From the Editor

Quidditas is a Latin, legal term that originally meant “the essential nature of a thing.” In fourteenth-century French the word became “quiddite.” In the early modern period, the English adaptation, “quiddity,” meant “logical subtleties” or “a captious nicety in argument” (OED), and is so used in Hamlet (“Why may not that be the skull of a lawyer? Where be his quiddities now, his quillets, his cases, his tenures, and his tricks?” (Act V, scene 1, lines 95–97). Thus, the original Latin meaning, together with the later implied notions of intense scrutiny, systematic reasoning, and witty wordplay, is well suited as the title of the journal of the Rocky Mountain Medieval and Renaissance Association.

Quidditas is the annual, on-line journal of the Rocky Mountain Medieval and Renaissance Association. The journal’s content is eclectic, publishing articles focused on medieval and early modern topics from all disciplines. The journal also accepts “Notes” for short articles pertaining to factual research, bibliographical and/or archival matters, corrections and suggestions, pedagogy and other matters pertaining to research and teaching. The journal welcomes contributions to “Texts and Teaching,” a section that seeks reviews of literature, articles on teaching approaches and other aspects of pedagogy, and short reviews of individual textbooks and other published materials that instructors have found especially useful in teaching courses in medieval and early modern disciplines. These features furnish readers and contributors venues not available in other scholarly journals.

Membership Information

Annual membership in the Rocky Mountain Medieval and Renaissance Association is $25, with an additional $5 fee for joint memberships.

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Notice to Contributors

Quidditas invites submissions from all aspects of medieval and Renaissance or early modern disciplines: art, literature, history, music, philosophy, religion, languages, rhetoric, Islamic and New World cultures, global regions, comparative and interdisciplinary studies. Online format enables extensive illustrations. Since there is no subscription fee, Quidditas is easily available from any computer. Authors will be informed about the disposition of manuscripts within three months of receipt.

Articles in Quidditas are abstracted and indexed in MLA, Historical Abstracts, Feminae: Medieval Women and Gender Index, America: History and Life, EBSCOhost, and Oxburgh Standard Periodical Directory, and Ex Libris has designated Quidditas as a peer-reviewed journal in its SFX Knowledgebase. Quidditas includes a “Notes” section for short articles pertaining to factual research, bibliographical and/or archival matters, corrections and suggestions, pedagogy and other matters pertaining to the research and teaching of medieval and Renaissance disciplines. Our “Texts and Teaching” section seeks longer review of literature essays, articles on teaching approaches and other aspects of pedagogy, and short reviews of individual textbooks and other published materials that instructors have found especially valuable in teaching courses in medieval and early modern disciplines. Membership in RMMRA is not required for submission or publication.

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Please send your submission electronically in MS Word (.doc or .docx) to the appropriate editor below. Use The Chicago Manual of Style (16th ed.). The author’s name must not appear within the text. All articles must include a short abstract (200 words maximum) before the main text, and a bibliography of works cited at the end. A cover letter with the author’s name, address, telephone number, e-mail address, and manuscript title must accompany all submissions.

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In Memoriam

Richard L. Harp

This volume is dedicated to Professor Richard L. Harp who died at the age of 73 on 7 March 2019. Richard and his spouse Margaret Harp, Professor of French at UNLV have been active members of the Rocky Mountain Medieval and Renaissance Association. Richard served on the Association’s Executive Board, presented papers and chaired sessions at several conferences, and Margaret served as Treasurer, and organized RMMRA’s 2018 Las Vegas conference.

Richard was a prolific scholar, author and editor of seven books, and numerous articles. His special focus was Ben Jonson. Not only was he founder and co-editor of the Ben Jonson Journal, published by Edinburgh University Press, but also the editor of the Norton Critical Edition of Ben Jonson’s Plays and Masques. But Richard’s interests were diverse. His publications also include studies dealing with Shakespeare, Samuel Johnson, John Milton, John Donne, the modern Irish playwrights and authors Brian Friel and Frank O’Connor, and pedagogy. Below is a partial list of his publications.

BOOKS


Jerry Tarkanian: Countdown of a Rebel, Leisure Press, 1984 (co-author, Joseph McCullough)


“Virtue is not Boring: Shakespeare and the Moral Life.” *Modern Age* (Spring, 2016), 19-29.


“Love and Money in The Merchant of Venice,” *Modern Age* (Winter, 2010), 37-44.


“Jonson’s Volpone and Dante,” *Comparative Drama*, 39:1 (2005 Spring), 55-74. [Co-author, Christopher Baker].


“Catholicism, Religion, and Ben Jonson,” *Cithara* 42 (May 2003), 25-34.


“Jonson’s Late Plays,” in *Cambridge Companion*, 90-102 [above].


“Frank O’Connor’s Stories: Epiphanies of the Heart,” in *Frank O’Connor: New Perspectives* [see above], pp. 65-81.

“Jonson’s Comic Apocalypse,” *Cithara*, 34, (November 1994), 34-43; rpt. in *Ben Jonson’s Plays and Masques*, 468-77 [above].


“Where are the Great Sinners?” *The American Benedictine Review*, 33 (September 1982), 292-301.


“Practicing What We Preach: Using the Classics to Teach the Classics,” *College English*, 37 (January 1976), 488-99.


“A Note on the Harmony of Style and Theme in Poe’s *Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym,*” *CEA Critic*, 36 (March 1974), 8-11.

Richard received his Bachelor of Arts from the University of Kansas, his Master of Arts from Boston College, and his Doctorate of Philosophy from the University of Kansas. He taught in the Department of English at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas for 44 years, from 1975 until his death in 2019. At various times during those years he served his department in the capacities of Chair, Director of Graduate Studies, and Director of Composition.
It is with great sadness that I share the news that our colleague, Dr. Richard Harp, Professor of English, passed away on Thursday, March 7, 2019. Richard was a valued colleague and a great friend to many in the College of Liberal Arts and across campus. He began his service to UNLV in 1975 and contributed in numerous ways over the past 44 years, including serving as Director of Composition since 2015, Chair of the Department of English for six years, and Director of Graduate Studies for nine years. He was an outstanding professor and prolific researcher, publishing seven books and more than 45 articles. Also, he was founding co-editor of *The Ben Jonson Journal*, housed at UNLV since its inception in 1992. His academic specialties included English Renaissance literature, ancient and modern Irish literature, and the Bible as literature. Richard received the Barrick Distinguished Scholar Award in 2003 and taught abroad as a Fulbright-Hays Lecturer at the University of Gothenburg in Sweden and Visiting Fellow in the Humanities at University College in Galway, Ireland. He served the UNLV community on many committees, including several years as a member and, later, chair of the Graduate Council. Richard will be truly missed by all who knew him.

*Jennifer Keene*

*Dean, College of Liberal Arts*

*University of Nevada, Las Vegas*

Our friendship happened at a lectern. Both Richard and I were deeply concerned about the ways in which canonical poetry was being shunted—by theory, by fashion, by old mortality—to the margins of academic discourse. We had begun to feel like characters at the end of Truffaut’s *Fahrenheit 451*, wandering in a woodland, reciting poems into the falling snow. (Richard was a great memorizer of poems, from Herbert to Heaney, Herrick to Hopkins.) And so we decided to team up, to teach our department’s English Literature surveys together in one big lecture hall. All told, we did it four
times: twice Chaucer to Johnson; twice William Blake to Seamus Heaney. It went fast. The students would file noisily in and then, after a few words about the weather or the weekend’s sporting events, Richard would begin with a wonderfully revelatory etymology—on such words as “kindness” or “virtue” or “humility”—and off we’d go. I’d parry with a sweeping historical assertion or a bit of theological provocation (Richard was Cavalier and I was Roundhead), and Richard would then answer with a passage from the poem proving us both correct and yet entirely open to question. The students took it joyfully from there. It seemed that everything Richard managed to say took, for them, the form of a radiant permission. But it was a rigorous permission too. One could never speak of a poem in the absence of the poem. Actual words, in their profoundly humane entity, mattered first and last. For seventy-five minutes, twice weekly, and now for the rest of my life, Richard brought poetry back to its luminous centers: to kindness, to virtue, and to humility.

Donald Revell
Professor of English
University of Nevada, Las Vegas

When I first met Richard Harp, at the 2014 RMMRA Conference in Denver, Colorado, I was struck at how he seemed to me intensely interested not only in what I happened to be presenting at the conference, or in my research goals more broadly, but in who I was as a person. We happened, fortunately for me, to be placed on the same panel, early Saturday morning, and I will never forget the impression he made on me. The word that comes to mind is “attention.” Harp had a way, not merely of listening to others, as we so often do with minds focused elsewhere, but of attending to them as persons, displaying true curiosity, even wonder, in both what they are saying and who they are as individuals. He did not, in other words, see others as mere ideas but as people who transcended their academic or professional lives.

As it turned out, I was fortunate to study under Harp these last four years at UNLV, his final PhD student. Harp also invited me to work
with him as Managing Editor for the *Ben Jonson Journal*, the journal he co-founded with Stanley Stewart in 1993. Getting to know Harp these last four years only confirmed my early impressions: a brief, often unplanned, meeting sometimes became a forty-five minute conversation – the best having nothing to do with work. Unlike so many in academia, Harp never seemed to separate, arbitrarily as we do, the intellectual and the personal. A conversation with him might begin with the mundane details regarding journal page numbers – or, as he would put it, “what we have in the hopper” – but would end with how my parents were doing, or the current state of Rebel, or Kansas, basketball. Indeed, for me, those short moments with him, the best those discussing sports, were, what C. S. Lewis coins, the “golden sessions.” I think, for Harp, all of life was more or less interrelated. Working with him demonstrated how an intellectual should both love his material but also show a kindness and appreciation towards students, colleagues, or anyone who happened to enter into his life. I learned as much about life from him, and how to be a well-rounded scholar, as I did about literature.

Unfortunately, I only knew Professor Harp for less than five years, but they were nonetheless memorable for that. Perhaps it is fitting that the final memory I do have of him impresses on my mind many of the above qualities. I happened to be reading his book *Dr. John-son’s Critical Vocabulary* in the UNLV English department one afternoon. When I finished, I left to discard my coffee, as I do every afternoon, thinking nothing of it. But seeing me down the hall, he hailed me into his office, as he so often had done before. It was during a break in his metaphysical poetry class, so he had anything but leisure time. Nevertheless, he took the time to see me. He handed me a book he wanted me to have, and told me that he had been meaning to give it to me for some time now. Little did he know, he chose a fitting time. For it was the same book I had just been reading.

Brandon Schneeburger  
*Visiting Assistant Professor*  
*Oklahoma State University*
One time when I was in Dr. Harp’s office he told me about his first dissertation attempt. It was a failure, he said, on the *ars moriendi*, or “the art of dying well.” He bent down to pull from a bottom shelf one of his numerous oversized dark tanned folders and started flipping through it. “Never could finish it,” he said, smiling and making eye contact, “after eight months I had to pick a new topic.” The irony of this strikes me now as I sit down to reflect on a great teacher who was in all senses of the word a “true gentleman,” down to the very last email he sent to me three days or so before he went into the hospital. It contained numerous suggestions and encouraging thoughts. If I learned one thing from Professor Harp it is that failures and mistakes are a blessing and the true purpose behind things is more mysterious than our plans and our dreams.

When I entered his classroom for the first time back in 2003 at the age of 23, I had no real hopes or expectations. I was just about finished with my degree and wandering along to whatever might come next when I enrolled in Dr. Harp’s Milton class. What I encountered was poetry—unpredictable and alive. I had no idea who Milton was, thank God, and I had no inkling of the cruxes critics (still) debate in his poetry. What I received was not criticism, but instead a story I had never heard before. Dr. Harp would say things like: “Milton is a philosophical poet—If he’s trying to say something he’s gonna come right out and tell you. He wants you to understand him so that you can wrestle with what he is saying,” and also, “Milton was a hard studier.” There was a long tradition here: Pagan, Christian, erudite, common, beautiful. There was the idea of “justifying the ways of God to men.” But one phrase that particularly struck me was something he said about a “student of Milton” that he knew. He could have been talking about an old school buddy; he could have been talking about one of his own teachers, or one of his students, or he could have even talking about himself, and this is what interested me. In all of my three-and-a-half years of college up to that point I had yet to hear a professor say that one might be a “student” of a work of literature like *Paradise Lost*, or of an author like John Milton
(though of course that always seems natural when reading alone). It
sounds strange to me now, and possibly strange to some who are
reading this, but back then I believed that literature was a vehicle
designed solely for transporting me to expressing myself. I had been
taught this idea from day one as a literature major. It seemed clear to
me then that a story was meant to provide the means for me to reach
my own ideas, my own “readings,” and thus provided a place for me
to exercise my own applications of “critical theory.” (To reach, seek,
and destroy my own “U-(Dis)-topia(s).”)

