdom is a part of virtue as a whole and therefore to possess it or to exercise it makes a man happy."[32]

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[29]Scott-James, op. cit., p. 69.

[30]E. F. Rice, Jr., Renaissance Idea of Wisdom, p. 1.

[31]Ibid., p. 6.

[32]H. Rockham, Aristotle's Ethics for English Readers, p. 113.

For almost one hundred years after the death of Aristotle (322 B. C.,), there was apparently little progress noted in Greek poetry, judging from that which has survived. But around 250 B. C., after Alexandria had become the center of Greek literature, several Alexandrian poets achieved fame. For example, Apollonius of Rhodes told the complete story of the Quest of the Golden Fleece,[33] perhaps one of the most told and retold myths in all of Greek poetry. Although not much is known about Theocritus, another Greek poet of the third century B. C. who wrote about mythology, scholars generally agree that it was he who introduced the pastoral form into western literature.

By the middle of the second century B. C., the Romans had complete possession of Greece, and for nearly six hundred years thereafter, until the collapse of the so-called Western Empire, Greece was under the Roman rule; and although the historical, philosophical, political, and even the literary traditions of Greece became those of the Romans, the Greek influences never expired completely.[34] In his works based on classical myths, the Latin poet, Ovid, was largely responsible for keeping the Greek traditions alive. Ovid did not believe in these stories; in fact, he thought

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[33] Hamilton, op. cit., p. 22.

[34] Ibid., p. 140.

they were nonsense. However, he took these myths which had been real to the early Greeks and expanded them into glorious tales which had an appeal for his own people. Indeed, Ovid's Metamorphoses has lasted throughout the centuries. He was an excellent storyteller and realized that the early Greek myths were exceptional source materials for his books.[35] As Gregory relates, in an introduction to his revision of Ovid's Metamorphoses, Ovid in retelling these stories or myths intended to interpret them in a new manner. He purposely elaborated and altered many of these early stories, because he realized that the world in which he lived and the people for whom he was writing were different.[36] For example, in his Invocation, Ovid clearly states his purpose in writing The Metamorphoses:

> Now I shall tell you of things that change new being
> Out of old: since you, O Gods, created
> Mutable arts and gifts, give me the voice
> To tell the shifting story of the world
> From its beginning to the present hour.[37]

Lucretius (96-55 B. C.) was a Roman poet and philosopher, who wrote an epic, De Rerum Natura, to show man that a fear of death was needless, because if man would contemplate the structure of the universe, he would come to an

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[35] Hamilton, op. cit., p. 21.

[36] Horace Gregory (tr.), Ovid, the Metamorphoses, p. xxiv.

[37] Ibid., p. 3.

understanding which would make life happy. Lucretius believed that a blind force had created the Gods and the world. He thought that the religion in which men believed was, in reality, a "debasing superstition." He admitted that there were Gods, but concluded that they were powerlessly meditative creatures of fate.[38] He felt it his duty or mission to set mankind free from the crushing weight of this superstition. He believed that in proving that all existence depended upon mechanical forces, he would show that there was no reason for man to fear the work of the Gods. The proofs which he needed he found in the system of the Greek philosopher, Epicurus:

> When man's life lay for all to see foully grovelling upon the ground, crushed beneath the weight of Religion, which displayed her head in the regions of heaven, threatening mortals from on high with horrible aspect, a man of Greece was the first that dared to uplift mortal eyes against her, the first to make stand against her; for neither fables of the Gods could quell him, nor thunderbolts, nor heaven with menacing roar, nay all the more they goaded the eager courage of his soul, so that he should desire, first of all men, to shatter the confining bars of nature's gates.[39]

However, Lucretius had a reverence for the laws of nature and a belief in Gods, even though they were ministers of fate. Consequently, in the opening lines of his De Rerum Natura, he calls upon Venus to assist him in the writing of

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[38] Wendell, op. cit., p. 211.

[39] Lucretius, De Rerum Natura, p. 7.

his poem:

> Mother of Aeneas and his race, darling of men and Gods, nurturing Venus . . . Since thou alone dost govern the nature of things, since without thee nothing comes forth into the shining borders of light, nothing joyous and lovely is made, Thee I crave as partner in writing the verses which I assay to fashion touching the nature of things, for my Good Memmius, whom thou, goddess hast willed at all times to excel, endowed with all gifts.[40]

Lucretius was conscious of the necessity of his effort to state his views with clarity:

> Nor do I fail to understand that it is difficult to make clear the dark discoveries of the Greeks in Latin verses, especially since we have often to employ new words because of the poverty of the language and the novelty of the matters.[41]

But Lucretius assures the reader that fear and gloom will be dispelled when he understands the laws of Nature. This one epic of his is the only surviving example of philosophical poetry in classical writing.[42]

Vergil (70-19 B. C.) was probably the most outstanding early Roman poet. He, like Ovid, did not believe in the early Greek myths, but at the same time, he confessed that he liked the stories.[43] However, his appeal to the reader was greater than of Ovid, because Vergil introduced

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[40] Ibid., p. 5.

[41] Ibid., p. 13.

[42] Wendell, op. cit., p. 211.

[43] Hamilton, op. cit., p. 22.

the element of human nature into his stories. In the Aeneid, he undoubtedly imitated Homer's Iliad and Odyssey, although he also showed an influence of the humanity of Euripides and a refinement which the Alexandrian poets had possessed.[44] Vergil's opening lines to The Aeneid give his reasons for having written the epic;

> Arms and the man I sing, the first who came,
> Compelled by fate, an exile out of Troy,
> To Italy and the Lavinian coast,
> Much buffeted on land and on the deep.
> By violence of the Gods, through that long rage,
> That lasting hate of Juno's. And he suffered
> Much, also, in war, till he should build his town
> And bring his Gods to Latium, whence, in time,
> The Latin race, the Alban fathers, rose
> And the great walls of everlasting Rome.[45]

Undoubtedly, Vergil borrowed whatever he needed from Homer, using the Odyssey as his model for The Aeneid in the first six books; and the Iliad, for the last six. But it was his skill in composing the Aeneid which gave it an appeal to a more sophisticated audience. There are few other poets who have been more highly praised or persistently studied than Vergil. Like Ovid, he kept alive Greek mythology, and in time, Greek and Roman mythology became almost inseparable.

Horace, another Roman poet, and a contemporary of Vergil, was by nature a conservative who praised both the

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[44] Wendell, op. cit., p. 239.

[45] Vergil, The Aeneid, p. 3.

Greek models and methods and expressed a preference for that which time had proved. His admiration for Homer is revealed in his statement, "In what measure the miseries of war / Can best be written, and the feat of kings / And captains, Homer showed."[46] Horace also believed that the poet should endeavor to instruct and delight the individual: "Tis not enough for poems to be fine: / They must have charm, and lead where'er they will / The hearer's soul."[47] While he insisted that tradition should be followed, he also believed that the task of treating familiar ancient themes was a difficult one:

> To trust in a distinctive manner themes
> That are familiar, is no easy task;
> And I commend your choice in spinning out
> A drama from the tale of Troy, instead
> Of giving to the world for the first time
> Some unknown story never told before.[48]

Horace did not intend for his Art of Poetry to be an essay; rather, he thought of it as an informal verse letter. Therefore, many of the requirements for the writing of good poetry which he advocated are noticeably lacking in his own poem.[49] While he wrote the Art of Poetry in an informal

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[46]Horace, De Arte Poetica, ll. 75-77, p. 100.

[47]Ibid., ll. 99-101, p. 101.

[48]Ibid., ll. 125-130, p. 102.

[49]Walter J. Bate, Criticism: The Major Texts, p. 50.

style, he gives his reader the impression that poetry should appeal only to the educated or sophisticated class:

> See to it that no deity or hero
> Whom you may bring upon the stage, where lately
> We have beheld him in royal purple and gold,
> Should ever in his language sink to the level
> Of dingy Taverns.[50]

Again, he states, "For my part / Were I to write Satyric plays, my friend, / I should not be content with the plain nouns / And verbs of common use."[51] Horace's Satires, Odes, or Art of Poetry--any one of these three--would have sufficed to make him immortal. That he wrote with an intention of being remembered is clearly shown in Book III of his Ode, in which he confessed: "I have made a record to outlast bronze . . . Not all of me shall die."[52]

None of the works of eminent ancient philosophers or poets were allowed to perish completely. The Romans sustained many of the Greek traditions. Although for several centuries a very limited amount of new literature was produced on the continent or in England, it is noteworthy that the ancient literature survived. Even before the time of the Italian Renaissance, Dante had helped to revive interest in the classics. Consequently, the early practice of the

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[50] Horace, op. cit., ll. 226-230, p. 106.

[51] Ibid., ll. 234-237, p. 106.

[52] Wendell, op. cit., p. 256.

Greek and Roman in insisting that art must please, and that of the later author whose aim was to teach, became eventually a combined principle in aesthetics by the time of Dante.

CHAPTER II

THE ITALIAN HUMANISTS AND POETS: THEIR DEFENSE AND INTERPRETATION OF THE CLASSICS

The study of Aristotle was well established in many European universities by the latter part of the thirteenth century, but it is of particular interest that it was well established in Italy by that time, because Dante very closely followed Aristotle's definition of moral virtue.[53] He believed, as did Aristotle, that moral virtues were controlled by reason and that man was responsible for the cultivation of his own system of ethics.[54] On the other hand, it is important for one to remember that Dante was a very religious man, and that his writings show the influence which Christianty impressed upon him. Philosophy and theology had become closely allied; the church had accepted Aristotle's philosophy as the epitome of knowledge, and, thus, all wisdom had become correlated from one point of view.

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[53] W. W. Jackson (tr.), Dante's Convivio, p. 20; hereafter referred to as Convivio.

[54] Ibid., p. 21.

In spite of the fact that sound reasoning was emphasized as a necessary scholarly attribute, it had become a "syllogistic" process of reasoning for justification. Authors of this period seldom were compelled to prove written testimony. If the idea could be expressed convincingly in the framework of syllogistic reasoning, proof of the matter was often unnecessary:

> A passage of Scripture or of Vergil, a mystical interpretation of a story from Ovid or of a narrative of the Bible, even the agreement of the supposed fact with the hypothesis which it confirms, are deemed to supply equally valid evidence.[55]

Until the middle of the thirteenth century, Latin had been, for the educated classes, the prevailing language, and most of the literature which was available was contained in Latin works only. Then, after the close of the so-called Dark Ages, Dante was one of the first poets to advocate a return to a study of the ancients.[56] Very little use of classical methods had been sanctioned before Dante had employed them, with the exception of some instances known in medieval Latin poetry.[57] Later, it will be seen that the French and Germans borrowed ideas from the ancients--both from historical fact and from mythology, and also translated

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[55] Ibid., p. 11.

[56] Scott-James, p. 12.

[57] W. P. Ker, Essays on Medieval Literature, p. 37.

from the Latin--but their poetry written in their own vulgar tongues revealed no copying of form or method from the classics.[58] Dante, although he was not particularly familiar with Homer, is thought to have been the first modern poet to make use of the epic simile which derived from Homer; however, one recalls that other Latin poets had used it and that Dante, as well, was quite familiar with Vergil. Later, Chaucer, who read and admired Dante, introduced this form into English verse formulae.[59] Dante in his use of the simile, then, has been held largely responsible for the linking of classical and modern poetry. It is for this reason that Dante believed that he could render a great service by attempting to write a treatise in the Italian vernacular, because vernacular prose was, at this time, the unusual rather than the ordinary.[60] According to Dante, he chose the vernacular in composing the Convivio for three main reasons: "The first arises from precaution against unseemly disorder, the other from whole-heartedness of liberality, the third from natural affection for one's native language."[61] Although he defended his use of the vernacular throughout

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[58] Loc. cit.

[59] Ibid., p. 32.

[60] Jackson, op. cit., p. 12.

[61] Convivio, I, 5, p. 42.

several tractates within the Convivio, he also gave his specific reasons for not having chosen the Latin, and leaves the impression that he is seeking absolution from his scholarly friends who might misconstrue his intentions. For example, he states that he could not use Latin because " . . . it would not have been subject but sovereign, both on account of its nobility, and on account of its goodness and of its beauty."[62] He adds that because of its "nobility," Latin is a stable language that does not undergo the changes which the vulgar tongue experiences. He was aware of the fact that words in the vernacular are subject to change, often becoming extinct in the matter of a few years, and he perceived that " . . . if a short time changes the language, a longer time changes it more."[63] But, he was convinced that Latin never would be transformed or altered. Moreover, he believed that because of the "goodness" of Latin, it was not applicable to his treatise. He added that "Latin makes manifest many things conceived in the mind which the vulgar tongue cannot." and, thus, he concluded that Latin is of greater utility than the vernacular for accomplishing that for which it was "ordained."[64] Dante

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[62] Convivio, I, 5, p. 43.

[63] Convivio, I, 5, pp. 43-44.

[64] Convivio, I, 5, p. 44.

further explains that Latin is the sovereign tongue because of its "beauty," and thinks that the

> . . . language is the most beautiful in which the parts correspond most perfectly as they should do, and they do so in Latin more than in the vulgar tongue, because custom regulates the latter, art the former.[65]

Therefore, he concludes that art, which governs Latin, makes the classical tongue more perfect, more beautiful, and the more noble, and cannot be used for the composition of his Canzoni. He also remarks that Latin has not an intimate connection with the Italian; therefore, he feels that Latin cannot be "intimate" with friends of the vulgar tongue:

> . . . the men of any language with whom Latin has converse are much fewer than those with whom the vulgar tongue of that language has converse, for all of them are its friends, and consequently Latin cannot be intimate with the friends of the vulgar tongue.[66]

He, then, concludes that Latin could not be "obedient." Since Latin could expound to none but the lettered, he states that " . . . it would not have fulfilled the command laid upon it so well as the vulgar tongue, which is understood by lettered and unlettered alike."[67] He, then, substantiates this statement by explaining that Latin would go beyond its "command" by enabling peoples of other countries

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[65] Convivio, I, 5, pp. 44-45.

[66] Convivio, I, 6, pp. 46-47.

[67] Convivio, I, 7, p. 49.

also to read the commentary, although he suspects that they would probably not be able to perceive its beauty:

> And this is the reason why Homer has not been translated from Greek into Latin like the other writings which the Greeks have bequeathed to us; and this is the reason why the verses of the Psalter have none of the sweetness and music of harmony, for they were translated from Hebrew into Greek and from Greek into Latin, and in the first translation all that sweetness disappeared.[68]

It is evident, from these remarks which comprise Dante's full explanation for the precaution which he takes against "unseemly disorder," that his affection for his native tongue is scarcely greater than his respect for the Latin; but it is, nevertheless, significant that he believes much is lost in translation from one language to another.

He next gives three reasons for believing that the vulgar tongue is more liberal than Latin: "The first is that it gives to many; the second is that it gives things useful; the third is that it bestows its gift without being asked for it."[69] He substantiates his first reason, by explaining that "to give to many" is to include the individual, while "to give to one" is to exclude the others. He continues: "Therefore whoever helps many confers both benefits,

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[68] Loc. cit.

[69] Convivio, I, 8, p. 50; cf., Alfred Ewert, "Dante's Theory of Diction," MHRA (November, 1959) No. 31, pp. 17-18; and by the same author, "Dante's Theory of Language," MLR, XXXV (1940), pp. 355-66.

whoever helps an individual confers only one benefit."[70] Not only does he believe that one should help (or write for) the many, but he also believes that the "gift" should be useful to the recipient. He feels that unless the "gift" is offered and received cheerfully, unless it can help to improve a condition, and unless it helps to create friendship between the giver and receiver, it is of no utility.[71] For verification of his position, he refers to Seneca who thought that " . . . nothing is bought so dear as that which is purchased by entreaty."[72] Dante further believes that the vernacular " . . . will bestow a gift unasked, which Latin would not have done," but warns that Latin cannot boast of this same action because he has observed that it " . . . has already been asked for as a commentary and gloss on many writings."[73] For this reason, he is convinced that a sense of whole-hearted liberality influenced his own choice of the vulgar tongue.

Dante's third reason for choosing the vernacular, as mentioned earlier, was the result of his natural affection for the vernacular, which he describes in the image of the

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[70] Convivio, I, 8, p. 50.

[71] Convivio, pp. 50-52.

[72] Convivio, I, 8, p. 53.

[73] Convivio, I, 9, pp. 54-55.

lover:

> Natural affection chiefly moves a lover to three things, firstly, to magnify the object loved; secondly, to be jealous for it; thirdly, to defend it, as everyone may see constantly happen.[74]

However, he confesses that he himself magnifies or makes great the qualities of his native tongue by exhibiting it rather than by merely realizing its potentiality. Next, he admits that that he is afraid that if he writes in Latin, some

> . . . unlettered person . . . might have the Latin commentary translated into the vulgar tongue, and fearing that this translation might be composed by some one who like the translator of the Latin version of the Ethics, would make it seem uncouth . . .[75]

Therefore, he decides to undertake the task himself. Again, Dante stresses his belief that much may be lost in translation from one language to another. Finally, in defending the use of vernacular against those who might disparage it, he states that the men " . . . who praise the vulgar tongue of other nations and disparage their own" are, in his judgment, shameful and disgraceful.[76]

Although, prior to Dante's Convivio, numerous important Latin and French works, as well as native discourses

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[74] Convivio, I, 10, p. 56.

[75] Convivio, I, 10, p. 56.

[76] Convivio, I, 11, p. 57.

and treatises, had been translated into Italian, Dante was unique in having written his essays in the vernacular. He was far ahead of his contemporaries in believing that his native tongue possessed great potentialities:[77]

> This shall be a new light and a new sun, which shall rise when the old sun shall set, and shall shine on those who are in darkness and mist because of the old sun which gives no light to them.[78]

In Dante's age, pagan myth and Christian beliefs had become fused in allegory which, by this time, was a predominant quality of all lyrical poetry.[79] Consequently, one finds Dante citing the four senses in which he believed all writing should be composed and could be understood:

> The first is called literal, and this is that sense which does not go beyond the strict limits of the letter; the second is called allegorical, and this is disguised under the cloak of such stories, and is a truth hidden under a beautiful fiction.[80]

To illustrate his concept of allegory, Dante observed that Ovid's Orpheus was able to tame the wild beasts with his lyre, which in allegorical truth meant that man was able to make merciless individuals kind and meek with the power of his voice. He identifies the third sense as the moral one:

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[77] Jackson, op. cit., pp. 12-13.

[78] Convivio, I, 13, p. 66.

[79] Jackson, op. cit., p. 13.

[80] Convivio, II, 1, p. 73.

" . . . that for which teachers ought as they go through writing intently to watch for their own profit and that of their hearers."[81] As an example of the depiction of this moral sense, he alludes to the incident in which Christ ascended the Mount and chose only three apostles to accompany him: i. e., morally, this incident meant that in secret affairs, one should have but few friends in whom to confide. He then describes the fourth sense, which he calls anagogic, " . . . that is, above the senses."[82] He explains that, although a composition may literally be stating a fact, the intimation of spiritual connotation can be true also, as when man deters from evil doing and believes he is forgiven and thus feels virtuous or holy. Dante believes that the literal sense should always precede the allegorical one, because, as he explains, " . . . it is not possible to go forward if the foundation is not first laid."[83] In essence, one sees that Dante has presented four senses in which all literature may be written and understood, but, in reality, he himself appears to have employed only two of these divisions in his own works: the literal, and the

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[81] Convivio, II, 1, p. 73.

[82] Convivio, II, 1, pp. 73-74.

[83] Convivio, II, 1, p. 75.

allegorical.

Dante also believes that reason ennobles mankind. Otherwise, he states that man lives by his senses, and here he refers to Boethius, who wrote that "he lives the life of an ass" who parts from reason or truth.[84] On the other hand, Dante undoubtedly was thinking of Aristotle whom he greatly admired and who also believed that man controlled his own actions by means of reason. Dante explains that, in antiquity, the philosophers, or the lovers of wisdom, were called wise men. He refers to Pythagorus whom he admired because Pythagorus had admitted " . . . that he was not wise but a lover of wisdom." Dante believes that from this statement had grown the belief that all lovers of wisdom were those who pursued wisdom, and points out that the Greek word philos meant lover, and sophia meant wisdom--the two eventually becoming one word, philosopher.[85] Dante adheres strongly to the belief that man's life is governed by man's own processes of reasoning. If the individual does not exercise his power of reason, Dante believes that he loses an incentive for living. He refers to Aristotle's statement in On the Soul in which the philosopher wrote, " . . . life is the essence of living," and adds that " . . . in animals

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[84] Convivio, II, 8, p. 92.