I could write so much about this one class. A particularly vivid
memory I have is of what happened one day during the usual mid-
way break. The Milton class met only a once a week (Monday eve-
nings it was) for three hours, so we were given a lengthy 20-minute
break. The reprobates like myself would, of course, head outside
for a smoke and some coffee during this precious time (and who
knows what else). As I straggled in to return I was shocked to see
him standing there alone kind of pacing around down the hallway by
the classroom door. I had stayed outside for an extra smoke so natu-
 rally I figured that I would be walking into class late. No worries, of
course, just float in. Harp took an interest and plainly asked me how
things were going. He made eye contact but wasn’t intimidating. I
said “fine.” We kept chatting for a while (by now I began to wonder
if class had been cancelled or something). During that encounter he
said some things like: “Education is a journey. The word literally
means ‘to be led out.’ It’s not a boxed thing, you know. Education
isn’t just taking a set number of classes and you are done—it doesn’t
have to end with getting a degree.” This really did not strike me as
the usual “knowledge is power” or “the sky is the limit” kind of
thing. It was more mysterious. “Where to?” I remember thinking.
“A journey...where are we going?” All the same I knew what he
meant. It sunk in while the whole time I felt excited, thinking, “I
can’t believe that he is talking to me like this.” Professors don’t just
do this kind of thing, you know. During class he had often brought
up his own past as a student, like the time when he told us about
what his teacher had said about the Fall of Adam and Eve. “I had
a teacher,” he said, “who used to say, ‘we aren’t in Kansas anymore.’ Kind of funny because we actually were in Kansas at the time. But we all knew what he meant.” Mystery and wonder seeped into Harp’s classes, though he spoke so plain.

I wish to quote a few words that Harp wrote at the passing of one of his own teachers, Frank Nelick. He gave me some of Frank’s papers one day (among other things) when he was clearing out his office and I found this piece amongst his things. Please humor me, and where it says “Frank” go ahead and read “Frank” but also go ahead and read in “Richard” too:

Frank was in the tradition of truly original scholarship which was validated by truth in speech rather than in the often curious and merely pedantic refinement of specialized publication. One had the sense that he was hearing a wisdom from Frank that was both ancient and alive and that was certainly never gotten up from old lecture notes or the latest scholarly treatise. Books were at best a means (and the scope of his reading was legendary), not the end of serious inquiry…. Like Shakespeare, Frank did not need the spectacles of books to read nature, and he exhibited a great deal of courage in insisting in the university that wisdom is found in speech, in teaching, rather than in writing. His students were the beneficiaries of this. During his thirty years at the University (of Kansas), though, he probably directed as many or more scholarly theses and dissertation of graduate students than anyone else in the English Department. That is, he was as generous with his specialized scholarly knowledge as he was with his teaching. Original ideas for scholarly investigation he had in abundance and they were validated by the successful completion of a graduate student’s research. A scholar protects an original research idea like almost nothing else he possesses. Frank had such ideas in abundance and he scattered them among his students like a farmer sowing a field. In so doing he contributed sustainably to his graduate students’ subsequent academic appointments and promotions …. For me, Frank was a never-ending help and source of ideas and scholarly wisdom. (“A Great Teacher Dies”)

Perhaps the most accurate way to describe the way in which Dr. Harp influenced my scholarly career would be to compare him to a great basketball coach. He was a good recruiter—I came back to UNLV for my PhD because of his deep familiarity with the program (he
helped design it and actually gave out the very first PhD granted by UNLV back in the 1990s. He had drills and skills, countless ideas and big dreams, yet was ever grounded, humble, and willing to give his time in abundance to anyone who was serious. All of my scholarly ideas and publications in one way or another originated from one of Dr. Harp’s classes, his conversations with me, or just like Frank—he simply “gave” me ideas to research which I was free to use as I pleased. In fact, just one semester before I earned my PhD, I sat in on yet another of Dr. Harp’s classes. Previously I had sat in many of his classes whenever I could during my PhD studies, even after I was “out of coursework” as they say. Many of these courses were undergraduate ones (including a whole year’s worth of the British Literature survey he co-taught with Donald Revell). Coming full circle, the last class I sat in on (spring 2017) was another undergraduate Milton class. On the syllabus Dr. Harp had listed a number of possible report topics and everyone had to give a presentation (just thinking about it still gives me the butterflies!). I chose to do my report on one of the topics from the list, “Milton and the Middle Ages.” Researching this topic soon after led to the conference paper I gave at the RMMRA at Grand Junction, CO entitled, “Milton and the Middle Ages” which won the Allen D. Breck Award (Volume 38 of Quidditas). The idea is original and rooted deep in history and tradition (I barely scratched the surface and hope others will continue looking at these issues). I hope to inspire students as Dr. Harp inspired me in so many ways, especially in these treacherous waters in which our profession is under vicious attack—both from without and within our departments. Many, many students will tell you that contact with great teachers like Richard Harp, Frank Nelick, John Senior, Dennis Quinn, and Donald Revell, makes your heart burn because it instantly becomes true that there exists an actual connection between literature and the real world in which we live.

Steven Hrdlicka
Instructor in English and Art
University of Nevada, Las Vegas
Obituary: Las Vegas Review-Journal

Richard L. Harp, of Las Vegas, passed away March 7. Richard was born October 9 1945. He earned his B.A. in English from the University of Kansas, his M.A. in English from Boston College and his Ph.D in English from the University of Kansas. A Professor of English at UNLV, Richard taught and published on writers of the English Renaissance including Shakespeare, Jonson, Milton, Donne, and Herbert. He was co-founding editor of the Ben Jonson Journal and served two terms as Chair of the UNLV Department of English. Richard loved teaching literature and was an inspiration to his students.

A native of Lawrence KS, Richard was a lifelong fan of the University of Kansas Jayhawks and showed the same enthusiasm for the UNLV Runnin’ Rebels. He played multiple sports and most excelled at tennis.

He was preceded in death by his father, Richard F. Harp, his mother, Martha Sue Layne Harp, his infant daughter Sarah, and his infant grandson Jacob. He is survived by his wife, Margaret, his children Rebecca, Matthew (Stacy), Adam, Mary, and Andrew and his grandchildren Lucas, Ella, Lainey, and Colton. He will be profoundly missed by his wife, children, friends, colleagues and students.
ALLEN D. BRECK AWARD

The Allen D. Breck Award is given in honor of Professor Allen D. Breck (1914-2000), a founder of the Rocky Mountain Medieval and Renaissance Association. As Professor of History at the University of Denver, he also served for 20 years as department chair. As Professor Emeritus he became the historian of the University of Denver, writing *From the Rockies to the World—The History of the University of Denver*. His specialties included medieval and church history, particularly John Wyclif. He also taught Anglican studies at the Hiff School of Theology, and wrote, edited, or contributed to histories of Jews, Methodists, and Episcopalians in Colorado and books on medieval philosophy, the lives of western leaders, and the relationships between science, history, and philosophy. In addition to his involvement with RMMRA, he was a fellow of the Royal Historical Society and belonged to the Medieval Academy of America, the Western History Association, and the Western Social Science Association.

The Breck Award recognizes the most distinguished paper given by a junior scholar at the annual conference.

Recipient of the Allen D. Breck Award for 2019

BRETTON RODRIGUEZ
Embellishing the Past: Fernando del Pulgar and History at the Court of the Catholic Monarchs

Bretton Rodriguez

University of Nevada, Reno

Composed in the late fifteenth century, Fernando del Pulgar’s Crónica de los Reyes Católicos was the official account of – and therefore one of the best sources for – some of the most significant events in late medieval Spanish history. Within his narrative, Pulgar described the marriage of Isabel and Fernando (better known today as the Catholic Monarchs), the establishment of the Spanish Inquisition, and the buildup to the conquest of Granada. Despite the importance of the events that he described, as well as his own role as official historian, Pulgar revealed a radical understanding of history and history writing in his personal correspondence. In particular, Pulgar claimed that it was the historian’s responsibility to embellish their account of the past and to change details to make their narratives as rhetorically compelling as possible. This essay explores how Pulgar embellished his official history to support specific nobles, the converso community, and the political interests of the Catholic Monarchs. In doing so, it not only provides insight into Fernando del Pulgar and the Crónica de los Reyes Católicos, but it also reveals the complexity and literary sophistication of the historical narratives produced at the court of the Catholic Monarchs.

In the late fourteenth century, the Castilian nobleman and historian Fernán Pérez de Guzmán wrote in the prologue to his most famous work – a series of biographical sketches of illustrious Castilian nobles known as the Generaciones y semblanzas (Generations and Biographies) – that there were three things one needed to be a good historian.1 Good historians had to be intelligent, they should be present or have trustworthy firsthand accounts for the events that they describe, and they should not write about the actions of a living ruler. This third element is particularly relevant for this essay. Pérez de Guzmán wrote that it was vital for a historian, “That the history should not be published while the king or prince is still alive in whose time and rule the historian is working so that the historian

1 Pérez de Guzmán, Generaciones y semblanzas, 2-3.
should be free to write the truth without fear.”² In other words, in order to compose a truthful account, a historian should only write about those rulers who are unable to harm him.

Peréz de Guzmán’s statement is striking in the cynical way it describes the influence of political power on writing history, but it also reflects a few generally held beliefs from the period. First, it accepts the idea, which dated back at least to Aristotle, that history should be an accurate account of what really happened in the past.³ Second, it exemplifies a popular medieval belief that history should serve a didactic role by presenting positive models to be emulated and negative models to be avoided. Even though medieval Castilian history frequently broke with these ideas in practice – and had done so at least since Alfonso X’s early vernacular chronicles in the thirteenth century – historians in medieval Castile still claimed to adhere to these standard ideas about what the nature of history should be.⁴

By the late fifteenth century, however, historians at the court of the Catholic Monarchs had begun not only to challenge these traditional ideas about the nature of history, but also to construct arguments in direct opposition to the idea that writing history meant relaying an exact account of past events. In particular, Fernando del Pulgar, the official chronicler for the Catholic Monarchs, articulated a revolutionary idea about the nature of history and its relationship to politi-

² Pérez de Guzmán, Generaciones y semblanzas, 2-3. “Que la historia no sea publicada viviendo el rey ó principe en cuyo tiempo y señorios se ordena, porque el historiador sea libre para escribir la verdad sin temor.”

³ In the Poetics, Aristotle wrote that history was an account of “the thing that has been,” which he contrast against poetry, which he claims is an account of “a kind of thing that might be” (Poetics, 234-235). In other words, history is an account of what has really happened while poetry is an account of anything that may happen.

⁴ In his thirteenth-century historical narrative, the Estoria de España (The Story of Spain), Alfonso X composed a history of Spain from its origins up to nearly his own rule. As numerous scholars have noted, despite claiming to write in order to educate his audience, Alfonso’s narrative helped to legitimize and support his own rule while also glorifying the history of his kingdom.
For Pulgar, the historian’s job was not just to relate what had happened in the past, but also to embellish it so that it was as rhetorically compelling as possible as long as he did not break with the overall sense of what had occurred. By examining a variety of works composed by Pulgar – with special attention to the personal letters that he sent to specific individuals – this essay will explore how he structured his official history of the Catholic Monarchs – the *Crónica de los Reyes Católicos* (*Chronicle of the Catholic Monarchs*) – to support powerful nobles, his own community, and his primary patron, Queen Isabel I of Castile.

In 1480, Isabel and Fernando II of Aragon – who together would come to be known as the Catholic Monarchs – named Fernando del Pulgar as their royal chronicler and authorized him to write the official history of their reign. This history, the *Crónica de los Reyes Católicos*, primarily covered the period from the marriage of Isabel and Fernando in 1469 up to the year 1490, which was shortly before the Castilian conquest of Granada. Like earlier chronicles, Pulgar’s history was intended to support the rule of the Catholic Monarchs, and he presented it as a tradition work of official history.

In the prologue to this account, for example, Pulgar offered a very standard idea of history. He stated, “We write, with the help of the all-powerful God, the truth of the things that occurred. Through which, those who read this chronicle will see the effects of the Providence of God clearly revealed,” and he went on to state that his work commemorated the great deeds of the Catholic Monarchs for future

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5 According to Gonzalo Pontón Gijón, Pulgar would have known Pérez de Guzmán personally, and Pulgar even mentioned overhearing his predecessor relating anecdotes in his fourth letter (12). This suggests that Pulgar would have been aware of Pérez de Guzmán’s ideas regarding the role of history and what he believed to be necessary to be a good historian.


7 Pulgar, *Crónica de los Reyes Católicos*, Proemio, 1: 3. “Escriuremos, con el ayuda del muy alto Dios, la verdad de las cosas que pasaron. En las cuales verán los que esta Corónica leyeren los efectos de la Providencia de Dios magnifístos claramente.” All citations from the *Crónica de los Reyes Católicos*, unless otherwise noted, come from Juan de Mata Carriazo’s 1943 edition of the text. Regarding its format, the first number refers to the chapter (here, the proemio), the second to the volume, and the third to the page number.
generations. In other words, Pulgar presented his chronicle as a didactic history. Moreover, by highlighting that history reveals God’s plan, Pulgar further supported the Catholic Monarchs by revealing how their actions were all part of the larger divine plan.