[85] Convivio, II, 11, p. 164.

life is sensation, and in man life is the use of reason."[86] Therefore, he believes that a wise man uses reason and knows the path in life which he should follow; whereas, the one who does not use judgment in following the right course has departed from reason: "And this is most apparent in one who has footprints before him and does not regard them."[87]

Although Dante has remained throughout the centuries a master writer, the name Giovanni del Virgilio would probably have been completely unknown had it not been for the efforts of Giovanni Boccaccio in preserving the few fragments which remained of his writings.[88] Del Virgilio was a poet and a professor of poetry in the Stadium of Bologna during the years 1319-1321, when his and Dante's correspondence occurred.[89] For two reasons, del Virgilio is pertinent to this study: first, for his defense of the use of the vernacular, and, secondly, for his method of interpreting the classical myths to his students. Del Virgilio was not only an intimate friend of Dante's, but also one who greatly admired Dante's poetic abilities. Nevertheless, he was

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[86] Convivio, IV, 7, pp. 216-17.

[87] Convivio, IV, 7, p. 217.

[88] P. H. Wicksteed and E. G. Gardner (trs.), Dante and Giovanni del Virgilio, pp. 119-20; hereafter referred to as Carmen.

[89] Ibid., p. 121.

unable to understand why Dante would not choose historical subjects and develop them in Latin.[90] In his first poem to Dante, he admits in his opening lines his inability to understand this problem:

> Sacred voice of the Pierides who with unwonted songs dost sweeten the stagnant world, as with life-giving branch thou longest to upraise it, unfolding the regions of threefold fate assigned according to deserts of soul, Orcus to the Guilty, Lethe to them that seek the stars, the realms above the sun to the blest; such weighty themes why wilt thou still cast to the vulgar, while we pale students shall read nought from thee as barb?[91]

To Dante's accusation that del Virgilio was herein addressing only scholars, he answers "Ay, but in laic verse! Clerks scorn the vernaculars."[92]

He pleads with Dante to write in Latin something with an historical significance which would make Dante's fame known throughout the world enabling del Virgilio to award him the poetic crown at Bologna.[93] Dante replies to del Virgilio in Eclogue I in which he explains del Virgilio's request and pretends to answer the questions of a friend. He explains to this friend why he must refuse del Virgilio's request, but adds that he hopes, nevertheless, to win

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[90] Ibid., p. 122.

[91] Carmen, I, ll. 1-8, p. 147.

[92] Carmen, I, ll. 16-17, p. 147.

[93] Carmen, I, ll. 25-38, pp. 149.

the crown in Florence and gain del Virgilio's respect for the Italian tongue. He writes,

> I have, said I, one sheep; thou knowest, most loved; so full of milk she scarce can bear her udders; even now under a mighty rock she chews the late-cropped grass; associate with no flock, familiar with no pen; of her own will she ever comes, ne'er must be driven to the milking-pail. Her do I think to milk with ready hands; from her ten measures will I fill and send to Mopus (del Virgilio)"[94]

The ten measures to which he refers, here, are the ten cantos of the Paradisio which he had just written.

When del Virgilio received Dante's Eclogue, he was pleased to observe that Dante had adopted Vergil's pastoral style. He, then, replies to Dante's Eclogue with one of his own in which he addresses Dante as a second Vergil: "Ah, divine old man, thus shall thou be second from him,--second thou art, or art himself if Mopus, and if Meliboeus with him, may so far trust the Samian bard."[95] Del Virgilio so admired Dante's writing that eventually he relinquished any idea of changing Dante's mind and wished for him the crown at Florence.[96]

In order for one to discuss the second reason for the importance of del Virgilio to this study, that of interpret-

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[94] Carmen, II, ll. 57-64, pp. 157.

[95] Carmen, III, ll. 32-35, p. 161.

[96] Carmen, III, p. 165.

ing classical myth, he must realize that the practice of allegorizing was a method for which all medieval writers had a passion.[97] Because the Christians had accepted symbolism in their Scriptures, they had come, also, to accept the symbolism in pagan writings--in fact, medieval scholars and authors constantly sought for hidden moral truths in ancient works.[98] Since Ovid was possibly one of the most popular classical poets during the medieval period, del Virgilio chose the Metamorphoses for the subject of his treatise. He took Ovid's stories, derived a moral sense from each, and then presented, in a few verses, a conclusion.[99] Two examples of both Ovid's and del Virgilio's stories may suffice to explain a medieval writer's allegorical interpretation of myth. For example, in "Actaeon," in Ovid's narrative, the hunter, Actaeon, saw the goddess Diana standing naked. She splashed water on his face and changed him into the hunted--a stag. His own hounds pursued and devoured him. Only then was the Goddess of Arrows pleased.[100] On the other hand, del Virgilio's interpretation of this same Ovidian tale differs considerably:

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[97] Wicksteed and Gardner, op. cit., p. 315.

[98] Ibid., p. 316.

[99] Ibid., p. 317.

[100] Gregory, op. cit., pp. 67-71.

> Actaeon was a huntsman who saw Diana naked, that is to say, he perceived the great folly of sport. So he gave it up, but he kept his dogs (apparently for old friendship's sake), and they ate him out of house and home and so ruined him.[101]

Del Virgilio's interpretation reveals a less barbaric strain, perhaps one which was more acceptable to the medieval scholar. However, with Ovid's epilogue to "Orpheus and Eurydice," which many critics have thought "disgusting," del Virgilio alters little in the moral meaning. Orpheus, who was melancholy after Eurydice's death, suddenly changes in his attitude and goes to Thrace. He refuses to sleep with women. Meanwhile, he teaches men the art of making love to boys.[102] Del Virgilio moralizes this same myth in this way: "Et cepit spernere mulieres dans animam suam deo et cepit amare viros idest viriliter agere. Unde mortuus est mundo."[103] ("And he began to spurn women giving his own spirit to the god and he began to love men therefore to enjoy virility. From whence he is a dead man to the world.") Although Del Virgilio's moralization, in reality, differs little from the moral quality of Ovid's tale, just the additional information which reveals that Orpheus has given his spirit to God makes it medieval in tone. One might add, at this point,

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[101] Wicksteed and Gardner, op. cit., p. 319.

[102] Gregory, op. cit., pp. 271-2.

[103] Wicksteed and Gardner, op. cit., p. 319.

that the numerous interpretations which del Virgilio gave were always called moral, while to medieval man, moral meant an "application to mores or manners."[104]

The great Italian poet, Petrarch, probably second only to Dante, was widely known for his sonnets and lyrics and was crowned poet laureate in Rome in 1341.[105] He also enjoyed the friendship of a vast number of prominent contemporaries with whom he corresponded. After accumulating an "unmanageable mass" of letters, one day, in 1359, he burned all but a few which he noticed had been "recopied" by his secretary.[106] Several volumes of these letters were bound, and it is one of these volumes containing letters to classical authors which is of much significance to this study. His letter to Cicero, because Petrarch remarks that this one sets the precedent, must be studied, along with his letters to Horace, Vergil, and Homer. First, Petrarch reveals that he particularly admires Cicero for the beauty of his speech: "O thou great father of Roman eloquence! Not only I, but all who take delight in the elegance of the

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[104] Loc. cit.

[105] Edward H. Weatherly and Others (eds.), The Heritage of English Literature, I, p. 595.

[106] Mario E. Cosenza (tr.), Petrarch's Letters to Classical Authors, p. IX; hereafter referred to as Fam.

Latin tongue render thee great thanks."[107] He admits that it was from Cicero that he had developed his own ability to write, but confesses that he had also followed Vergil as a guide in the writing of poetry. Almost as if he felt the necessity to apologize, he reminds Cicero that Cicero himself called Vergil "Rome's other hope and stay," but Petrarch does not admonish Cicero for having put himself before Vergil.[108] Petrarch, then, informs Cicero that the man's works are still " . . . extant, indeed, splendid volumes," and that Cicero's fame " . . . has spread far and wide." However, he adds that he feels a great sense of remorse over the fact that much of Cicero's work has been lost and in all probability will never be recovered.

Although in the letter to Cicero he admits his great respect for Vergil as poet and as guide, Petrarch also celebrates Horace as a "prince of lyric song." To quote at length his praises of Horace would necessitate the reproduction of the entire letter; therefore, one has chosen select phrases or sentences which are undoubtedly sufficient to show the high regard which Petrarch held for Horace:

> Sweet it is now to follow thee through secluded woodlands; tis a joy to accompany thee when thou singest of the playful Nymphs and nimble Satyrs and of the Graces

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[107] Ibid., Fam., XXIV, 4, "To M. T. Cicero," p. 22.

[108] Ibid., p. 24.

> with their rosy, naked bodies; how pleasing it is, when thou dost strike the praises of golden-haired Apollo; thou dost chisel out the characters of the ancient heroes as though in material more lasting than marble.[109]

He asks Horace for guidance and expresses loyalty to him, saying, " . . . wherever thou goest, whatever thou doest, pleases me."[110] Whether Horace writes under pleasant or adverse circumstances, or relates happy or sorrowful events, Petrarch finds that he still " . . . dost give pleasure." Finally, he closes his letter by promising Horace: "I shall follow thee with most eager mind, so happily am I drawn captive by the chords of thy lyre, so soothing is to me the bitter sweetness of thy pen."[111]

Although Petrarch's praise for Horace is extensive, his love and admiration for Vergil is even greater. He addresses him in the following manner: "O illustrious Maro, bright luminary of eloquence and second hope of the Latian tongue, fortunate Mantua rejoices in so great a son as thou."[112] He asks Vergil if Homer is a companion in Heaven and in elaborate phrases questions Vergil concerning his surroundings: "How near the truth were thy earthly dreams

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[109] *Fam.*, XXIV, 10, "To Horatius Flaccus," pp. 125-26.

[110] *Ibid.*, p. 128.

[111] *Ibid.*, p. 131.

[112] *Fam.*, XXIV, 11, "To Publius Vergilius Maro," p. 136.

and imaginings? Hast thou been welcomed by the wandering Aeneas?"[113] These are two questions which reveal Petrarch's strong admiration for Vergil's works. He adds that he is forever grateful to Augustus for preventing the burning of the Aeneid, which Vergil had ordered to be destroyed upon his death. "Augustus was not moved by the dejected spirits of his dying friend, and justly will be praised by all succeeding generations for having disregarded thy last wishes."[114]

Petrarch's letter to Homer, written in answer to one which the Greek poet supposedly had sent to him and had signed "Homer," was not composed until 1360. In the opening lines, Petrarch admits that he had long wished to write to the ancient poet, but explains that " . . . fortune was unkind to [him] in [his] study of Greek."[115] By the sixth century, the Greek language had become almost unknown to most scholars, and by the time of the fourteenth century few Greek teachers were available; indeed, Petrarch admits that he could find no one to teach Greek to him to enable him to read the original text of Homer.[116] But he tells

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[113] Ibid., p. 137.

[114] Ibid., p. 140.

[115] Fam., XXIV, 12, p. 148.

[116] Wendell, op. cit., p. 157.

Homer that certain Latin translations have now come into his possession which permit him to enjoy Homer's works and adds that if the present translator responsible for this work should live long enough, eventually all of Homer's works will have been restored.[117] Former translations of Homer's work which Petrarch must have read had been unsatisfactory, for he is apparently questioning some of these translations in his statement, "For that little book which commonly passes as thine, though it is clearly taken from thee and is inscribed with thy name, is nevertheless not thine."[118] It is for this reason that he feels elated to learn that new translations are in the making. He also feels that every good writer should be praised for his own accomplishments alone, and should not be judged in comparison with another man's work, because "Cicero was, in many instances, merely an expounder of thy thoughts, Vergil was even more frequently a borrower; both, however, were the Princes of Latin speech."[119] At one time, he had believed that if Homer's works had been translated into Latin prose or even into Greek prose, Homer's purpose would have been lost

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[117] Fam., XXIV, 12, p. 148. This translator is Leonzio Pilato, from Calabria, Italy, in all probability.

[118] Ibid., p. 149.

[119] Loc. cit.

completely. But, he adds, that " . . . on the contrary, [Homer] dost still retain [his] hidden power to please, though turned into prose, and what is more, into Latin prose."[120] In other words, Petrarch believes that Homer is such a great master, that even translations cannot diminish this poet's ability to please, nor lessen his art to convey. Indeed, Petrarch is stern in his admonishment of the Greeks for allowing so much of Homer's great writings to have perished, particularly since the Greeks had always enjoyed and admired them so much: "Such blindness makes them unworthy of the boast that they once produced so luminous a star."[121] When "Homer" complains that Vergil was ungrateful because he did not acknowledge his borrowings from Homer in the Aeneid, Petrarch comes to Vergil's defense. He shows that Vergil had given credit to Theocritus and Hesiod in both the Buccolics, and the Georgics and agrues that death had prevented Vergil from giving Homer a "distinguished" and "conspicuous" place in his masterpiece.[122] To substantiate his belief, he points out that Papinius Statius had waited until the close of his Thebaid to honor Vergil,[123] and

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[120] Fam., XXIV, 12, p. 150.

[121] Ibid., p. 154.

[122] Ibid., pp. 157-160.

[123] Ibid., p. 161.

suggests that if death had suddenly overtaken Statius, he could not have said (in hopes that his Thebaid would survive for centuries), "O live, I pray! nor rival the divine Aeneid, but follow afar and ever venerate its footsteps."[124] He pleads with "Homer," then, to have faith in his explanation, and reminds "Homer" that in numerous short poems Vergil did honor to his name. He assures Homer that, while there may remain some who scorn him and only a few who follow him, Homer should not despair.[125] Petrarch feels this is the best that he can do for Homer, because, as he explains, "Any attempt to free thee from the scorn of rabble would result in detracting from thy singular and peculiar praise."[126] He closes his letter by assuring Homer that the time will come when the great poet will again be highly praised because he is so deserving: "Farewell forever. And when thou wilt have returned to thy seat of honor, pray give kindly greetings to Orpheus, Linus, Euripides, and the rest."[127]

Boccaccio (1313-1375), the noted Italian poet and learned classical scholar, is responsible for a collection

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[124] J. H. Mozley (tr.) Statius, II, p. 505.

[125] Fam., XXIV, 12, p. 162.

[126] Ibid., pp. 162-170.

[127] Ibid., p. 171.

of mythological legends in his fifteen-volume encyclopedia entitled Genealogy of the Gods.[128] For the purpose of the present study, Books XIV and XV are particularly pertinent because, in these, Boccaccio defends classical literature and justifies all good poetry. He stated that, as with any new book, there would be scholars who would commend his praiseworthy efforts and condemn, fairly, his defective work. However, he knew that a greater number would curiously inspect his book for the purpose of finding imperfections, and he asserts, " . . . with these is my quarrel, with these must I fight; and these I must overcome with the aid of better reasons than I have cited thus far."[129] To those who maintained that poetry was "no art" or that it was "a useless one," he declared that poetry was divine and worthy of respect and wished that these people

> " . . . would show how poetry can reasonably be called futile when it has, by God's grace, given birth to so many famous books, so many memorable poems, clearly conceived, and dealing with strange marvels.[130]

When scoffers claimed that poets had no concealed meanings in their writings, Boccaccio furiously replied: "O the injustice of men! O what absurd dunces! What clumsiness!" and added that only the "muddled" would not see Vergil's

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[128] Charles C. Osgood, Boccaccio on Poetry, p. xi.

[129] Boccaccio, Genealogy of the Gods, XIV, 2, p. 18; hereafter referred to as Genealogy.

[130] Genealogy, XIV, 6, pp. 36-37.

hidden meanings, Dante's twofold interpretations, or Petrarch's concealed meanings.[131]

Boccaccio was particularly incensed when the "enemies of poetry" asserted that poets were not truthful. He defended the poets emphatically, saying that " . . . poets are not liars." He added that some had accused Vergil of having lied when he mentioned that there were many gods when there was only one recognized divine God,[132] and he reminded these "disparagers" that the pagan poets could not be so unfairly accused of a false belief in their god's powers at a time in history when the blessed birth of one divine God had not yet been revealed to the world.[133] He further admonished these "zealots" who, he felt, were incompetent and who had accused the poets of writing corrupt stories. He added, "I beg them to tell whether they have ever read a book of Homer, or Hesiod, or Vergil, or a poem of say Horace or Juvenal?"[134] He believed that if they had done so, they would not have been prone to utter such absurd accusations. He thought that if they had been familiar with Vergil, Horace, or Juvenal, they would have known that these ancient

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[131] Genealogy, XIV, 10, pp. 52-53.

[132] Genealogy, XIV, 13, p. 62.

[133] Genealogy, XIV, 13, p. 66.

[134] Genealogy, XIV, 15, p. 72.

authors had waged an endless battle against corruption and vice.[135] Boccaccio also believed that these incompetent ones had grossly misinterpreted Plato's meaning in advocating that the poets should be driven out of the city, and stated that since they themselves had a desire to drive poetry out of every home, they had grasped at Plato's statement in order to justify their own objectives.[136] He added that Plato would not have banished poets of virtue, and said, "If not these, then what poets would Plato expel? Find out for yourselves, you incompetents." But he added, "Every art, like every liquor, hath its lees," and believed that unless art had its dregs, it was "cheapened."[137]

Boccaccio feared, therefore, that these "slanderers" would eventually accuse him of freely quoting from Greek poetry. He openly admitted that he often quoted the Greeks, but he defended his "Greek in a Latin discourse" by stating that it was not an unusual practice.[138] Although he believed that no one objected to the presence of Greek myths in his books, he had observed that when he quoted from Greek verses in his Latin work, he was severly condemned. ("I

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[135] Genealogy, XIV, 15, p. 75.

[136] Genealogy, XIV, 19, pp. 87-8.

[137] Genealogy, XIV, 19, p. 93.

[138] Genealogy, XV, 7, pp. 118-19.

thought I was thus adding a certain grace to my Latin, but lo, I have brought down a storm of malice upon myself."[139]) Even so, he felt that the wise would not offer objections. It is evident that Boccaccio respected the praise of the judicious more than he feared the censure of the ignorant.

These Italian humanists and poets, therefore, were largely responsible for a revival of interest in classical literature. However, the important innovation in this period was the use of the vernacular. A synthesis of the reasons which these poets gave for using the native tongue was (1) as a precaution against disorder; (2) because of the whole-heartedness of liberality in the vernacular; and (3) because of their affection for their native tongue. Although the importance of the vernacular to literature gradually increased, most authors, at this time, still were inclined to compose in Latin. They had access to the early Latin translations of the older Greek legends, and they adapted this material to their own uses. Finally, their individual defense of the classics reveals the high regard which they held for ancient poets.

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[139] Genealogy, XV, 7, p. 121.

CHAPTER III

THE ROLE OF THE CHURCH IN THE DISSEMINATION OF CLASSICAL LITERATURE

By the fifth century B. C., Christianity had become the established religion throughout civilized Europe, by means of the Catholic Church. It was a force of much influence on man's thoughts, his morals, and his activities.[140] The Greek and Latin Church Fathers created the Mass of doctrine upon which the medieval theologians expanded and directed their labors.[141] During the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, the celebration of the Mass in the churches became more elaborate and symbolic, a symbolism which greatly impressed medieval man.[142] Christianity was founded upon a basic set of beliefs, with the Bible as proof. But old Roman law also had definite rules and principles, and Christianity and Roman law had to learn to work together.[143]

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[140] Hardin Craig (ed.), The History of English Literature, p. 63.

[141] H. O. Taylor, The Medieval Mind, II, p. 69.

[142] Ibid., p. 102.

[143] Ibid., p. 297.

The organization of the Church had become powerful and had attracted the most influential and intellectual groups into its service. Almost all writings and translations were those of an historical or philosophical nature.[144] These dominant Christian influences definitely impeded, for a time, any noticeable progress in the development of secular literature or art, since only when art ministered to religion did the Church sanction it. The clergy was the class who instructed, preached, wrote, and, in general, controlled society.[145]

Although for several centuries very few outstanding secular contributions to literature had been made, late in the ninth century King Alfred translated, or ordered translated, into Anglo-Saxon several notable works of antiquity which he believed would help to refine and educate his subjects. He selected the History of Orosius from the fifth century, Boethius' Consolations of Philosophy and the writings of Gregory the Great from the sixth century, and Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English Speaking Peoples from the seventh century as those which he felt were important.[146] Also, one recalls that, Beowulf, probably the best known early English poem, which was written about the middle of the

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[144] Scott-James, op. cit., p. 96.

[145] Ibid., pp. 97-8.

[146] Wendell, op. cit., p. 456.

eighth century by an unknown author, was copied by scribes around the year one thousand.[147] Although it described a pagan society, one notes the presence of numerous Christian passages which suggest that the scribe was a cleric well acquainted with ancient literature.

For several hundred years following the fifth century, authors selected that which they preferred or enjoyed from the Old Testament and treated these tales allegorically.[148] While many of these stories had no religious significance, the writers believed that this material had much inherent value because God had inspired its composition. Authors came to believe that if these ancient Biblical stories contained hidden ethical meanings, perhaps pagan writings similarly would have a moral significance for the Christian world. Thus, many classical myths were re-told in Christian interpretation which made them acceptable to those who heretofore had felt that all pagan literature was immoral.[149] The use of allegory in the treatment of both the Scripture and ancient literature kept ancient myth alive in a period in which a minimum of secular writing

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[147] Marjorie Anderson and Blanche Williams (eds.), Old English Handbook, p. 290.