These claims by Pulgar – that he had crafted a didactic history to instruct the reader while also revealing God’s divine plan – were standard for historians in medieval Iberia. However, Pulgar’s personal letters reveal that he envisioned history as having a much more expansive role than just providing models for future generations. In particular, the letters that Pulgar sent to individual nobles reveal how he was able to write and revise his historical narrative in order to support his allies.

The best example of how Pulgar manipulated his accounts of the past in support of specific interests is a letter that he sent to the Count of Cabra, Diego Fernández de Córdoba, around the year 1484. In general, Pulgar wanted his letters to be read by a wide audience. In fact, he published 15 letters shortly afterward, in 1485, which have come to be known simply as the Letras (Letters). He also published 32 letters, along with the first edition of the Claros varones de Castilla (Famous Men of Castile), in 1486. By publishing his private correspondence, Pulgar was participating in a practice that was common amongst contemporary European humanists, and he was also following the example of classical philosophers such as Cicero. Pulgar’s letter to the Count of Cabra, however, was not intended to public. Not only did Pulgar not publish the letter amongst the others, but he also instructed the count not to reveal its contents.

8 Similar claims, for instance, were made by Alfonso X in the prologue to his Estoria de España, in which he argues that he produced his history to preserve the memory of scientific achievement and so that the great deeds of individuals might not be forgotten (Prologo, 3).

9 This is not only true in Pulgar’s letters. In his Claros varones de Castilla – a series of biographical sketches of important nobles and clergy members that he composed and published in the 1480s – Pulgar repeatedly praised and glorified the accomplishment of specific nobles.

to anyone. This letter is vital for interpreting Pulgar’s work. In fact, in this letter, he proposed nothing less than a new understanding of writing history in Castile.

As was traditional, within the letter Pulgar praised the role of history for preserving memory, and he offered to conserve the memory of the count’s deeds for his descendants. However, he also claimed that he wrote history in a new way, one that broke with tradition and imitated Livy and other classical historians. He stated:

I, very noble and magnificent lord, in this (history) that I write I do not continue the form of these chronicles that we read of the kings of Castile, but I work as I can to imitate, if I should be able, Livy and the other ancient historians, who embellished their chronicles a great deal with arguments that we read in them, enmeshed in a great deal of philosophy and good doctrine. And in these types of arguments we have license to add, to ornament them with the best and most effective words and reasons that we are able, provided that we do not depart from the substance of the event.11

Pulgar was clear. He believed that historians had the right and responsibility to adapt their historical narratives to more effectively make their arguments, provided that they did not misrepresent the substance of the event. This was a major departure from the way that previous historians had written about composing history. Rather than focusing on the didactic purposes of history, or emphasizing its role as witness to God’s divine plan, Pulgar emphasized the form and structure of the text.

Later in the letter, Pulgar provided an example of his version of writing history. Pulgar told the count that he had written two speeches regarding the question of what to do Boabdil following his capture at the Battle of Lucena in 1483.12 One speech was in favor of keep-

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11 Pulgar, Letra XXXII, 142. “Yo, muy noble e magnífico señor, en esto que escribo no llevo la forma destas corónicas que leemos de los Reyes de Castilla; mas trabajo cuanto puedo por remidar, si pudiere, al Tito Livio e a los otros estoriadores antiguos, que hermosan mucho sus corónicas con las razonamientos que en ellas leemos, enbueltos en mucha filosofia e buena doctrina. Y en estos tales razonamientos tenemos licencia de añadir, ornándolos con las mejores e más efícaces palabras y razones que pudiéremos, guardando que no salgamos de la sustancia del fecho.”

12 Boabdil (1460-1533), also referred to as Muhammad XII, was one of the Muslim rulers of Granada during the conquest of the kingdom by Isabel and Fernando. Moreover, Boabdil
ing Boabdil imprisoned and the other was in favor of letting him go. Notably, Pulgar offered to attribute the latter speech to the count. Pulgar wrote:

"Since they wrote to me that regarding the deliberation on the Moorish king there were a few opinions, some of them for and some of them against, I constructed two arguments: the one that he (Boabdil) should not be placed in liberty, and the other advising that he be set free. I am sending them to your lordship, and if you command that the latter argument be attributed to your lordship, as that is what the Council determined, then I will do it."

In essence, Pulgar was offering to change his history – which, as the royal historian, was the official version of past events for the Castilian court – and to make the count responsible for convincing the king and queen to release Boabdil.

Although there is not a record of his reply, one can see how Pulgar treated the Count of Cabra, as well as other nobles with whom he had a relationship, in the _Crónica de los Reyes Católicos_. First of all, he included the two speeches mentioned in his letter – one proposing that Boabdil remain imprisoned, the other advocating for his release – in the chronicle. However, within the narrative, it was not Count of Cabra who gave the speech in favor of releasing Boabdil. Instead, it was Rodrigo Ponce de León, the Marques of Cádiz, who advocated that the emir be released, which was ultimately what happened. The existence of this letter, therefore, not only calls into was the ruler who ultimately surrendered the city of Granada to the Catholic Monarchs in 1492.

13 Pulgar, _Letra XXXIII_, 142. “Porque me escribieron que cerca de la deliberación del rey moro ovo algunos votos, dellos pro e dellos contra, yo hice dos razonamientos: el uno que no se devía soltar, el otro consejando que se suelte. Enbiolos a V.S., y si mandáredes quel postrimero razonamiento se intitule a V.S., pues en aquel se determinó el Consejo, luego lo faré.”

14 Although he almost certainly did not know about the letter sent to the Count of Cabra, Lorenzo Gálindez de Carvajal, a historian writing for Carlos I of Spain (Charles V of the Holy Roman Empire) in the sixteenth century complained that Pulgar overly privileged the deeds and actions of some nobles while ignoring or overlooking the achievements of others.

15 Pulgar, _Crónica de los Reyes Católicos_, 150, 2: 89.
question whether or not the Marquez was the one to give the speech, but it also challenges the basic historical accuracy of Pulgar’s account of the event.

Examples such as these reveal how Pulgar was able to shape his narrative to support the interest of individual nobles. Moreover, taken in tandem with the letter that Pulgar sent to the Count of Cabra, one can see the way that Pulgar was able to construct a history that supported the interest of specific nobles at the expense of others, which highlights the larger role and importance of writing history at the court of the Catholic Monarchs. In addition, it reveals how a historian – especially the official historian – [could easily become a type of power broker at court] with control over the official account of the past.

Along with shaping his narrative to further the interests of individual members of the nobility, Pulgar also used his narrative in support of a very different group, the *converso* community in Castile. *Conversos* were Christians who had converted from Judaism, or the descendants of individuals who had taken that step, either through persuasion or force. Although many *conversos* thrived in early fifteenth-century Castile, beginning with the rebellion of Toledo in 1449, and the first statutes of *Limpieza de Sangre* – laws that discriminated against the converts based on their ethnic heritage – *conversos* began to suffer from persecution and exclusion.

This persecution intensified in the period following 1478, when the Catholic Monarchs received permission from the pope to establish the Spanish Inquisition, and 1481, when *autos de fe* – acts of faith

16 In the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries, there were a number of significant riots against the Jewish populations of a number of Castilian and Aragonese cities. In fact, according to David Nirenberg, these anti-Jewish riots resulted in the greatest Jewish loss of life in the Middle Ages (90). As a result of these conflicts, around 400,000 Jews converted to Christianity between 1391 and 1416 (Kaplan 18).

17 Along with the law of *Limpieza de Sangre*, *conversos* were the target of anti-*converso* riots in multiple cities throughout the 1460s and 1470s, and they were often forced to pay special taxers, or were limited in what careers and opportunities they were able to pursue (Kaplan 22-26).
where lapsed conversos were punished publicly – began in Seville. In this initial period of its history, the Inquisition primarily targeted conversos who were believed to have relapsed or to have continued practicing Judaism. Contemporary sources claim that thousands of conversos were tried and processed by the Inquisition during its early years, and recent scholarship has proposed that in addition to those who were processed and received lighter punishment, around 300 conversos may have been burned alive during the first decade of the Inquisition in Seville.\(^{18}\)

One reason that Pulgar may have supported this community was his own background. Pulgar – like many contemporary Castilian historians, including Alonso de Cartagena, Alfonso de Palencia, and Diego de Valera – came from a converso background.\(^ {19}\) He was also the student of another prominent converso, Fernán Díaz de Toledo, an important official at the court of Juan II and Enrique IV. Along with his personal background, Pulgar revealed his support of the converso community through his treatment of conversos within his Claros varones de Castilla,\(^ {20}\) as well as thought another unpublished letter in which Pulgar spoke out in defense of the community.

In this letter, Pulgar strongly advocated for the converso community, and he cited scripture to argue that lapsed conversos and Jews should be converted by persuasion rather than force. He also defended those who he saw as innocent, stating:

> I believe, lord, that there are some that sin from evil intentions, and others – and the majority – because they follow those evil ones; and they would follow good ones if it were possible. But, as the older ones are such bad Christians, the newer ones are such good Jews. Without a doubt, lord, I


\(^{19}\) As Michael Gerli has discussed, many of these converso intellectuals – such as Fernán Díaz de Toledo, Alonso de Cartagena, and Diego de Valera – were not only intellectually shaped by their background, but also actively sought through their writings to support conversos and their role in Castilian society (“Performing Nobility,” 20).

\(^{20}\) In the Claros varones de Castilla, Pulgar included biographies for several important converso nobles, and he depicted them in an overtly positive light. In particular, Pulgar offered a glowing depiction of the converso bishop Alonso de Cartagena, in which he repeatedly emphasized his limpieza, which in this case would mostly likely signify his purity and provide a contrast with the statutes of Limpieza de Sangre (Claros varones, 66-67).
believe that there are ten thousand young girls between ten and twenty
years old in Andalusia that from the time they are born have never left
their houses, nor have they heard nor known of any other doctrine except
that which they saw their parents do inside their own homes: to burn all
of those would be the cruelest thing.21

Following this letter, Pulgar was severely criticized by many at court
and throughout Castile. For example, in a different letter, which he
did publish, Pulgar was forced to respond to an anonymous critic
who had equated his stance on the *conversos* with treason against
Isabel and Fernando.22 Any such implication would have caused
Pulgar to worry not only about his status at court, but also being
processed the Inquisition.23

Given this backdrop, it is notable how Pulgar shaped his narrative in
the *Crónica de los Reyes Católicos* to support the *converso* commu-
nity. Although Pulgar did not criticize the Inquisition or the Catholic
Monarch directly, he did repeatedly emphasize the suffering of the
*conversos*, particularly those of Seville. Late in his chronicle, Pulgar
went even further, and he actually allowed members of the com-

Some of the relatives of the imprisoned and of the condemned (*conver-
sos*) notified the king and the queen that … the religious inquisitors and
the secular executors had arranged things cruelly; and they had shown
great evil, not only against those who they judged and tortured, but also

nor, que allí hay algunos que pecan de malos, y otros y los más porque se van tras aquellos
malos; y se yrian tras otros buenos si obiese. Pero como los viejos sean allí tan malos
cristianos, los nueuos son tan buenos judíos. Sin duda, señor, creo que mozas donzellas de
diez a veinte años hay en el Andaluçia diez mill niñas, que dende que naçieron nunca de sus
cassas salieron, ni oyeron nin supieron otra dotrina sino la que vieron hazer a sus padres de
sus puertas adentro: quemar todos éstos seria cossa crudelíssima.”

22 Pulgar, *Letra XXI*, 85-86. In this letter, Pulgar articulated an argument in support of the
*converso* community, and he argued against persecuting specific *conversos* for information
that they would have been taught as children before they could recognize it as wrong.

23 The Inquisition was able to target individuals from even the highest levels of Castilian
society. For instance, even Fernando de Talavera, Isabel’s personal confessor who was later
named the Archbishop of Granada, had problems with the Inquisition late in his life, which
led to several members of his family being processed and interrogated.
against everyone … and considering the piety of God and that the Holy Mother Church commands sweet reasons and gentle admonishments to be used in this case to bring those who have erred back to the Faith. And following the precepts and rules of the holy canons, they should ameliorate and lessen those penalties that they laws make available to them, and not (turn to) that cruel punishment of fire.  

By embedding the same arguments in support of the *conversos* that he had developed in his letters, but assigning them to the relatives of those who suffered and died, Pulgar strengthened his argument by putting it in the mouth of those most affected by the Inquisition. In doing so, Pulgar put his audience, if only for a moment, in the position of those who were being persecuted.

In essence, Pulgar created a dual vantage point for the events that he described. In addition to offering the perspective of the dominant old Christian society, Pulgar also invited his audience to imagine themselves in the subaltern position of the dominated *converso* community. By allowing individual *conversos* to articulate their own critique. Pulgar gave voice to a community that had been silenced and marginalized throughout the second half of the fifteenth century.