[148] R. R. Bolgar, The Classical Heritage and Its Beneficiaries, p. 218.

[149] Ibid., p. 219.

was being produced.

Until the time of the twelfth century, a vast quantity of devotional literature was produced, always under the supervision of the Church. During the latter part of the twelfth century, however, in Provence in Southern France, a new kind of poetry emerged which was to influence all later lyric poetry. The poetry of the troubadour gave rise to a different type of literature which, for a time, appeared to be completely at odds with Christian philosophy. The more romantic writings of the troubadour showed an influence of the Church. Much of the barbarism of the pagan poets was eliminated; and the code of manners, which changed the ruthless fighter into a gentleman, had a profound effect upon the culture of this period.[150] The Church did not sanction "adulterous stories," and thus it encouraged and inspired writings that, although they were chivalric and romantic, were also moral romances.[151] Chivalry became "dedicated to the service of God," and, thus, one sees that religion became a stabilizing influence in literature. The troubadours, or wandering poets who were professional entertainers of the nobility, introduced this verse, the main

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[150]Christopher Dawson, Medieval Religion and Other Essays, p. 109.

[151]Craig, op. cit., p. 63.

theme of which was love.[152] This poetry spread rapidly from southern to northern France, and from there throughout the continent and into England. Although its popularity lasted for less than two centuries, its influence existed longer, particularly in England and France.[153] As early as the seventh century, records show that England had enjoyed the work of professional minstrels and entertainers.[154] But as Christianity had developed, Church domination of the arts had also increased. Church opposition to the troubadour was indicative of the fact that the people did not want to have all secular poetry suppressed.[155] After the Norman Conquest, the influence of the French language had soon permeated each class of society in England. Since French was the language of the merchant and seaman, it soon became widespread.[156] French culture was very acceptable; therefore, the new French poetry appealed to the fashionable and refined social groups. At the same time, it represented a change from the use of the native language and from Latin.[157] In England,

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[152] Wendell, op. cit., p. 535.

[153] Loc. cit.

[154] H. J. Chaytor, The Troubadours and England, p. 1.

[155] Ibid., p. 5.

[156] Ibid., p. 11.

[157] S. P. Tatlock, "Epic Formulas," PMLA, XXXVIII (Sept. 1923), p. 519.

there was a lack of outstanding writers of poetry or prose.[158] However, the literature which was produced gave an accurate picture of everyday life; and the manners and customs were portrayed with little thought for originality in style.[159] Since Latin was the language which had been used in the churches, schools, and the literature for many centuries, medieval Europe had become accustomed to the Roman traditions.[160]

The people of this era were eager for knowledge, and new centers of learning were established in England as well as upon the Continent. The University of Paris, founded in the cathedral school of Notre Dame, was recognized as a great seat of learning and became the pattern which other schools followed.[161] When the new orders (the Franciscans and Dominicans) developed, they established themselves at other seats of learning as well as in Paris. The Dominicans settled in Oxford in 1221, and in Cambridge in 1274; the Franciscans at Oxford and Cambridge in 1224.[162]

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[158] Ker, op. cit., p. 2.

[159] Ibid., p. 3.

[160] Paul O. Kristeller, The Classics and Renaissance Thought, p. 6.

[161] A. W. Ward and A. R. Waller, The Cambridge History of English Literature, I, p. 222.

[162] Loc. cit.

Most of the great schoolmen of this time were members of the clergy. Originally, all authority was purely ecclesiastical, but at Oxford, since there was no cathedral located there, the chancellor, on the other hand, gradually obtained more authority. Although there are many unanswered questions as to the actual origin of Oxford as a school, it is a fairly well accepted fact that its location and accessibility were in its favor.[163] Grosseteste, the first so-called chancellor of Oxford, was a secular priest, but because he was also a learned and highly respected Latin scholar, the Friars preferred him as their master. Although his later position was comparable to that of the Chancellor of the University of Paris, he was never allowed a title higher than that of Magister Scholorum.[164] He was an unusual Latin scholar; but he also knew Greek, Hebrew, and Arabic and was interested in inculcating into the school a knowledge of each of these languages. He felt that anyone who knew these subjects would have a better understanding of both the Scripture and Aristotle.[165] The system of studies and the curriculum at Oxford were copied mainly from that

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[163] Hastings Rashdall, The Universities of Europe, I, p. 326.

[164] Ward and Waller, op. cit., p. 225.

[165] Taylor, op. cit., p. 147.

already established in the University of Paris. Degrees were offered in the arts, medicine, civil law, cannon law, and theology; and the study of Aristotle was a required subject for the candidates for most degrees.[166]

Although medieval and Christian writings were important at this time, the majority of teachers and those eager for knowledge relied upon the learning of classics,[167] which were used for instruction; thus, they were not only storehouses of knowledge for the man of the period, but they were also sources of inspiration to him.[168] Medieval man recognized and appreciated the ancients, and from them he derived a sense of discipline and a prescription for authority in matters for which he strove. This influence of authority carried over into the controlled Mass of the Church, which man respected, and into the symbolic ritual which so impressed him. He had a profound faith which largely derived from his great respect for controlled authority.[169] While the Christian religion had become strongly established during the Middle Ages, one suspects that if it had not accepted

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[166] F. M. Powicke and A. B. Emden (eds.), Rashdall's Medieval Universities, III, p. 153.

[167] Taylor, op. cit., p. 154.

[168] Ibid., p. 134.

[169] Ibid., pp. 328-329.

the classics as a fine example for teaching, both the literature and the Church probably would have suffered. Because the two assimilated their fundamental constituents, the literature remained alive. The rigidity and discipline which the classics revealed at this time, were incorporated into the ritual of the Catholic Church.[170] Man was eager to learn, and apparently was certain that the classical literature was the source of this desired knowledge.

From the grammar school to the highly specialized courses in the Universities, the text books which were used were written in Latin. If man wanted the common education of a clerk, or if he desired to study a particular subject, such as mathematics, rhetoric, or astronomy, he studied from Latin books. If he entered higher institutions of learning in order to study law, philosophy, or even theology, he invariably turned to the Latin classics.[171] Latin was universally studied by all persons of learning. It was the language which cut through time barriers and thus was kept alive. Because of the heavy reliance on the classics, a limited amount of new and original writing was accomplished. Much material was taken, some literally copied, from the

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[170] Dawson, op. cit., p. 100.

[171] Taylor, op. cit., p. 135.

Greek and Latin writings.

The English people accepted the ancient's literature, and thus relied on Latin translations. Latin was the model for writers, and they were very apt to use the models in any way they desired and indulge in excessive ornamentation to please the public.[172] The English translated vast amounts of material. Handbooks, translations of sermons and poetry, and prose were the principal works that were copied.[173] At this same time, during the eleventh and twelfth centuries, Italian writers were also relying heavily upon Latin. The Italian writer preferred to copy Cicero, Vergil, and Horace.[174]

In Western Europe in the latter part of the twelfth century and all through the thirteenth century, the intellectual culture gradually changed. Although Latin poets and prose writers remained important, an interest in Greek philosophers began to flourish.[175] Paris, Oxford, and Cambridge considered the study of Aristotle an essential subject as early as the first part of the thirteenth cen-

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[172] Craig, op. cit., p. 19.

[173] Ker, op. cit., p. 7.

[174] H. J. Chaytor, From Script to Print, p. 43.

[175] Kristeller, op. cit., p. 7.

tury.[176] Law, medicine and formal rhetoric were the only principal subjects taught in the Italian universities at this time; but by the latter part of the thirteenth century, the study of Aristotle was well established in Italy. The Latin classics were also beginning to be used in the schools influential in the rise of Italian humanism.[177] The public in thirteenth century England was far less critical than previous societies. England was, by then, tri-lingual, and although French was used fluently by many persons, Latin was probably written and read more than it had been before.[178]

Numerous authors of the Middle Ages had written about the ancient poets--principally, Homer, Ovid, and Vergil--and specifically have seemed to be interested in the accounts of the battles between the Greeks and Trojans. The medieval writer wrote to please the people of his own time span, so he changed anything he pleased. Some writers have called it "Medieval Naivete," but Bush believes the writer of this period was simply an independent author who wanted to satisfy the taste of medieval man.[179]

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[176] Powicke and Emden, op. cit., p. 150.

[177] Kristeller, op. cit., p. 36.

[178] Tatlock, op. cit., p. 519.

[179] Douglas Bush, Mythology and the Renaissance Tradition in English Poetry, p. 12.

Since medieval man seemed particularly interested in the battles between the Greeks and Trojans, one of the chief epic themes which he liked and borrowed from the classics was the story of Troy. Bush states that John Lydgate's Troy Book is probably the best account of all of the Troy episodes ever written.[180] Lydgate composed this work during the years 1412-1420 and attempted to cover the entire siege of Troy and the fate of the surviving Greeks and Trojans.

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[180] Ibid., p. 9.

CHAPTER IV

LYDGATE'S TROY BOOK: A "CORIOUS FLOUR OF RETHORIK"

John Lydgate (1370-1451), Middle English poet, translator, and adapter, was responsible in his lifetime for many redactions of classical narratives.[181] At a time in which English medievalists expressed a preference for accounts of the battles between the Greeks and Trojans, Lydgate realized that the epic theme of the Trojan War was a particularly important one. Critics have generally agreed that Troy Book is probably the best Middle English recounting of the events of the Trojan story.[182] For one to determine how Lydgate, as a Middle English adapter, produced his version of this traditional theme, he must observe the author's utilization of source. Lydgate's prologue to Troy Book is the starting-point for such an investigation, since it contains his pronouncements concerning the problem of rendering an older work into the vernacular, a problem that is, in many ways,

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[181] Ward and Waller, op. cit., p. 592.

[182] Craig, op. cit., p. 164; Bush, op. cit., p. 9.

quite similar to the one which Dante discussed at length in Convivio.

The prologue to Troy Book, consisting of 384 lines, opens upon a traditional invocation to the Gods, in which Lydgate asks for assistance in his forthcoming labors. He appeals, first, to Mars to " . . . be myn helpe in this grete nede / To do socour my stile to directe / And of my penne the tracys to correcte . . . ." (Prologue, 28-30)[183] The two words, stile and tracys, immediately draw one's attention to Lydgate's professional sense of authorship, revealing his desire to be correct in form and accurate in his recounting of the ancient legend. Next, he seeks the help of Othea, the Goddess of Prudence, and Calliope, the Goddess with the "melodic voice," and asks them to " . . . haue compassion / Wher as I erre in my translacion . . . " (67-69), once more emphasizing his determination to be as truthful as possible in his rendering of the Troy legend into the vernacular.

At this point in the prologue, he admits that, in undertaking this task, he is not seeking glory or praise but, rather, that he is obeying the wishes of his lord, the young Prince of Wales, who has commissioned him to translate from the Latin, Guido delle Colonne's Historia Destructionis

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[183]Henry Bergen (ed.), Lydgate's Troy Book; all references indicated by lines.

Troiae. Here, Lydgate explains that his young Prince has always had much

> . . . Ioye and gret deynte
> To rede in bokys of antiquite,
> To fyn only, vertu for to swe
> Be example of hem, and also for to eschewe
> The cursyd vice of slouthe and ydlenesse. (79-83)

One discovers, in this passage, that the prince is a typical moralist in his views about literature, and, by inference, that Lydgate, in accepting this commission from the Prince, identifies himself, as well, with the same moralistic principles. Particularly is it interesting to learn that Prince Henry has specifically desired that Lydgate make use of Guido delle Colonne's Historia Destructionis Troiae as the Latin work to be followed in his version in the English vernacular:

> By-cause he wolde that to hy3e and lowe
> The noble story openly wer knowe
> In oure tonge, aboute in euery age,
> And y-writen as wel in oure langage
> As in latyn and in frensche it is;
> That of the story þe trouth[e] we nat mys
> No more than doth eche other nacioun;
> This was the fun of his entencioun. (111-118)

Prince Henry, one notes, desires that the story of Troy be made available in the English vernacular (as it is already extant in the Latin and French) to all classes of citizens ("hy3e and lowe"), because of its ennobling qualities and particularly for the "trouthe" inherent to the story. Lydgate's purpose in undertaking the task is, therefore, not unlike Dante's former reasons for writing in the vernacular,

who also expressed his preference for the vernacular Italian over the Latin, because he felt that Latin could not expound to any but the lettered, adding that Latin also could not be "intimate" with those who were "friends of the vulgar tongue." In the passage cited above, Lydgate similarly notes that the vernacular guarantees the Prince, and the reader, that they will not "mys" the "trouthe" of the story.

At this point in the Prologue, Lydgate pauses to list what he considers to be the major problems confronting the translator who accepts a commission of this kind and observes, first, that ancient authors were generally held to be truthful men: "For in her honde they hilde for a staf / The trouthe only . . . ." (152-153) This concept of the nature of the poet coincides with the Aristotelian belief, discussed earlier, that the poet was one who was possessed with the gift for expressing the divine truth. Moreover, Lydgate points out that poets have been the sole means of perpetuating truth: "For ner [e] writers, al wer out of mynde, / Nat story only, but of nature and kynde / The trewe knowyng schulde haue gon to wrak . . . ." (159-161) He clearly recognizes that authors may deal in fiction ("story") and in factual material ("nature and kynde") and states, once again, that man's knowledge of existence owes much to the labors of past authors by whose efforts alone truth has been preserved. Next, he explains that the ancients

have made it possible for Lydgate and his followers to see things clearly because ancient works are like a " . . . merour only to oure mynde . . . ." (168), employing the reliable "mirror image" to describe the manner in which authors and their works reflect the truth. To illustrate his point, he, then, introduces an immortality theme into his prologue, suggesting that, by means of the sustaining power of literature, even heroes cannot actually perish, remaining alive in the many true literary accounts of their exploits, because books tell truths about mankind: "For vn-to vs her bokes represent / With-out[e] feynynge þe weie þat þei went / In her daies . . . ." (177-179) Lydgate understands that books also are histories or records of man's past struggles, and, here, one sees that his ideas are indeed comparable to those expressed by the earlier writers investigated in this study. In other words, since truth and morality were themes of much significance to the early Greek authors, and since poets were held to be teachers of, at least, "poetic truth," Lydgate is convinced that their records in preservation have served future generations of mankind as great source books from which to study examples of noble action. Furthermore, the moral values of literature are also uppermost in Lydgate's mind, when he states that all men " . . . shulde be his live in al that euer he can / For vertu only eschewe to don amys." (190-191) Obviously, he believes that the

ancients have told the truth about heroic deeds which time otherwise would have dimmed. (195-212) Consequently, he concludes that is the " . . . corious flour / Of rethorik . . . " which has preserved truth throughout the centuries. (218-219) He shows that the ancients had been occupied with the story of the seige of Troy and calls attention to the fact that it is still a fresh and lively tale: "For clerkys han this story so depeynt, / That deth nor age, by no maner weye, / The trouthe may not maken for to deye . . . ." (256-258). However, one observes that Lydgate is also objective in his praise of the ancients when he admits that there are some authors who, unfortunately, have not always told the truth. For example, he states that Homer "lied" in pretending that the Gods helped the Greeks (259-275), and he believes that this falsifying of the records was wrong of Homer, concluding that Homer had been blinded by love. (282-285) Furthermore, he believes that " . . . Ovide also poetycally hath closyd / Falshede with trouthe, þat makeþ men ennosed / To whiche parte þat þei schal hem holde . . . ." (299-301) But, he observes that Ovid was not the only Latin poet ever to mix the qualities of truth and falsehood, because Vergil " . . . was in party trewe of his writyng / Exsepte only that hym lyst som whyle / The tracys folwe of Omeris stile . . . ." (306-308) Here, Lydgate agrees with Plato's theory that poets are <u>imitators</u> and,

thus, do not always reflect the truth. Boccaccio's pronouncement that "poets are not liars," however, does not coincide with Lydgate's approval of Guido's having corrected the untruths of Homer, Ovid, and Vergil. However, one recalls that Lydgate does make an apologia in behalf of Homer's untruths and suggests, in doing so, that while poets may occasionally stray from the truth, they do not always deliberately falsify the record.

Lydgate, next, reviews the background of the Trojan story and states that two historians from the past (Dares, a Trojan, and Dictys, a Greek, who were actually present at the battles) are the true sources of fact concerning the Troy legend. He thinks that they wrote so well, " . . . each in his tonge, by swyche consonaunce / That in her bokys was no variaunce . . . ." (315-316) Bush, in his mythology, reiterates Lydgate's critical evaluation of these two ancient authors, adding that while the viewpoints of Dares and Dictys differ, the information which they present was truthful and detailed.[184] Taylor, however, thinks that the popular tale of Troy in Dares and Dictys contained " . . . intentional distortions," which medieval man simply accepted, pretended to believe, and fashioned to suit his own tastes.[185]

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[184] Bush, op. cit., p. 8.

[185] Taylor, op. cit., p. 253.

Lydgate also cites Cornelius of Athens as having made a true translation of the works of these two historians, but he is, in Lydgate's judgment, too brief, having omitted much that Lydgate thinks should have been included. (317-352) Lydgate, therefore, turns to "Guydo of Columpna," a highly noted author of the past, who had written about the same events, which

> . . . he enlvmyneth by crafte & cadence
> This noble story with many fresche colour
> Of rethorik, and many riche flour
> Of eloquence to make it sownde bet
> He in the story hath ymped in and set,
> That in good feythe I trowe he hath no pere
> To rekne alle þat write of this matere,
> As in his boke 3e may beholde and se. (362-369)

It is Guido's translation, then, upon which Lydgate will rely in making his own translation of the Troy legend.

The Prologue to Troy Book, therefore, reveals that Lydgate's purpose in translating Guido's Latin version into the Middle English vernacular is, first, to comply with the wishes of Prince Henry and, next, to give as true an account of the ancient story as it is possible for him to do. His prologue makes it clear that he has a high respect for truth. In stating the problems which confront a translator, he maintains that, although books tell truths about men and are the sole means of perpetuating truth, some authors have been known to misrepresent it. However, Lydgate believes, in the case of the Troy story, that Guido has set these other authors "right," and Guido, therefore, has become the model

for Lydgate's rendering of the story which is to follow.

In his prefatory remarks to Book II (159-197), Lydgate, having finished Book I and (one assumes) having received undesirable criticism of his work, now feels it necessary to indulge in a defense of his treatment of Guido and makes the following pertinent statement of his own method:

> . . . I wil my stile dresse
> To write forþe þe story by and by
> Of newe Troye in ordre Ceriously,
> As myn auctor in latyn, Guydo, writ. (160-163)

He says that he will try to follow Guido's narrative carefully, using Guido "as myn auctor." However, he warns: "I am so dulle, certeyn, þat I ne can / Folwen Guydo, þat clerke, þat coryous man . . . ." (169-170) He believes Guido is the greater author and, therefore, very difficult to follow for a man of Lydgate's intelligence. Here, he is referring to "coryous" Guido, in the sense of a perfectionist in rhyme and metre and, thus, once more admitting his own inability to compose in Guido's manner. He, then, clearly admits that he had no intentions in the first place (apparently referring to Book I) of following Guido's account "word by word" in the "maner of grammariens," and reiterates that he took not upon himself the task of an exact translation: "I toke nat on me þis story to translate . . . ." (177) Instead, he tells his reader that his method has been to " . . . leve þe wordis and folwe þe

sentence." (180) He even touches upon the problems of the versifier, again, in admitting that he was not always careful to perfect his metre, " . . . troup of metre I sette also a-syde . . . ," (181) because he felt that the truth contained in the meaning was of primary importance. Therefore, he strove to reveal " . . . þe troupe, and lefte coryouste / Bope of makyng and of metre be . . . ." (185-186) It was never his intention to vary greatly from, nor to oppose, Guido: "Nat purposyng to moche for to varie / Nor for to be dyuerse nor contrarie / vn-to Guydo . . . ." (187-189) He wrote always with the aim of conforming to the contents of the work before him: " . . . But me conforme fully in substaunce, / only in menyng, to conclude al on . . . ." (190-191) He says that he is intending, then, to give the reader the true meaning as best he can, although he insists that he does not possess " . . . þe floures of his [Guido's] eloquence." (193)

Later, at the conclusion to Book V, after he has made his own redaction of the Troy legend, Lydgate writes another long apologia, describing his problems in accomplishing his task--points of which are relative to the source which he has used in his translation. He asks his readers to "correcte," not "disdeyne" his work, and to let " . . . ignoraunce & rudnesse me excuse." (3487) He knows his metre is deficient, but he believes that the substance will please

" . . . For in metring þou3 þer be ignoraunce, / 3et in þe story 3e may fynde plesaunce / Touching substaunce of þat myn auctour wryt." (3491-3493) He thinks the ignorant have been the first to criticize unfairly, and he adds that authors as great as Chaucer, are always kind; and states that were Chaucer alive, he would " . . . nat pinche nor gruche at euery blot . . . . ." (3522) Indeed, he believes that Chaucer would have enjoyed the work for its substance and meaning and would not have complained merely because the metre was poor. Lydgate, here, is defending his own use of the vernacular, saying that one cannot adapt from another language and obtain results identical to the original, but he knows Chaucer would have recognized the fact that Lydgate could not imitate Guido perfectly. In a similar way, del Virgilio earlier recognized the substance of Dante's Paradisio. Although he had attempted to discourage Dante in the use of the vernacular, he finally recognized the meaning and substance of Dante's work worthy of praise.