Through his treatment of the Inquisition, one can see the way the Pulgar utilized and structured his narrative not just in favor of specific nobles, but also in favor of the *converso* community in Castile. In doing so, Pulgar supported the interests of a group of people who were often discriminated against and persecuted by society. However, despite his support of this community – of which he formed a part – the main beneficiary of Pulgar’s embellishment of the past was the monarchy.

24 Pulgar, *Crónica de los Reyes Católicos*, 120, I, 439. “Algunos de las parientes de los presos e de los condenados notificaron al Rey e a la Reyna que … los ynquisidores eclesiásticas y los esecutores seglares se avían cruelmente; y mostrauan grand enemiga, no solo contra aquellos a quien justiçiauan y atormentauan, mas avn contra todos … E que considerada la piedad de Dios y los que la Santa Madre Iglesia manda vsar en este caso, con dulçes raçones y blandas amonestaçiones, e con buenas doctrinas y enxenplos se deveían traer a la Fé aquellos errados. E seguindo los preçeptos y reglas de los santos cánones, los devian reducir e admitir en las penas que las leyes disponen, e non con aquella cruel pena del fuego.”

25 Michael Gerli has argued that Pulgar used others characters within the narrative to articulate his criticisms of the Inquisition, which helped both to protect Pulgar and also to establish a dual vantage for the reader. (“Social Crisis,” 158-159).
As has been seen, Pulgar was willing to shape his narrative to support the interests of specific nobles as well as a larger community with which he had a personal connection. However, the most obvious beneficiary of Pulgar's writing was the monarchy in general and the queen in particular. This relationship was made explicit in a letter that Pulgar sends to the queen. Pulgar wrote,

Most high, excellent, and powerful queen … I will go to your highness as you commanded me, and I will take to you the writing up to this point that you have commanded to examine because writing in times when so much injustice has been converted by the grace of God into so much justice, and so much disobedience and corruption has been converted into so much order; I confess, my Lady, that it deserves a better intelligence than mine.

Here, Pulgar admits to giving Isabel editorial control over the narrative that he produced, which, as royal historian, was the official account of the reign of the Catholic Monarchs. Knowing that Pulgar allowed Isabel the power to examine and even edit his chronicles informs the way that scholars have to approach the text. It also reflects how Pulgar constructed his historical narrative to legitimize Isabel's right to the crown and to support her policies.

Legitimacy was a particularly important theme for Isabel, and it was a central concern of Pulgar's chronicle. Early in her reign, Isabel had serious problems legitimizing her position for a variety of reasons. First, Isabel was a woman, and women did not normally inherit royal power in Castile. Therefore, despite depicting the public as being in support of Isabel's succession and rule, Pulgar still had to address the issue of whether Isabel could legally inherit the crown of Castile in his chronicle. To do so, Pulgar depicted how a series of men tried to disinherit the queen throughout the first half of the text: first her half-brother, Enrique IV; then the advisors of her husband,

26 Gomez Redondo argues that Pulgar was clearly writing his history in support of Isabel and her policies while Alfonso de Palencia — who had been the official historian before Pulgar — had written his history primarily in support of her husband, Fernando (46-47).

27 Pulgar, Letra XI, 53-54, “Muy alta, excelente y ponderosa Reyna é Señora … Yo iré á Vuestra Alteza segun me lo envia á mandar, é llevaré lo escripto hasta aqui, para que lo mande examiner; porque escribir tiempos de tanta injusticia convertidos por la gracia de Dios en tanta justicia, tanta inobediencia en tanta obediencia, tanta corrupcion en tanta orden, yo confieso, Señora, que ha menester mejor cabeza que la mia.”
Fernando; and finally Alfonso V of Portugal.

In one representative example, Pulgar admitted that some nobles – he specified that they were relatives of the king – wanted a man to inherit from Enrique IV. However, Pulgar countered this argument by explaining that according to the ancient laws of Spain – Castile in particular – women were able to inherit. He then listed numerous examples of women who had inherited, or who would have inherited royal power. These examples, of course, were almost entirely invented, and they are another example of how Pulgar embellished material within his narrative.

Pulgar also embedded a conversation between the monarchs following Isabel’s coronation in Segovia in which the queen convinced Fernando of her claims by appealing to the rights of their own daughter, Princess Isabel, who was currently their only child and heir, to inherit if they were to die without other issue.

Pulgar also had another problem regarding Isabel’s legitimacy. Despite having crowned herself as queen almost immediately following the death of her half-brother, Enrique IV, in 1474, Isabel was arguably not the rightful heir. The problem was that Enrique claimed to have a daughter of his own, Juana. Isabel, Fernando, and their supporters claimed that Juana was illegitimate, the daughter of one of Enrique’s followers, Beltrán de la Cueva, hence, they – and Pulgar – referred to her as Juana la Beltraneja. However, Juana also had her supporters. In particular, her uncle, Alfonso V of Portugal, claimed to believe that she was the rightful heir, married her, and invaded Castile in support of her rights shortly after the death of Enrique IV.

Against this political backdrop, one of Pulgar’s primary rhetorical goals in his chronicle was to discredit Juana and justify Isabel’s right to rule. He did this by asserting, repeatedly, that Enrique IV was im-

28 Pulgar, *Crónica de los Reyes Católicos*, 22, 1: 70.

29 Pulgar lists seven different women who he claims had inherited and wielded royal power. Of these, only one, Urraca (1077 – 1126), actually held and exercised royal power. However, Pulgar likely would not have wanted to emphasize this comparison too much as Urraca ended up fighting against her husband, Alfonso I of Aragon (1073 – 1134), and losing control over much of her kingdom.

potent, and he also claimed that it was God’s will that Isabel became queen.\textsuperscript{31} In particular, Pulgar argued that Isabel’s claims had been proven true through the Castilians’ victories over Alfonso V and the Portuguese in battle. In essence, Pulgar used his own account of the war as evidence that God wanted Isabel to rule in Castile.

In addition to demonstrating her legal right to the crown, Pulgar also highlighted Isabel’s virtues as a means of providing her with a moral justification for the crown. The moral character of the queen was reiterated throughout the \textit{Crónica de los Reyes Católicos}.\textsuperscript{32} For example, Pulgar emphasized the importance of the queen’s actions throughout the war against Granada, and he claimed that her actions led to many of the Castilian victories. The best example of Isabel’s virtues, however, may be a short description, or \textit{semblanza}, of the queen that he embedded within his larger narrative:

She [Isabel] was very quick-witted and prudent, which rarely correspond in a single person … She was very religious and devout, she gave alms in the proper places in secret, she honored the centers of prayer, she visited monasteries and religious houses willingly, and she gave magnificently to those houses where she knew they maintained an honest life … she was very inclined to justice, so much so that it was believed she followed more the road of rigor than of piety; and she did this in order to fix the great corruption and crimes that she found when she inherited the kingdom.\textsuperscript{33}

Through this description, Pulgar depicted the queen as an ideal ruler whose only issue may have been that she was too rigorous in her pursuit of justice. However, even in this example, the cause of this fault was not Isabel, but rather in the condition of the kingdom when she inherited it. Moreover, by focusing so much on the queen’s moral virtue, Pulgar seems to create an implicit comparison between the queen and those rulers who came before, especially Enrique IV, who

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{31} In the \textit{Claros varones de Castilla}, Pulgar emphasized Enrique IV’s inability to conceive children throughout his biography of the king, and he claimed that it was this issue that destroyed the king’s marriage to his wife, Blanca of Navarre, with whom he failed to have children despite being married for many years (\textit{Claros varones}, 6-7).
  \item \textsuperscript{32} Elizabeth Lehfeldt argues that Isabel’s identity as a woman was instrumental in helping Pulgar to create an additional contrast between her moral actions and Enrique’s immorality (41). This contrast legitimized Isabel’s rule, and it supported Pulgar’s claim that the queen had been chosen by God to rule.
  \item \textsuperscript{33} Pulgar, \textit{Crónica de los Reyes Católicos}, 24, 1: 77. “Era muger muy aguda y discreta, lo cual vemos raras veces concurrir en vna persona … Era muy católica y devota, fazía limosnas secretas y en lugares devidos, honrabia las casas de oración, visitaua con voluntad los monesterios y casas de reliñón, aquellas do conocía que guardavan vida honesta, y dotuíauas magníficamente … Era muy inclinada a fazer justiçã, tanto que le era inputado seguir más la vía de rigor que de la piedad; y esto fazía por remediar a la grand corruçion de crimenes que hallo en el reyno quando suçedió en el.”
\end{itemize}
was known – at least, within Pulgar’s depiction of him in the *Claros varones de Castilla* – for his disloyalty and vices.

Pulgar also placed additional evidence for Isabel’s legitimacy in her own voice by embedding a prayer said by the queen toward the beginning of the War of Succession against Portugal. He wrote:

> You, Lord, who are aware of the secrets within hearts, you know that I have not obtained the kingdoms of the king, my father, through an unjust path, nor have I obtained them through trickery or force, but instead believing truly that these kingdoms belong to me by right because of those kings, my ancestors, who won them through the spilling of their blood. And you, Lord, in whose hands is the right to distribute these kingdoms, through your Providence you have put me in this royal state in which I am today, I beg you, Lord, that you hear now the prayer of your servant, and that you show the truth, and that you manifest your will with your marvelous works.  

This prayer, although explicitly about the outcome of the war, also reveals the characteristics that Pulgar argued made Isabel worthy to rule. Although Pulgar claimed that people heard the queen praying in public, it seems likely that he invented or adapted his account of the prayer – much as he did in the debate over Boabdil – to shape the audience’s interpretation of events in key ways. Within the *Crónica de los Reyes Católicos*, Pulgar used Isabel’s prayer to reiterate his larger arguments for the queen’s legitimacy, and to place them within her own mouth in a context – in the midst of personal communion with God – that would be associated with honesty and humility.

This moment in the text supported Pulgar’s argument in multiple ways. First, it offered the motivations for Isabel’s actions and showed that the queen truly believed herself to be the rightful ruler of Castile and to rule by divine right.  

34 *Pulgar, Crónica de los Reyes Católicos*, 31, 1: 101. “Tú, Señor, que conoce el secreto de los coraçones, sabes de mí que no por vía yjusta, no con cautela ni tiranía, mas creyendo verdaderamente que de derecho me perteneçen estos rreynos del rey mi padre, he procurado de los aver, porque aquello que los rReyes mis progenitores ganaron con tanto derramamiento de sangre no venga en generacçion agena. Y tú, Señor, en cuyas manos es el derecho de los reynos, por la dispusiçión de tu Providençia, me as puesto en este estado real en que oy estoy, suplico humildemente, Señor, que oygas agora la oraçión de tu sierva, y muestres la verdad, y manifiestes tu voluntad con tus obras marauillosas.”

35 By presenting Isabel in this way, Pulgar echoed earlier *converso* writers who had sought to represent previous Trastámara rulers as messianic-type figures. For example, Pablo de Santa María depicted Juan II as a messianic figure who appears at the end of the *Siete edades del mundo*. For many *converso* writers who were facing severe social pressure, part
in a line of righteous Castilian rulers who fought, bled, and died for the kingdom. Third, by having her place all of her faith in God, the prayer reinforced the queen’s humility and her deep faith. Within the narrative, Isabel trusted that God would send her a sign so that she did not sin through ignorance in fighting for the crown. Finally, Pulgar used this prayer to re-introduce the idea of Providence into his account of historical events and to support the image of Isabel as an almost-messiah like figure whose morality and faith saves her people.36

Toward the end of his depiction of the war between Castile and Portugal, Pulgar embedded an embassy to the Portuguese court in order to reiterate and reinforce many of his claims regarding the queen’s legitimacy as well as the providential nature of his history.37 During the embassy, Pulgar had the queen’s ambassador, Rodrigo Maldonado, outline the argument in favor of Isabel and Fernando being the rightful rulers of Castile. Throughout the speech, Maldonado emphasizes the role of God’s will in determining all the outcomes in human affairs. Pulgar wrote:

> In His Providence, He [God] has ordained that men receive many different results in the wars and conquests that they have undertaken, as we read in the Sacred Scripture and also in other authentic histories. We see that He helped you in the victory that He gave to you against the prince, Don Pedro, your uncle … and in the victories and the achievements that you had against the Moors in Africa; because they were just and holy enterprises in which God, like a friend, wanted to grant you victory as a king. However, what can we say about the enterprise that you have undertaken in Castile, except that we can clearly see that it does not please Him, nor does He want that you should continue, as we perceive in the great evils and misfortunes that have befallen you.38

of the hope for the messianic ruler was that he – or she – would alleviate the larger societal tensions.

36 It is interesting that Isabel, rather than Fernando, who is depicted as the savior of their people. Moreover, this is only one of multiple places where one can see Pulgar making Isabel a more prominent figure than her husband. Notably, Pulgar was chosen to be the royal historian following the dismissal of his predecessor, Alfonso de Palencia, for – in the words of the historian – not being suitably favorable to Isabel and assigning too much credit to Fernando for the couple’s accomplishments, including the battles he had won on the battlefield. By all accounts, Pulgar learned a lesson from Palencia’s dismissal, and he repeatedly praised Isabel above her husband throughout the *Crónica de los Reyes Católicos*.