In this apologia, Lydgate also welcomes any alterations of his work, however, by one who follows in the footsteps of Chaucer. Again, he apologizes for not having written in eloquent expressions, but explains that he has tried to tell " . . . þe story pleyn, chefly in substaunce." (3543) He adds that trusting in worldly things is not profitable, because not even kings or princes " . . . haue ful

surete . . . " in their lives. And he reiterates in his epilogue that, since his book is " . . . enlumined with no floures / Of rethorik, but with white and blak . . . " (100-102), he is anticipating complaints and will humbly accept emendations.

In the present study, a selection of episodes in Troy Book enable one to observe Lydgate's presentation of four heroic figures from classical literature, namely, Jason, Hercules, Hector, and Ulysses, since their narratives are representative of Lydgate's approach to the problems of adapting legend and myth into Middle English. The presentation of these four characters are discussed in Lydgate's chronology.

The popular classical poem, The Quest of the Golden Fleece, was written by Apollonius of Rhodes in the third century B. C.[186] It depicts Jason as the brave hero who captures the Golden Fleece, but, here, Jason's characterization is contained in descriptions of his exploits rather than in any specific notations of character by Apollonius: i.e., " . . . and here he smote them and there, / Mowing them down: full many on belly or flank did he smite . . . ."[187]

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[186] Hamilton, op. cit., p. 117.

[187] Arthur S. Way (tr.), The Tale of the Argonauts by Apollonius of Rhodes, p. 138.

Also, in this work one sees Jason through the eyes of Medea, who loves him: "He spoke, and to hear him her soul was melted within her then . . . ."[188] Ovid, as well, mentions Jason as the "bright Captain Jason," and has Medea moved by Jason's "manliness," his "gentility," his "aristocratic air, his poise, his grace."[189] Lydgate, on the other hand, explains that nature used all of her craft and art when she fashioned Jason the perfect man: " . . . when sche hym made, with hert [e], wil, & þou3t, / That of her crafte behynde was ry3t nou3t." (148-153) He shows that nature bestowed upon Jason good looks, strength, agility, courtesy, wiseness, " . . . the most [e] goodly þat men koude knowe . . . ." (153-157) In Lydgate, Jason is admired by all, "bothe to hy3e and lowe . . . " (158-161), so much so, that Lydgate feels he cannot do justice to Jason's description. He explains that Guido has truthfully related that Jason is "beloued" by everyone, and honored " . . . thoru3 þe londe . . . ." (162-164) Jason, however, is immature and innocent, and Lydgate shows that Jason loyally serves his uncle, "Pelleus," never disobeying or shirking his duty. He is never ill-tempered, " . . . Al-be he had holly in his hande . . . ," and he is always peace-loving. (165-177)

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[188] Ibid., p. 129.

[189] Gregory, op. cit., pp. 174-78.

In contrast with "beloved" Jason, Lydgate describes Peleus as a "hypocrit," who hates Jason, one who is " . . . Lyche an addre vnder flouris fayre, / For to his herte his tonge was contrarie . . . . ." (181-186) He shows that Peleus plotted secretly " . . . Lyche a snake that is wont to glyde / with his venym vnder fresche floures . . . ." (211)

For Lydgate, Jason has become a symbol of the watchful man in the presence of false Covetousness, for he says " . . . Lat hem be war, þat stonden in this caas, / To thinke a-forne & for to haue in mynde / That al falshed draweth to an ende . . . . ." (244-246) Lydgate has Peleus take advantage of Jason's innocence: "Knowyng Iason was 3onge and desyrous / vn-to swych thing, and ly3tly wolde enclyne." (386-387) Peleus, next, pretends to honor Jason's bravery: "For whiche anoon to preyse hym þei be-gynne, / Þat he suche honour to his nevewe wolde . . . ." (418-419) Then, Peleus flatters Jason for his virtue and manliness and says " . . . þou art oure wal, / Our my3ty schelde, and protecciou:" and adds " . . . þi witte, þi prouidence / Þi kny3tly hert, þi manly excellence . . . ," are known throughout the land. (437-464) In Lydgate, Jason is innocent: "He nou3t aduerteth þe menyng fraudelent . . . " (514), and gladly agrees to undertake the adventure. Here, one suspects that Lydgate may be telling the young Prince Henry that all

young heirs to a throne should be aware of the fact that some rulers are not above suspicion and are not always to be thought honest because they are nobles. Nevertheless, Lydgate observes that Jason is glad to obey his uncle, and feels contented: "He was accorded, in conclusioun, / With humble herte and hool intencioun." (520-526) He is, however, anxious that the reader understand that all which Peleus has said to Jason in flattery is, in reality, true, as he shows when the nobles and the worthies, next, respect Jason and volunteer to go with him " . . . Bothe for loue and worschip . . . ." (549-552)

Jason and Hercules reach the coast of Troy, and at this point, Lydgate presents an interesting discussion of the Greeks and Trojans which in Guido is omitted. "Guido merely says that the Greeks, weary of the sea, landed to refresh themselves with the spring-water without intending harm to anyone."[190] Lydgate, however, says that the Trojans unjustly suspected the Greeks and this suspicion " . . . was cause and occasioun / Þat þis cite and þis royal town / Distroied was . . . ." (760-768) He points out, as well, that small quarrels grow into larger battles, the result of which is war. (786-800) He observes that the ruin of Troy was

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[190]The text of the extracts from Guido is that of the undated Dutch Latin edition (?1473); Lydgate's Troy Book, IV, p. 100.

the beginning of Rome, and the rise of " . . . many gret cite . . . ." (811-823) Eneas " . . . com in-to Ytaille, / And won þat lond . . . ." (826-827) After him came Silvius, " . . . of whom cam Brute, so passyngly famus," who founded Britain.(829-834) As Wickham says, the English regard " . . . the Trojans as their ancestors and the Greeks as their enemies; . . . "[191] therefore, the fall of Troy for the English people (and for Lydgate) marked the beginnings of Britain.

Lydgate, next, returns to the story of Jason, who with Hercules lands at Symeonte. They are asked by a messenger from the King to leave, and, here, Lydgate emphasizes Jason's purity once again: Jason " . . . þat novther thou3t harme nor vylonge, / But Innocent . . . ." (969-970) When Jason hears the words of King Lamedon's Ambassador

> . . . he gan chaunge cher,
> And kepte hym cloos, with sobre contenaunce,
> And was nat hasty for Ire nor greuaunce;
> For no rancour he cau3te of his tale,
> Saue in his face he gan to wexe pale,
> Long abydyng or ou3t he wolde seyn. (1015-1021)

Jason, then, relays this message to his people and, therein, Lydgate demonstrates Jason's concept of distributive justice, explaining that if King Lamedon had come to Greece, " . . . He schulde of vs haue resseived be . . . ." (1029-1070)

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[191] Glynne Wickham, Early English Stages 1300 to 1660, Vol. II, part I, p. 32.

Lydgate also speaks of "worthi Iason" (1216), and "þis manly man Iason . . . ." (1222) It is obvious, then, that in Troy Book, Jason, the innocent, the "beloved" of Greece, becomes more than a character who strove to win the Golden Fleece, because Lydgate has made him into a glorious, respected, and noble adventurer who attains to honor in spite of the treacherous actions of Peleus. Although Lydgate has followed his "master Guido" in meaning throughout Book I, he has greatly amplified Guido's story concerning the landing of the Greeks at Troy and in the speeches of King Lamedon. The editor of Lydgate's Troy Book states that the lines "are considerably extended by Lydgate, who revelled in the speeches."[192]

Next, Hercules, one of the brave young Greeks who volunteered to accompany Jason on his search for the Golden Fleece, is mentioned only briefly in the tale by Apollonius of Rhodes. Here, he is called "mighty-hearted Herakles," "Valiant Herakles" and "bold Herakles." His heroic deeds are so amplified by Appolonius that he finally concludes no man "had the deeds outdone, save Herakles." He shows, also, that when Hylas, the armor-bearer for Hercules, was drawn into the sea by a nymph, Hercules swam after him and never

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[192]The text of the extracts from Guido is that of the undated Dutch Latin edition (?1473); Lydgate's Troy Book, IV, p. 101.

returned.[193]

Lydgate dispatches Hercules in the company of Jason on the perilous journey in search of the Golden Fleece. He notes that many worthy men volunteered to accompany Jason--"Amonges whiche þe grete Hercules, / Of force, of my3t, of strenthe pereles . . . ." (553-554) Lydgate also recounts the " . . . famus dedis twelue," for which, he asserts, Hercules should be remembered:

1. He slou3e Antheon in þe eyr on hey3t,
   And many geant . . . (573-574)
2. Þe serpent Yare he slou3 eke in Palude . . . (576)
3. And Cerberus þe hownde he bond so sore,
   At helle 3atis þat he barke no more . . . (577-578)
4. He fledde arpies, briddes of Archadye . . . (584)
5. And slou3 centauris, þe bestis monstruous . . . (585)
6. þe feerse lyon he byrafte his house . . . (586)
7. þe goldene applys he bare for þe dragoun . . . (590)
8. þe fyry cat he slou3 with-out [e] more . . . (591)
9. And of Archadye, þe cruel tuschy boor . . . (592)
10. And at the last, on his schulders square,
    of verray my3t þe firmament he bare. (593-594)

After citing these ten labors, Lydgate then confesses that he cannot mention all of the great " . . . passyng dedis, whiche ben historial . . . " but tells his reader to " . . . Redeth Ovide, and þer schal hem fynde . . . ." (596-597)

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[193] Way (tr.), op. cit., Book I.