37 Notably, many of the arguments that Maldonado makes in his speech in front of Alfonso V are the same that Pulgar makes in a letter – *Letra VII* – that he claimed to have sent to the same Alfonso V during the war for the Castilian throne after the death of Enrique IV. Here, once again, one can see the way that Pulgar re-utilized outside material to embellish his chronicle and support his larger claims.

38 Pulgar, *Crónica de los Reyes Católicos*, 110, 1: 390. “En su Providencia las tiene
By embedding this speech, Pulgar sought to use Alfonso’s own history of military conquest to prove his point about the role of God in determining the outcome of human affairs. According to Pulgar, when Alfonso fought just wars – such as the rebellion led by his uncle or his invasion of North Africa – the king was victorious. However, when he fought against the Catholic Monarchs, he was defeated repeatedly, which Pulgar had Maldonado argue, implied that he was attempting to fight against the will of God.

As his treatment of the embassy reflects, throughout the *Crónica de los Reyes Católicos* Pulgar was able to shape and construct a narrative that not only related the deeds of Isabel and Fernando, but also depicted them as the correct actions of virtuous rulers working to fulfill God’s divine plan. In doing so, Pulgar not only legitimized the rule of the Catholic Monarchs and provided ideological support for their policies, but he also embellished his account of the past to compose a rhetorically compelling master narrative for their reign.

In conclusion, even though Pulgar claimed to be writing within a specific tradition, didactic history, his personal letters reveal his beliefs regarding the nature of writing history, and also allow modern scholars to see some of the political calculations that shaped his *Crónica de los Reyes Católicos*. In particular, Pulgar’s letters reveal a new conception of history, which could be shaped, manipulated, and – in Pugár’s own words – embellished by the historian. And this is exactly what Pulgar did, constructing his historical narrative in such a way as to support specific nobles, his own *converso* community, and also the monarchy. Furthermore, by embellishing his history to support these groups, Pulgar revealed the developing role and power of both history and historians at the court of the Catholic Monarchs.
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Bibliography


Eroticism as a Metaphor for the Human-Divine Relationship in Attar’s *Conference of the Birds*, or *Mantiqu’-Tair*

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Farīdū’d-Dīn Ἁṭṭār’s *The Speech of the Birds* employs transgressive erotic imagery in multiple sub-tales in ways that both enhance the frame tale’s significance and suggest that persistent, discrete categories of love poetry and religious poetry are untenable as far as Ἁṭṭār’s works are concerned. Eroticism in Ἁṭṭār’s work paradoxically elicits shock and supports orthodoxy, sometimes simultaneously. In the narrative of Shaikh-i Sam’ān religious taboos are broken by a Muslim shaikh devoted to a Christian beloved who spurns him continuously. In “The Princess and the Beautiful Slave-Boy” eroticism is overtly presented as a metaphor for temporary, ecstatic union with the divine. In the “The Vazir’s Beautiful Son” heteronormativity is cast aside in order to delineate a narrative example of spiritual growth, suffering, and ultimately spiritual mystery. Ἁṭṭār’s *The Speech of the Birds* employs eroticism as a tool to dislocate the spiritual seeker as well as a metaphor to explicate the emotional valence of what it means to suffer in pursuit of divine unity. Each of these sub-tales also offer confirmation that spiritual struggle is a communal, not individual process.

Farīdū’d-Dīn Ἁṭṭār was a Persian poet of the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries who wrote in the Sufi tradition; the dates of his life and compositions are not certain, and there continues to be scholarly discussion about the dates of completion of some of his works.1 His long narrative poem, *The Speech of the Birds*, or *Mantiqu’-Tair*, is usually dated to the last quarter of the twelfth century.2 Like many of Ἁṭṭār’s narrative poems, *Mantiqu’-Tair*, according to Paul Losensky,

1 Reinert’s article in *Encyclopedia Iranica* and Safi’s in the third edition of the *Encyclopedia of Islam* give his birth and death dates as c. 1145-1221. The death date is generally tied to the Mongol invasion of Nišāpūr, Ἁṭṭār’s dwelling place. For an account of Ἁṭṭār’s life that integrates historical information with the admittedly legendary lives of Ἁṭṭār, see Kermani, *Terror of God*, 25-30 and 57-62.

2 There is some internal evidence that suggests an early completion date for *Mantiqu’-Tair*, such as 1175, 1178, or 1187. Landolt, “Ἅṭṭār, Sufism, and Ismailism,” 8-9. Reinert identifies 1177 as the only date included by Ἁṭṭār in his works as “the year of his completion of the *Manteq al-tayr*” but notes that this is not “conclusive evidence” because this date is not found across all manuscripts of the text. Reinert, “Ἅṭṭār, Farīd-al-dīn.” The name of this work is transliterated and translated variously in English scholarship; I follow Peter Avery’s spellings and translations herein.
makes “use of frame stories, a single narrative running the length of
the work that serves to motivate and organize a heterogeneous array
of shorter tales, anecdotes, and parables.” There has been some
scholarly work that points out the structural similarity between
Mantique’t and poems such as Geoffrey Chaucer’s The Canterbury
Tales or even the obvious bird connection with Parliament of Fowles. However, thematically Mantique’t-Ṭair shares more in common with
Western literature about fin’amors such as Chaucer’s Troilus and
Criseyde than it does with the structure of The Canterbury Tales
or the content of Parliament of Fowles. Further, it is a text that defies
understanding based on discrete categories of erotic and religious
poetry. Aṭṭār employs the language and imagery of erotic love and
desire within an otherwise overtly religious and didactic narrative
poem. The erotic metaphor found in the longest and perhaps best
known sub-tale, “The Story of Shaikh-i Sam’ān,” also appears
elsewhere within Mantique’t, particularly within “The Princess and

3 Losensky, “Words and Deeds,” 76. Dick Davis says of frame narratives: “the frame story
that functions as religious allegory, is often a minutely organized artefact.” Davis, “The
Journey as Paradigm,” 174. Fatemah Keshavarz agrees with Davis as she discusses the
minute poetic structure of various parts of the poem in Keshavarz, “The Flight of Birds,”
especially 117. On the source of Aṭṭār’s specific frame tale de Bruijn explains, “the story
of the frame work was taken from a symbolic tale about birds, which in the twelfth century
had been told in Arabic and Persian prose respectively by Muhammad and Ahmad Ghazali.
The use of the bird as a symbol of the human soul, implied in that story, is even attested
earlier in philosophical allegories among the writings of Ibn Sina (d. 1037) in Arabic poetry
and prose.” de Bruijn, Persian Sufi Poetry, 101. See also Kermani, Terror of God, 31 and
47-48. Kermani notes more broadly of frame tales: “Weaving differently colored threads
into a main narrative is a fundamental strategy in Eastern literature” (47).

4 Decidedly brief are Maryam Khoshbakht, Moussa Ahmadian, Shahruhk Hekmat, “A
Comparative Study of Chaucer’s The Canterbury Tales and Aṭṭār’s The Conference of the
Birds” International Journal of Applied Linguistics and English Literature 2.1 (2013): 90-
97 and Nor Faridah Abdul Manaf, “The Influence of Farid al-din Aṭṭār’s Mantiq al-Tayr
(The Conference of the Birds) on Western Writers: From Chaucer to Peter Brook,” The
Islamic Quarterly 46.3 (2002): 247-58. Zacharias P. Thundy also posits Aṭṭār’s work is a
model for Chaucer. Zacharias P. Thundy, “Chaotic Order in the Supertext of the Canter-
Ferial Ghazoul compares Aṭṭār’s search for the divine with that found in the Holy Grail
tradition in Ghazoul, “Departure in Search of the Divine in the Arabo-Persian and Franco-

5 See Shackle, “Representations” for the variety of translations of this sub-tale.
the Beautiful Slave-Boy,” and “The Vazir’s Beautiful Son.” Both of these narratives, like the narrative of Shaikh-i Sam’ān, employ variant economies of erotic desire to explore multiple, sometimes contradictory, ideas about the relationship between the divine and the individual soul. Additionally, in each of these sub-tales, there is an element of transgression infused into the erotic economies.

Sam’ān’s story violates prescriptions against relationships of people of different faiths. Sam’ān’s erotic desire imitates the ultimate obsessive longing for God that the ideal pilgrim soul at the peak of gnostic ability ought to manifest for God. Sam’ān’s journey also presents the movement from an exoteric Islamic faith to an esoteric one infused with an understanding of Sufi concepts of the dissolution of the self (naf). Additionally, such esoteric faith recognizes the importance of religious community and radical self-sacrifice through subjugation of the ego in pursuit of God the Beloved.

6 Nicholas Boylston’s holistic reading of Manṭiqu’ṭ-Ṭair in his dissertation classifies the poem’s sub-tales into three categories. One of these categories is the Miniature Romance, about which he observes that “Aṭṭār gives space for character development and poetic description of the characters involved.” Boylston, “Writing the Kaleidoscope,” 361. All three of the sub-tales I examine fall into this category of tale. Such prevalence of the romance within Aṭṭār’s twelfth-century poem suggests that he was not writing in a theological vacuum given the appearance of literary-mystical romances such as Nizami Ganjavi’s Layla and Majnun (584/1188) and Khosraw and Shirin (576/1180-81). Additionally, Husayn Ilahi Ghomshei notes of the latter that it “teaches that the only role that man is fit to play in the entire theatre of Existence is that of the lover.” Ghomshei, “The Principles,” 78. Helmut Ritter also discusses Majnun in particular as a model of the mystical lover, especially 384, 413.

7 Yannis Toussulí provides a clear glossary of many Sufi terms and defines naf as “self or soul, in the sense of the individuated quality of personhood; the individual ‘I’ that must be purified or refined in order to experience transcendence; sometimes used as a shorthand for the ‘divisive ego.’” Toussulis, Sufism, 243-244.

8 I should note that Toussulis, quoting Hamid Algar points out the importance of communal spirituality for Sufis who place an “emphasis on the spiritual efficiency of a virtuous and devotional companionship (suhbat), that is, the company of their masters and companions . . . . In another of his definitions of his path Bahuaddin [1318-1389] describes it as the path of companionship.” Algar quoted in Toussulis, Sufism, 81. Admittedly this Sufi figure is later than Aṭṭār’s work. Additionally, this perspective is lent credence by Kermani’s finding that another of Aṭṭār’s works, The Book of Suffering, “emphasizes that no one should embark on an inward journey without the guidance of a leader.” Kermani, Terror of God, 40.
In “The Princess and the Beautiful Slave-Boy” an erotic encounter that violates social class boundaries stands in as metaphor for the mystical union of the soul with Allah. Instead of the presentation of the ideal pilgrim “The Princess and the Beautiful Slave-Boy” investigates the pilgrim’s experience upon a direct encounter with the divine and the perplexity that it results in for the pilgrim once that encounter is over. The slave who is overwhelmed by his alcohol-laced sensual pleasures represents the spiritual drunkenness that so often appears in Persian Sufi poetry where wine and intoxication with the love of God are potent symbols of the pilgrim’s ecstatic longing.

The matrix of eroticism, desire, obedience, and suffering is more complex in the “The Vazir’s Beautiful Son,” but erotic desire and ecstatic devotion remain in the narrative’s homoeroticism. This sub-tale investigates yet another element of the pilgrim’s journey by simultaneously showing to the reader and shielding the reader from the states of ego annihilation (fana) and abiding in God (baqa). 9 Within this sub-tale, which concerns a same-sex relationship, ‘Aṭṭār employs eroticism of a transgressive nature, but it should be noted that that transgressive quality derives from the power inversions and unexpected emotional outbursts of figures normally coded as powerful and rational. 10 For example, a youth becomes a pīr (an “elder,” or a term “synonymous with shaykh”) to his elder and king. 11 These power inversions generate the transgression in this sub-tale while the homoeroticism derives from a well-established Persian literary trope. This trope continues in Persian literature long

9 Here I paraphrase the meanings of these terms provided by Toussulis, Sufism, 237-47.

10 El-Rouayheb has pointed out that “Sexual roles as a rule mirrored nonsexual relations of power, the sexually dominant (the penetrator) also being the socially dominant (the man, the husband, the master). Love, on the other hand, tended to overturn the established social order, causing a master to be enthralled by his slave, . . . . There is abundant evidence to suggest that many individuals actually experienced passionate love as an addictive submission to a beloved who would otherwise occupy a lower status than themselves.” El-Rouayheb, Before Homosexuality, 90. Aṭṭār’s poetry enacts these inversions over and over again.

11 Toussullis, Sufism, 244.
after ‘Aṭṭār’s death, and includes the poetry of Ḥāfiẓ of Shīraz that is well-known and beloved by Muslim populations. Shahah Ahmed even suggests knowledge of Ḥāfiẓ is central “to the historical being [Ahmed’s emphasis] of Muslims.”12 Additionally, Leonard Lewisohn writes:

Although it is well-known that it was customary in all medieval Islamic societies for children first to memorize the Qur’ān before pursuing other studies, . . . all the Persianate civilizations of Islamdom (Ottoman Turkey, Safavid and Qajar Persia, Timurid Central Asia and Mughal India…) have for the past five centuries been ‘Ḥāfiẓocentric’ as well. Up to the 1950s, Muslim children in Iran and Afghanistan and India were taught first to memorize the Qur’ān, and secondly to commit the poetry of Ḥāfiẓ to heart, . . .13

All this is to say that the homoeroticism in ‘Aṭṭār, which is also displayed in Ḥāfiẓ, is far less of a violation of literary and cultural norms in ‘Aṭṭār’s time and place than might initially appear to a Western, modern reader whose own religious history aligns with Christianity, whether or not that reader is a practicing Christian.

‘Aṭṭār’s adoption of and reliance upon erotic literary idiom places Manṭiqu’ṭ within a realm of religious literature that is not organized in an overtly rational manner, nor can readers rely only upon their intellectual capacity to understand and accept its religious precepts. The co-existence of the erotic and religious problematizes these categories of poetry and suggests the need to read them both against and with one another. In “Sewn Together with the Thread of the Sun” Fatemeh Keshavarz argues for the importance of reading ‘Aṭṭār’s Manṭiqu’ṭ as neither religious document nor literature, but rather interdisciplinarily as both literary and religious.14 This

12 Ahmed, What is Islam?, 33.

13 Lewisohn, “Prolegomenon,” 16. Aside from this observation, Peter Avery provides a number of personal anecdotes about his encounters with Iranians that illustrate Ḥāfiẓ’s cultural omnipresence in the region. For example, when he meets an illiterate youth from Shīrāz, he recites an opening line of a poem by Ḥāfiẓ about the city and the youth in turn recites the rest of the poem. Avery makes the point that the cultural saturation of Ḥāfiẓ is so intense that even the illiterate can quote the poetry they might not be able to read from the page. Avery, “Foreword,” x-xi.

position supports what I see as a scholarly need to investigate the intellectual and literary relationships between Ἁṭṭār’s Manṭiqū’ṭ-Ṭair and primarily secular, love poetry of medieval Europe, though this cannot be part of this current assessment of Ἁṭṭār’s eroticism. His embrace of erotic love metaphors and allegories is a clear indication that discrete categories of the erotic and the religious cannot always be asserted—each informs the other in Ἁṭṭār and cannot be fully understood without reference to the other.

A Brief Overview of Literary Traditions that Inform Manṭiqū’ṭ-Ṭair

The ambiguity of literary eroticism is especially prevalent in Persian Sufi poetry, which J. T. P. de Bruijn makes plain in his introduction to its various genres. De Bruijn notes that “When Sufis began to write Persian poems they adapted many forms of court poetry to their own ends” and likewise “expansion of Sufi poetry equally made its impact on the poetry of ‘the world’ so that eventually the lines distinguishing the two became vague.” This leaves the interpretation of such poetry uncertain, as de Bruijn suggests that whether to read the love discussed in such poetry as ‘ishq (carnal love) or as a metaphor for divine union is usually decided upon based on the extant biographical materials of the author and whether or not any affiliation with mysticism is present.

For the purposes of this examination, the most relevant genres of Persian poetry are the ghazal, or love lyric, and the masnavi, sometimes called the epic or narrative genre. Ἁṭṭār wrote both of these types of poetry and while Manṭiqū’ṭ-Ṭair is unquestionably an example of the didactic masnavi, it shows influence from the poetic traits of the ghazal, a genre which Ἁṭṭār also wrote.

In Manṭiqū’ṭ-Ṭair, Ἁṭṭār employs key elements of ghazals as he presents over and over again sub-tales that include the lover.

15 de Bruijn, Persian Sufi Poetry, 3.

16 de Bruijn, Persian Sufi Poetry, 56. Likewise, Ritter suggests viewing these as discrete, unrelated categories is not fully accurate: “The connection between the two [types of love] in mysticizing love poetry is far more intimate, and their relation to one another far more many-sided than such an either-or (majāzī-ḥaqīqī) [allegorical-real binary] presupposes.” Ritter, Ocean, 450.

17 de Bruijn, Persian Sufi Poetry, 57.
āshiq) and beloved (maʿshūq), the former constantly pressed by love itself (ishq) to pursue the object of its desires. Further, Rafal Stepien observes that “opposition between the intellect (aql) and love (eshq), and the avowed superiority of love over the intellect are commonplaces in Sufi literature,” and he clarifies that “for Sufi practice, the faculty of discernment with which the intellect is identified is, precisely, concerned to divide subject from object, whereas the Sufi aims ultimately to unite with the object of his knowledge just as a lover with beloved.” Thus, over and above expressing the radical self-other divide between the human and divine, ‘Aṭṭār’s use of erotic others is a method of generating cognitive dissonance for his audience, an intellectual jangling of categories that befuddles the reader and simultaneously recreates the difficulty of the pilgrim’s task within a literary puzzle.

Critical Approaches to ‘Aṭṭār

Manṭiq ʿt-Ṭair is one of ‘Aṭṭār’s most discussed works, and so it is important to situate my perspective in this broader critical discourse. Claudia Yaghoobi’s wonderful comparative study of Ἁṭṭār’s works with Western writings from the period while using the lens of modern theories of subjectivity engages with inspiring topics about diversity and binary categories. While I agree with much of the argument

18 Notably, de Bruijn also explains some ideas about gender in ghazals: “The Persian language has no distinction of gender in pronouns,” so the beloved’s sex is often indeterminate or ambiguous in ghazals and if there is an indication of sex, Persian ghazals “point almost always to the male gender of the Beloved.” Also, this gender ambiguity is distinct from the heteronormativity of Persian narrative poetry “in which pairs of lovers … are nearly always heterosexual, the female partner usually playing the role of the Beloved.” De Bruijn, Persian Sufi Poetry, 66.


20 Other scholars also discuss diversity explicitly in regard to Aṭṭār. Nicholas John Boylston’s dissertation addresses diversity as a foundational aspect of Ἁṭṭār’s masnavīs, but in a much broader sense than the social diversity Yaghoobi examines. See Boylston, “Writing the Kaleidoscope,” especially 336-389. Boylston’s perspective on diversity appears much more measured than Yaghoobi’s ultimately, who writes, “Aṭṭār’s works are a powerful cry for the inclusion of all members of society.” Yaghoobi, Subjectivity in Aṭṭār, 159. She first adopts this position in Yaghoobi, “Subjectivity in Aṭṭār’s Shaykh of San’ān Story” and expresses similar concepts in Yaghoobi, “Against the Current,” 92, 104. For another view of the diversity of voices in Aṭṭār, see Stepien, “A Study in Sufi Poetics,” 87, n. 37 where he discusses divine fools as rhetorical tools that allow Aṭṭār a layer of rhetorical removal when he engages in social criticism. Fatemeh Keshavarz mentions diversity in Aṭṭār’s work in a manner that I do not feel stretches too far into reading Aṭṭār as a social progressive: “These examples [of sub-tales] are more than anecdotes documenting personal struggles for growth. They are glances into the dynamic, humorous, and informal nature of the relationship between the Sacred which is illusive and changing, and a wide range of seekers.” Keshavarz, “Flight of the Birds,” 129.
in *Subjectivity in Ἁṭṭār, Persian Sufism, and European Mysticism*, my perspective on Ἁṭṭār stops short of the radically optimistic view that Yaghoobi concludes with, that “Ἀṭṭār tend[s] to accept and embrace human diversity at a time when such diversity, although thinkable, was rare.”21 As I admit here, certainly Ἁṭṭār employs and invokes social, religious, and sexual identities that are other, but while Yaghoobi argues he employs these others in order to allow new narratives of inclusivity and cultural validation through his writing, I see his eroticized sub-tales engaged with othering as a means of expressing the radical boundary crossing that the whole of *Manṭīqʿt-Ṭair* is concerned with, i.e. the traversing of the radical boundary that demarcates the human soul and the divine.22 Ἁṭṭār employs these others more metaphorically and does not necessarily argue for equal or egalitarian treatment of all such social groups in the material world.23 His use of the other is radical, progressive, and, as Yaghoobi has done, can be read in light of modern theorists like Foucault, but I believe *Manṭīqʿt* is ultimately and primarily, as many *masnavi* epics are, a didactic piece of literature that engages with the Sufi conception of the unity of existence, i.e. the idea that the difference between the created world and the divine is an illusion. This concept is of course a radically refreshing theological concept compared to the religious thinking dominant in Europe at the time, and even in exoteric Islam. There is a difference between the embrace of the other in a theological work meant to prick the conscience of Sufis, or even exoterically practicing Muslims, and the embrace of the other in a material, historical, and cultural manner.

My approach to Ἁṭṭār mirrors more closely the perspective of Rafal Stepien whose 2013 article establishes Ἁṭṭār is neither

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21 Yaghoobi, *Subjectivity in Ἁṭṭār*, 152.


23 Others concur: “One should take care not to read a reflection of reality in these [antinomian] poetic images. Poets such as Ἁṭṭār (d. ca. 1220), who used them very frequently in their poetry, were certainly not antinomian mystics, but pious Muslims who put much emphasis on the obedience to God’s will as it was laid down in the shariʿī *ʿAt*.” de Bruijn, *Persian Sufi Poetry*, 75.
purely a literary elite nor purely a composer of Sufi didacticism. Stepien insists on the dual nature of ‘Aṭṭār’s literary output, dubbing him a “mystic-poet,” and he notes that ‘Aṭṭār finds “mere formal excellence” in poetry to be insufficient to qualify it as valuable, wisdom poetry; rather he “repeatedly asks his readers to dig beneath the husk of poetic form to uncover the jewel of spiritually edificatory meaning.”

Rather than read the prima facie diversity of ‘Aṭṭār’s works as advocacy for variant social groups and identities, I see his use of othered groups as a means of delivering his esoteric spiritual meaning precisely because it allows for the type of writing or poesis that ‘Aṭṭār needs to access to achieve his rhetorical goal, which, in Stepien’s words, is to “expoun[d] Sufi concepts and relat[e] mystical experiences.”

Further aligning with my view of ‘Aṭṭār is Stepien’s use of Michael Sells’ analysis of apophatic literature to frame his methodological approach to the poet. Stepien recapitulates Sells: “‘The [mystical] writer must continually turn back to unsay the previous saying’ so as to create aporia; the ‘unresolvable dilemma; in which full meaning resides. Such an act of apophatic speech creates a ‘meaning event’ wherein the duality initially posited or presupposed falls away into a semantic synthesis: ‘The meaning event is the semantic analogue to the experience of mystical union. It does not describe or refer to mystical union but effects a semantic union that creates or imitates the mystical union.’ This leads on the epistemic front to a condition of ‘agnosia’: ‘an unknowing that goes beyond rather than falling

24 Stepien, “A Study in Sufi Poetics,” 99, 94. Another critic points to Ἁṭṭār’s didacticism, though Stepien views his perspective as too dismissive of Ἁṭṭār-the-poet: “Ἁṭṭār’s primary aim . . . was to bring the spiritual teachings and insights of the Qur’ān and hadith (the sayings of the Prophet of Muḥammad), as they had been understood by earlier generations of saints and Sufis, vividly alive for the majority of his compatriots unfamiliar with the learned Arabic forms of those traditions.” Morris also notes that “virtually every story is meant to paraphrase or illuminate specific Qur’ānic themes or canonical sayings attributed to Muhammad.” Morris, “Reading,” 77, 78. Keshavarz also writes “It is no longer possible to divide the creative impulse of these Sufi poets into poetic and/or mystical poetry. There is no justification for assuming that these poets wrote poetry despite their mystical devotion, rather than as a constituent element of the experience.” Keshavarz, “Flight,” 124.

As this explication of apophatic writing may suggest then, I view Āṭṭār as definitively religious, and while binary divisions of subjectivity are repeatedly addressed by him, rather than view this as social commentary, despite such a reading’s appeal for modern, secular/ecumenical audiences, I see Āṭṭār writing in an ultimately more literary-theological mode.

**Frame Tale and Pilgrimage in Manṭiqūṭ-Ṭair**

From methodological approaches, we must now turn to a brief overview of Manṭiqūṭ-Ṭair. Allegorically, the poem documents the movement of individual souls through various levels of Sufi devotion, the ultimate goal of which is the destruction of the Self or individual ego through annihilation in the divine. Stepien refers to this process as *epektasis*, or “the infinite unveiling of the divine Being along the journey” while Michael Sells refers to *epektasis* as “the soul’s infinitely deepening and never-ending pursuit of the divine.” The birds, and perhaps even the unwitting readers of Manṭiqūṭ, are thus undergoing *epektasis*. Additionally, J.T. P. de Bruijn reveals that in Āṭṭār’s poem “the seven valleys not only recall the stages of the Sufi path, but also the route through the Arabian desert to be followed on a pilgrimage to Mecca. Moreover, if imagined as going in a vertical direction, they correspond to the ascent through the Ptolemaean spheres which, … was a standard analogy of the climb to a perfected state of being.”