He refers to his source when he adds that Hercules set up pillars in the "Sibellys streytes" so that mariners would know the boundaries and could pass, " . . . as Guydo maketh mynde . . . ." (613) And he explains that, according to Guido, the place is called Syracenyca: " . . . recorde of myn auctour." (616) Furthermore, he points out that it was " . . . Þe manly kny3t, þe worþi Hercules . . . ." who threatened King Lamedon's Ambassador. Later, when Jason and Hercules land at Colchos, Lydgate shows that the king seats Jason first, and afterwards, " . . . Hercules, þat was so gret a lorde." (1530) In preparing to invade Troy, he shows that " . . . Hercules, þe worthi conquerour . . . " (3798) is the "chefe solicytour" for Peleus when enlisting men in battle. (3796-3797) Later, " . . . Þe noble Kny3te, þe strong[e] Hercules . . . ," plans to ambush Lamedon. (4020-4040) In battle, on the other hand, Lydgate describes him as " . . . þis cruel Hercules, / Þe my3ty gesunt of force per[e]les, / Liche a lyoun . . . " who slays the Trojans. (4281-4285) Then, the Greeks reach land and enjoy their loot. Here, he is following his source as he explains, " . . . in Guydo as I rede . . . ." (4399-4402)

At this point, Lydgate leaves Jason and Hercules, and continues with another battle in Book II. Hercules is a brave, strong hero, according to Apollonius of Rhodes and Ovid, and it is only in Lydgate's version, taken directly

from Guido's translation, that Hercules accompanies Jason, participates in the many battles of the wars between the Greeks and the Trojans, and proves himself to be a heroic warrior.

Although Hector, the third hero for discussion, has been called "the ideal knight of medieval chivalry,[194] Ovid, in his Metamorphoses pays little attention to this hero or even to the story of Troy. The Trojans were prepared for the Greeks when the Greek ships landed, and " . . . These opening encounters taught the Greeks that Hector's skill at a rushing skirmish took its toll." In the thick of the fighting, Ovid writes that Achilles " . . . kept his eyes alert for Hector or for Cygnus . . . ."[195] In the argument between Ajax and Ulysses over Achilles' armor, Ajax referred to Ulysses as " . . . the man who ran from Hector's fires . . . ," and boasted that he was proud to say he had not been knocked down by Hector. When Ulysses defended himself, he reminded Ajax that Hector had met Ajax hand to hand, and " . . . Hector left the field unscratched--and then the fight was over . . . ."[196]

In Homer's Iliad, on the other hand, Hektor is the

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[194]Bush, op. cit., p. 4.

[195]Gregory, op. cit., p. 327.

[196]Ibid., p. 360.

Trojan hero. "Hektor the glorious" or "brilliant Hektor" (Book VII, 42)[197] are common references to him in this poem. Homer shows other facets about Hektor, as well: Menelaos reproaches the Greeks because none volunteer " . . . to face Hektor," (Book VII, 98) and Nestor shames them because they " . . . all cringe away before Hektor . . . ." (Book VII, 129) In all of Homer's battle sequences, Hektor is described as the " . . . tall Hektor of the glancing helm . . . ," and, whenever he speaks, Homer shows that the Trojans either cheer their champion, or sit in awed silence. (Book III, 102) He is "glorious Hektor" (p. 165) "loved of Zeus." (p. 195) (Book VIII, 493)

In Lydgate, Hector is first mentioned as " . . . þe rote and stok of cheualrie" and "the sovereign flower of knighthood." (Book II, 244-245) " . . . He allone excelled euerychon . . . ." (254) He shows that King Priam had sent Hector to Panonia to "amende þinges," because Hector was always " . . . so iust and so prudent, / so wel avised and so pacient . . . ." (1129-1130) He is further shown to have preferred to reform minor abuses rather than mete out punishment. (1132-1137) Although Hector wanted revenge on the Greeks, Lydgate observes that he wisely warned Priam that they must think " . . . only nat þe gynnyng but þe

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[197] Lattimore (tr.), The Iliad of Homer. References by book and line.

ende . . . ." (2233) Lydgate, then, devotes one chapter to Dares's descriptions of the Greek and Trojan heroes. In this passage, he asserts that Hector was the " . . . flour of manhod . . . ," courteous, gentle and wise. To his friends he was gracious; to his enemies, he was a "lyon." (4800-4833) When the Trojans were driven back to Troy, Hector, the "hardiest" of men " . . . of worþines was þe lode-sterre . . . ." (8476) When the battles began, " . . . þe Trojan champioun--Worþy Ector--" assembled and directed the Trojan forces. (III.19-29) Lydgate explains that Hector had every possible gift that nature could grant him--" . . . souereine excellence, and gouernaunce medlid with prudence . . . ." (486-490) Hector was also strong and brave, and had killed many Greeks, and is repeatedly alluded to as worthy Hector, the prudent manly knight in Lydgate. During the three months' truce in the battle, Lydgate has Hector visit Achilles. Each man agrees that he must eliminate the other, because, Hector has explained truthfully that he could not love Achilles since love springs from friendship, and he knows that " . . . werre may no frendly hede . . . ." (3896-3906) When Hector is slain by Achilles, Lydgate doubts that he is able to write more of the tale because " . . . myn hond boþe tremble and quake, / O worthi Hector, only for þi sake . . . ." (5424-5425) In all other ancient treatments of Hector, therefore, one sees

him as the brave, strong warrior. However, only in Lydgate's poem is one provided with the details which reveal Hector's human qualities, those of kindness, compassion, sagacity, courtesy, and loyalty. He becomes, in Lydgate's hands, a courageous human being, as well as the idolized Trojan hero.

In The Metamorphoses, Ovid presents Ulysses, the final hero for examination in this study, as "the heroic son of Laertes" possessed of a superior intelligence. In the dispute between Ajax and Ulysses over the rightful possessor of Achilles' armor, Ovid has Ulysses win the honor because of " . . . the force behind his gift of speech."[198] Later, he is described as " . . . that great Greek liar, the shrewd Ulysses . . . ." He is also the " . . . strong and brave . . ." hero who "cut out" the eye of the Giant Polyphemus. And, elsewhere, Ovid reminds his reader that Ulysses is "shrewd."[199]

Lydgate in Troy Book recounts the same story of Ajax and Ulysses, but adds that he has done so " . . . lyche as Guydo writ . . . ," and shows that the armor was awarded to Ulysses because he had saved Helen when Troy had been defeated. (237-241) After Ulysses' departure from Troy, Lydgate devotes nearly five hundred lines to this hero's

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[198]Gregory, op. cit., pp. 354-364.

[199]Ibid., p. 397.

adventures. According to the editor, Guido's version of these events is a "matter-of-fact chronicle," but Lydgate "makes quite a story" out of these adventures. In Lydgate, Ulysses is plundered and arrested for murder, but escapes " . . . By his prudence," because he is "bope expert, wys, & olde . . . ." (1796-1821) Then, Lydgate narrates the giant's attack upon Ulysses, adding that one can also read about it in " . . . Ovide . . . in his boke of transformacioun--/Methamorphoseos . . . ." (1971-1973) Next, in Lydgate, Ulysses describes his adventures to King Idomeneus. When Ulysses hears that certain nobles plan to ravish his wife, Penelope, " . . . He wexe in hente wood and furious . . . ," and beheaded his enemies: " . . . Smet of her hedes by iugement final / And set hem vp on þe castel wal . . . ." (2244-2264) Lydgate, then, reminds his reader that Guido in his account of these events is very brief in ending the episode of Ulysses and Penelope: " . . . And Vlixes in his chefe cite / Abood still with Penolope / Where I hym leue in Ioie . . . ." (2305-2311)

When Ulysses has a dream that disturbs his mind, Lydgate has his nobles interpret its meaning. They tell Ulysses that he will be eventually killed by a kinsman. He, then, imprisons his son, but, says Lydgate, " . . . Þe Olde fool, þis dotard Vlixes, / a sone hadde be-geten on Circes . . . ," is a fact which Ulysses has forgotten. When this

illegitimate son comes to Greece, not recognizing Ulysses as his father, he stabs Ulysses. Ulysses forgives his son: " . . . vnto hym anon for-gaf his deth . . . ." (3259) Then, Lydgate adds " . . . I haue no more [of] latyn to translate / After Dites, Dares, nor Guydo . . . ." (3360-3362)

In other versions of Ulysses' adventures, this hero is depicted as a brilliant, shrewd man, and even a liar. Lydgate, however, rarely describes this character in a derogatory manner. Rather, he thinks him wise and expert. It is true that he does reveal Ulysses' aroused temper when Penelope is threatened, and he does note Ulysses' cruelty in killing the great number of nobles who were involved in the plot against his throne, but as Lydgate describes these matters, he is always aware of his hero's just actions and leadership qualities.

When John Lydgate begins his Troy Book, he shows that he is very much aware of the problems which confront an author in translating an older book into the vernacular. He makes clear to the reader, therefore, that his main objectives are to comply with Prince Henry's wish, and to attempt an accurate recounting of the story. He emphasizes that books have been the perpetuators of truth, and states that he will follow Guido, who he believes has made an accurate accounting of the Troy story. One is aware of his conscious effort

to make clear his point of view about translating and adapting an ancient work. In the three apologetic passages dispersed throughout the poem, he is constantly reminding the reader that he is not pretending to follow Guido, or any other source, in a verbatim sense; rather he points out that he is more concerned with the "sentence," or accurate meaning, of Guido than he is with rendering Guido's line into the Middle English vernacular. That he has been severely criticized by some of his contemporaries for having adopted this method is obvious, particularly since he feels the necessity of repeating his views on this matter at three points within The Troy Book. His feeling, perhaps, is not unlike that which Dante experienced when he wrote in the vernacular despite criticism from his contemporaries. Also, Lydgate's anticipation of probable criticism is very similar to Boccaccio's expectation of unfair inspection for imperfections in a "new" work, rather than fair commendation for a poet's efforts. Bergen, the editor of the poem for the Early English Texts Society, by providing an abridged text of Guido's Latin work, has made it possible for the scholar to comprehend Lydgate's technique in rendering Guido's major episodes into Middle English. It is obvious, therefore, that there are many passages in The Troy Book which are solely the work of Lydgate. In his interpretation of four characters of legendary importance, Lydgate, unlike Guido,

emphasizes the more human qualities of the hero. Undoubtedly, the influence of Christianity upon medieval thought is partly responsible for the fact that a Middle English author so obviously stresses the values of kindness and compassion for mankind. Lydgate also impresses one as being sincere in his attempt to present the idolized Greek and Roman heroes as noble, worthy characters. Above all, he confirms the conviction of ancient philosophers and Greek and Roman writers that truth is a virtue for which man should strive and which the written word should perpetuate.

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