What the reader literally encounters in Manṭiqūṭ, however, is an animal fable; a variety of birds are introduced, all of whom are personified and long for a king. Annemarie Schimmel discusses the well-known literary trope of the bird: “The equation soul=bird is popular all over the world. It appeared in many primitive religions and is still to be found today. . . . Persian poetry abounds in this imagery. Avicenna had used it,

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26  Stepien, “A Study in Sufi Poetics,” 111. The quotes within Stepien are from Sells, *Mystical Languages*.


and Ghazzālī wrote a Risālat at-ṭayr, a ‘Bird’s Treatise,’ of similar contents.”

A bird called the hoopoe, who emerges as the leader for the pilgrimage, identifies the Simorgh as the birds’ king, who is also Allah, God, or the divine. Then the hoopoe warns of the difficult journey to find this king. Each bird represents a different objection to personal reform and devotion to the pursuit of the divine (e.g. the peacock is prideful, etc.). The journey is also structured around a pun; Simorgh, the name of the king, means “thirty birds,” which the reader uncovers is the number of birds that arrive at the end of Mantiqatu’t for a face-to-face exchange with the divine. When these remaining birds do encounter the divine, they find that:

Then by reflection, the faces of the thirty birds of the world
The face of the Simurgh found, from the world.

When these thirty birds looked hard,
No doubt about it, these thirty birds were that “Thirty-Birds”.

Rebekah Zwanzig says of Sufis that “The Sufi, then, is one who realizes that God is not only something without to be worshipped, but is also something within to be found.” Likewise, Schimmel reports that the Sufi poet “speaks of the mystery of the mutual relationship between lover and beloved, who are like mirrors to each other, lost


30 De Bruijn notes further the learned nature of Aṭṭār’s use of the birds: the title of the overall work derives from the Koran, the hoopoe is associated with Solomon as his messenger to the queen of Sheba, and the Simurgh is an image “borrowed from the ancient epic tradition of Persia,” de Bruijn, Persian Sufi Poetry, 102.

31 Aṭṭār, Speech, 377:4232-4233. I give first the page and then the verse numbers from this translation for all quotations. The titles of the sub-tales follow the text in the translation where possible, and where not possible because Avery has labeled them “Story and Exemplification,” I adopt his titles for the stories from his Appendix 1. I have also consulted the Darbandi and Davis and Wolpe translations.

in contemplating each other, one being.”

In order to achieve this feat, the thirty birds have had to endure great difficulty, which Ἁṭṭār distinguishes for us in the poem by describing each different stage of movement toward the divine as a separate valley. Lucian Stone provides a condensed and cogent description of the seven valleys:

after crossing the first four of the seven valleys, [1] of seeking [or quest] (talab), [2] love (‘ishq), [3] intuitive knowledge or gnosis (ma’rifat) and [4] detachment (ishtighna), and upon experiencing [5] union with the divine (tawhid), the mystic encounters [6] the state of pained, yet blessed, perplexity [or bewilderment] (hayrat)—a topsy-turvy experience of the world in which the wayfarer’s logic (mantiq) is befuddled and finally cast aside—allowing for [7] poverty (faqr), annihilation (fana) and subsistence in God (baqa) to succeed.

I begin with a sub-tale from early in the pilgrimage, one that Dick Davis has said is “a kind of smaller reflection of the larger structure within which it appears,” but which I see as presenting the ideal pilgrim soul expressed through the metaphor of the obsessed lover.

The Story of Shaikh-i Sam’ān

The sub-tale “The Story of Shaikh-i Sam’ān” presents the story of a respected shaikh who has had an established community of religious followers for fifty years as well as four hundred spiritual students;

33 Schimmel, Mystical Dimensions, 295. This equation of the birds to the divine must be tempered with an appreciation of the hierarchy of being, however. Stepien clarifies, “in passages dealing specifically with the attainment of the creative to final absorption in the Creator, Ἁṭṭār makes sure to emphasize the one-sided nature of the process: the moth may extinguish itself in the Light, but the light remains burning as before.” Stepien, “A Study in Sufi Poetics,” 96, n. 73. Ritter validates this perspective as well: “union of God and man, the removal of duality, takes place in Islamic mysticism in such a way that the human partner is, so to speak, dissolved in divinity, or room is made for divinity so that in place of two only one still remains, God. The lover must become the beloved, not the other way round.” Ritter, Ocean of the Soul, 595. Lewisohn’s description of this process is similar “the mystic’s individual identity could virtually melt into that of his theophanic Witness.” Lewisohn, “Prolegomenon to the Study of Ḥāfīẓ 2,” 44.

34 Stone, “Blessed Perplexity,” 95. De Bruijn notes that the valleys recall the manāzil or “succession of states in the classical training of Sufis,” though there are differences between that system and Ἁṭṭār’s. de Bruijn, Persian Sufi Poetry, 101.

35 Davis, “The Journey as Paradigm,” 175.
he is a devout man who keeps “prayers and fasts innumerable” and whose breath “recovered health” for “Whoever came upon sickness and infirmity.”36 Despite all these good qualities, the shaikh suffers from a recurring dream, and so he undertakes a pilgrimage to Rúm, or Constantinople, with a group of his followers, where he is smitten by a seductive and cruel Christian woman who pushes him to violate various religious principles.37

When the Christian girl comes into view for Samʿān, she also enters the readers’ gaze; we are given a blazon of nearly thirty lines emphasizing her great beauty and its ability to divert one from the proper religious practice: “Whoever had the heart enchain in that heart-holder’s tresses, / From the image of her locks plaited the pagan’s girdle.”38 We are told further of her hair that a single one might convert many: “She wound a hundred of her girdles from a single one of her hairs.”39 This image suggests that the sight of one of her hairs is enough to stimulate a hundred men to take up the Christian belt, or zunar, referred to as a girdle in the quotation above. Further, Samʿān’s conversion is solidified with another hair image: “Infidelity from those locks [of the Christian girl] poured to melt his faith.”40 Ḥāṭṭār’s reliance on hair imagery aligns with


37 On the identification of Constantinople with Rúm and the idea of Constantinople as a “Second Rome,” see Toussulis, Sufism, 91. The trope of love being a sudden and overwhelming force in one’s life is well-attested: “In literary representations passionate love often appeared as a mysterious and ineffable force that suddenly and unpredictably took hold of the soul.” El-Rouayheb, Before Homosexuality, 85. Lewisohn also explains, “whenever the heart resolves itself to pursue its ‘invisible Witness of Beauty’ [shāhid-i ghaybī], and the base passion soul [nafs-i ammara] is unable to apprehend that Reality for itself, it attaches itself to a form in the visible phenomenal world, thus becoming bound and attached to a certain ‘pretty face’ which is an image of the divine workmanship, and that thing they call the shāhid.” Lewisohn, “Prolegomenon to the Study of Ḥāfiẓ 2,” 45.

38 Ḥāṭṭār, Speech, 111: 1212. Avery notes these descriptions are “taghazzul,” a rhetorical device “derived . . . from the root of the Arabic verb meaning to show amorosness, to woo or court.” Ḥāṭṭār, Speech, 530, n. 398.

39 Ḥāṭṭār, Speech, 112: 1227.

40 Ḥāṭṭār, Speech, 112: 1231.
the general tradition of describing the beloved found in ghazals.\textsuperscript{41} The shaikh remains in love with the girl despite his companions’ remonstrations, but as Ἁττάρ puts it, “The distracted lover, when does he obey?”\textsuperscript{42}

The Christian girl functions within an elaborate system of Persian Sufi symbolism; on the one hand she is indeed impious in the eyes of an exoteric, orthodox Muslim because she is a Christian, but Ἁττάρ’s poetry is not so simply logical. The prima facie illicit love that Sam’ān experiences is also described with these lines:

\begin{quote}
His love that night grew a hundred fold; 
Inevitably all at one fell swoop of self he was bereft, 
The heart from both the self and the world he tore. 
Dust on the head he smeared and to mourning took. 
Not one moment did he know sleep or calm: 
He was trembling with passion and in agony wailing.\textsuperscript{43}
\end{quote}

These lines recall directly the type of detachment from self-interest that Ἁττάρ and his hoopoe acknowledge as necessary for the divine pilgrimage to be successful; as we have seen love is one of the valleys pilgrims have to traverse. Sam’ān’s extreme devotion to the girl aligns him with what Franklin Lewis describes as “a Sufi amplification of the ‘udhri tradition of dying for love, dignified and affirmed by a hadith ascribed to the Prophet: […] ‘He who loves and remains chaste, and dies, dies a martyr.’”\textsuperscript{44} Sam’ān’s suffering then,

\textsuperscript{41} De Bruijn explains: “description of physical beauty is concentrated on the head. . . . . As far as the hair is concerned, its blackness, symbolising distancing and concealment, and the curls, which are the image of the devious ways of the Beloved, receive special attention.” de Bruijn, Persian Sufi Poetry, 67.

\textsuperscript{42} Ἁττάρ, \textit{Speech}, 113: 1239.

\textsuperscript{43} Ἁττάρ, \textit{Speech}, 113: 1243-45. Sam’ān has taken on the way of blame or become a malamat, one who no longer cares for a pristine spiritual reputation. On Sufism, malamati, and ShariʿA see Toussulis, Sufism, 71-89 and 165.

while on the one hand transgressive because directed at a religiously inappropriate love object, also allows Sam’ān to make spiritual progress that he has been incapable of within the confines of his respectable, exoteric, orthodox identity. The suffering necessary for spiritual progress in Ἁṭṭār has been well noted; Annemarie Schimmel, for example, writes that Ἁṭṭār is “the voice of pain, the voice of longing and searching.”45 Ἁṭṭār employs the concept of love-longing in Ἰάτητι as a way to communicate the desperation and desire of the pilgrim soul for union with God, and yet like the lover who desperately seeks his beloved’s approval, the lover of God must wait for God to announce his desire for his lover, so when the Christian girl receives Sam’ān’s advances with coldness and harsh demands, it is fitting, almost requisite given the spiritual nature of Ἁṭṭār’s work.46 One might also note that the beloved’s aloofness aligns this love language with the type to be expected in the chaste variants of European fin amor poetry.

Also connected to this profound and overwhelming love is the literary trope Jim Wafer has written about as the “vision complex,” which involves “nazar, or ‘gazing’—that is, looking with admiration at a beloved person.”47 Thus, the fixed gaze of Sam’ān upon his beloved

45 Schimmel, Mystical Dimensions, 305. Ali-Ashgar Seyed-Gohrab discusses the pain of the lover: “this suffering is a purgative, purifying the lover from all attachments so that only love can exist. Accepting suffering and deprivation is another way of describing the mystical stages of ḍoṭā (annihilation) and baqā (indwelling with the Beloved), during which the mystic lover diverts himself of everything that impedes his union with the Beloved.” Seyed-Gohrab, “The Erotic Spirit,” 113. In Sam’ān’s case, those things include his Islamic religious practice.

46 Stepien agrees, “only divine grace can allow access” to the divine. Stepien, “A Study in Sufi Poetics,” 106.

47 Wafer, “Vision and Passion,” 108. Schimmel writes that “To look at him [the beloved], to adore him from a distance, may induce the Sufi to truly religious ecstasy, and to contemplate his face is worship.” Schimmel, Mystical Dimensions, 291. Yaghoobi observes of gazing, Sam’ān, and his Christian lover: “It seems that each is the shāhid for the other,” that is, each is “the earthly manifestation of divine beauty in human form.” Yaghoobi, Subjectivity in Ἰάτητι, 137, 124. Lewisohn shares a similar perspective on shāhid-bāzī and nazar-bāzī: “The term shāhid means both ‘seer’ and ‘witness’, and as a technical term in Sufism, shāhid-bāzī (cavorting with the she/he who is a Witness) is the art of contemplation of the divine in the mundane-human, beholding the divine in the mirror of human beauty, the latter bearing ‘witness’ to the former, the shāhid thus becoming an ‘icon of beauty’ or ‘divine demonstration’, one who bears ‘witness’ to the presence of divine . . .” Lewisohn, “Prolegomenon to the Study of Ḥāfīẓ 2,” 43. For a discussion on the shāhid from Ritter, see Ritter, Ocean, 484-502.
is a common trope, and also an “apparently orthodox doctrine [that] has much in common with […] the notion that the visible world is a reflection of a supernatural reality, and that this relationship can be perceived particularly clearly in certain phenomena . . . .” That is, it is acceptable to gaze at a beautiful beloved because doing so elevates the soul of the person who gazes. Thus Sam’ān’s visual seduction by the Christian’s beauty is a seduction toward the celestial. Furthermore, the length of the blazon attempts to draw the reader in as well: we read Sam’ān’s spiritual progress, and Ἁṭṭār attempts to coax our own growth by offering us a direct gaze at the shāhid, or witness, of the Christian beloved.

There is a further layer of meaning in this part of Sam’ān’s story as well, connected to the beloved’s non-Islamic faith. Leonard Lewisohn has written an article on the hermeneutics of Ἁṭṭār’s poetic symbolism and marks a number of meanings for the Christian lover in Ἁṭṭār’s works: “the Christian child symbolizes ‘the higher idolatry of love,’ a universal sentiment in love-poetry throughout the world” and “is a theophanic icon reflecting the Sufi vision of divine tawhid” or union. Lewisohn also remarks, the “Christian child” symbol … signifies ‘a spiritual communication, …, an infusion … from the spiritual realm which overwhelms the hear[t], reason and

48 Wafer, “Vision and Passion,” 108. Also, according to Leonard Lewisohn, “the Sufi teaching that the lover contemplates the eternal forms of the celestial realm of the Spheres by the medium of human forms in the physical world.” Lewisohn, “Sufi Symbolism,” 292. Schimmel echoes the same idea: “The mystic who is completely absorbed in his love contemplates in the human beloved only the perfect manifestation of divine beauty” rather than the corporeal body of the beloved. Schimmel, Mystical Dimensions, 290. Schimmel also writes of Ἁṭṭār’s rough contemporary Rūzbihān Baqlī (1128-1209) that he “holds that the love of a human being is the ladder toward the love of the Merciful” and thereby “alludes to the classical Arabic saying that the metaphor is the bridge toward reality—hence, human love is generally called, in the Persian tradition, ‘ishq-i majāzī, ‘metaphorical love.’” Schimmel, Mystical Dimensions, 292.

49 Boylston has noted the tendency of Ἁṭṭār to draw his audience in: “‘‘ATH’AR’S versifications of perspectives . . . allows us to sympathize with each of them [the birds] for a moment, to realize how easy it is to make their mistakes.” Boylston, “Writing the Kaleidoscope,” 356. I would say not only can readers empathize with the bird-pilgrims, but they may very well identify their own flaws with a certain bird, and perhaps at the hoopoe’s words of support and challenge, the readers will begin their own journey. Boylston also suggests the structures of Ἁṭṭār’s lessons reinforce the reader’s investment: “The moral improvement of Ἁṭṭār’s characters occurs through perspective shift . . . . By inviting the reader into the conflicts between characters through narrative, Ἁṭṭār is thus inviting us to go through this perspective shift ourselves.” Boylston, “Writing the Kaleidoscope,” 263.

psyche of the mystic through divine grace and so totally occupies him that he is unconscious of all else, . . . .” He’s mystical poetry employs frustrated erotic desire as an allegory for the struggle of a pilgrim converting from exoteric to esoteric Islam. The allegory functions to underline a simplistic, straightforward statement about Sufi devotion; as Annemarie Schimmel explains “The reality that is the goal of the mystic, and is ineffable, cannot be understood or explained by any normal mode of perception; neither philosophy nor reason can reveal it. Only the wisdom of the heart, gnosia, may give insight into some of its aspects.” The disappointed erotic economic metaphor of the narrative mimics the perfect pilgrim-divine love economy wherein the pilgrim sacrifices all for access to the divine. Likewise, the knowledge Sam’ān gains through this experience cannot be construed through logic. Marking the Beloved as an object that is otherwise forbidden helps ‘Aṭṭār emphasize the gnosia of the experience. He’s positive description of Sam’ān’s


52 Schimmel, Mystical Dimensions, 4.

53 Lewisohn has an apt explication of the logic of using erotic imagery of the religious other: “the pilgrim of necessity must first become an idolater, caught up in an illusory play of images. On the imaginal level, these images point to a higher love and are bearers of a transcendent significance. Constellated for him [the Sufi pilgrim] in the heaven of his soul, such images act as icons appearing on the horizon of his spiritual journey while the veils are gradually lifted. This iconic symbolism is ‘theophanic’ because the form that bears witness […] to the divine hails from the spiritual realm where it necessarily appears, initially at least, through Christian symbols—as if only through the dream of Christianity can the pilgrim awake into the bright daylight of Islam. If the pilgrim falls in love in flesh with a Christian maiden, she at last reveals herself to be in soul a Muslim houri.” Lewisohn, “Sufi Symbolism,” 265. De Bruijn makes a similar point regarding the suffering of love reflected in Persian ghazals: “The plight of the true lover is full of paradoxes. Although love leads the soul on to the highest bliss imaginable, the road to be followed is a particularly rough one and leads through an abyss of self-denial and humiliation. The experience of love is often a very painful one. However, such pain should not be avoided but be welcomed as a sign of the beloved’s attention. Love is a way of gaining knowledge about the desired object; not by reason, but through a form of intuitive perception often designated as zaq (‘taste’). There is also a contradiction in moral sense. To be really in love amounts to focusing completely on the Beloved without any regard for one’s own well-being, even to the point of accepting annihilation through love. At this elevated stage of self-denial the common standards of moral and religious behavior have become irrelevant. Distinctions between good and bad, or belief and unbelief, are not binding any more on the lover. They refer to values tinged by expectations of reward and salvation that are concerned with the lover’s self-interest, and therefore point to aims other than the unconditional surrender to the Beloved’s sovereign will.” de Bruijn, Persian Sufi Poetry, 71-72. Nasr differs: “It is as if Attar wanted to state in the classical language of Sufi poetry that veritable ecumenism is essentially of an esoteric nature and that it is only through the esoteric that man is able to penetrate into the meaning of other formal universes.” Nasr, “Flight of the Birds,” 107.
love for the Christian girl is selfless and consuming: Sam’ān himself admits to his companions, “I’m quite careless of fame and notoriety.
/ I’ve smashed the glass of hypocrisy with a rock.” Sam’ān’s defense of his lovesickness to his friends encapsulates the paradox of his position. At first instance he is a man who has given over faith for heresy—indeed, he freely commits such when he agrees to the Christian girl’s demands that he “Worship an idol and burn the Koran, / Drink wine and sew up the eye of the Faith”—but this heresy is the beginning of the journey toward a deeper faith, a greater gnostic knowledge of the divine derived from complete obedience to the Beloved. Lewisohn states: “the poet contrasts the ‘infidelity’ of his erotic Sufi faith, where the Christian child is emblematic of the divine, to normative Islamic devotional piety, typified in the poem by the formalistic ascetic focused on the self.” Within the story of Sam’ān, however, the formalistic ascetic only...
achieves success when his prayers are not directed inwardly at his own success but outwardly toward others who need his help. The people in need of help in this narrative are at first Samʿān and then his Christian beloved.

Ultimately, the shaikh recovers from his spiritual peril; after his debate with his companions, they are initially unsuccessful in dissuading him from staying, and, disheartened, leave him as the Christian’s swineherd. Though Samʿān does not submit without protest, his heretical and blasphemous acts follow swiftly upon the Christian’s assertion that “‘Whoever is not of his beloved’s complexion, / His love is no more than tint and scent.’” The beloved here claims that if Samʿān truly loves her, he will not place strictures on his compliance to her demands; he will simply obey, i.e. adopt her will solely, indicated here through an adoption of the beloved’s complexion. She, like God, is a demanding figure—both require submission of the will of the one who seeks them. Samʿān’s abnegation of the self then is theologically necessary for spiritual progression, and his suffering for the beloved would be a mere pose if he were in fact to bear a complexion (i.e. will) distinct from hers.

Community in “The Story of Shaikh-i Samʿān”

There is, however, more to the Samʿān story than a metaphor for turning away from exoteric belief and delving into deeper Sufi truths. When Samʿān’s compatriots return to Mecca they must reveal the


58  Ritter emphasizes the power differential inherent in the soul-God love pair: “A spiritual bridegroom” is inconceivable in Islam. Rather, the legal relationship of man to God is always that of a slave to his master.” Ritter, *Ocean*, 534. Likewise, Stepien points out that self-annihilation or extinguishing the individual will is a central concept in ‘Aṭṭār, particularly for prophets who “have quelled their carnal nature, submitting it in perfect *islām* (submission) to the divine will, and thereby allowing it to embody nothing other than religious law.” Stepien, “A Study in Sufi Poetics,” 108.

59  Ghomshei describes Samʿān’s experiences in this manner: “the shaykh did ‘repent’ of his love passion, but his repentance was not so much a formal ‘turning back’ as a passage out of exoteric into esoteric Islam—a casting-off of the phantasy of conventional faith for the reality of true devotion. Shaykh Ṣanʿān, having passed through the crucible of erotic romantic passion, experienced a fresh conversion to religion based upon the principles of love. He was no longer the desiccated ascetic Sufi . . . .” Ghomshei, “The Principles,” 96. Lewisoohn writes extensively of this ascetic Sufi, or *zāhid*. See Lewisoohn, “The Religion of Love and Puritans of Islam,” 159-196.
news of his fate to a close friend who did not make the journey with him. The response that they get from Samʿān’s friend is swift and negative:

“‘O you unclean scoundrels,  
In loyalty neither men nor women.⁶⁰

Experienced friends are needed by the thousand.  
The friend only becomes useful in such a time as this.  
If you were comrades of your own Shaikh,  
Why did you not put comradeship into practice?  
May you be ashamed! Now was this comradeship?  
Was this repayment of dues and loyalty?”⁶¹

The final lines of the friend’s speech echo the reproach of the Christian girl when Samʿān initially refuses her requests that require him to break the precepts of his faith, that is, Samʿān’s followers are not true friends as they have not acted loyally, just as the Christian girl accuses Samʿān’s love of being without substance because he will initially only drink wine for her rather than meet her other three demands: “‘Love has its foundations in ill-repute! / Whoever shies away from this mystery is of the raw.’”⁶² Samʿān’s friend is deeply concerned with the devotion that Samʿān’s followers have to him.

⁶⁰ This gender reference may be a part of a denigration of the shaikh’s followers. Franklin Lewis writes, “Ἁττάρ frequently couches his discourse on religious affiliation in terms of emasculation—both in insults directed against characters for a misguided confessional adherence, or for a deficient measure of faith and religious devotion to their religious beliefs (whether in Islam or another tradition). … When Ἁττάρ wishes to chastise one of the male characters in a narrative (or, by extension, the reader) for spiritual lassitude or waywardness, his narrator will often unman and belittle him, labeling him as a non-man, a woman (zan), a sissy or a ‘fag’ (mukhannas).” Lewis, “Sexual Occidentation,” 694. Here the friend’s speech seems to deny either masculine or feminine identity to the group of followers, suggesting they are some sort of ungendered entity. For another discussion on gender among Sufis, see Margaret Malamud, “Gender and Spiritual Self-Fashioning: The Master-Disciple Relationship in Classical Sufism” Journal of the American Academy of Religion 64., no 1 (1996): 89-117.


⁶² Ἁττάρ, Speech, 133:1477. This quotation demonstrates that Samʿān’s repudiation of his faith is a radical, paradoxical act that ultimately turns him to a deeper faith. To clarify, the Beloved, as the friend, suggests Samʿān does not understand love because he is too afraid of ill-repute, which he should readily accept on account of love. His initial refusal indicates his inexperience or inferior spirituality, here conveyed by the word “raw.” Toussulis has noted in his discussion of malamatiyya that “those who most perfectly incurred blame” — here, Samʿān — “were those who relinquished outward appearances and focused instead on a path of relentless self-inquiry (muhasibi).” Toussulis, Ṣufism, 74.
Ἁṭṭār also declares in the section just before Sam’ān’s story that “Whoever’s footing in love is sure / Has passed beyond unbelief and Islam, too.” Indeed, the hoopoe urges the other birds to prepare themselves to move beyond exoteric belief in order to succeed on the pilgrimage:

“When you no longer have either this lack of faith or this being faithful,
This body of yours will have gone and this soul no longer be:
After this you will become the man for this business:
A man is needed for mysteries such as these.
Put your feet forward like men and be not afraid:
Go beyond belief and unbelief and be not afraid.
How long will you hesitate? Refrain from puerility.
Go forward like lion-hearts to the task.
Though a hundred impediments suddenly confront you,
Let there be no dread, because, on this road, they do.”

Thus, Sam’ān’s friend becomes a galvanizing force who rejects the spiritual lassitude and superficiality of Sam’ān’s companions; he rallies the group, and they journey to Sam’ān. En route the group engages in prayer and fasting in imitation of Sufi practice:

Bound for Rūm, they all moved out of Arabia.
Absorbed in private praying they became, day and night:

In this manner, until forty nights and days were accomplished,
Not a head was turned from the one position [i.e. of prayer].

All for forty nights had neither food nor sleep;
As with the nights, forty days, neither bread nor water.”

64 Ἁṭṭār, Speech, 108: 1181-1185. See note 60 above on gendered references in relation to spiritual fortitude necessary for the growth of the soul’s gnosis.
65 See Avery, Speech, 490, note 155, for a discussion thereof.
66 Ἁṭṭār, Speech, 135: 1493, 1495-1496. Kermani indicates the significance of forty: “In Sufism the number forty stands for endurance, patience and submission in suffering until fulfilment approaches; one could also think of Israel’s forty-day trek through the desert, the forty days Moses spent on Mount Sinai, or the forty-day period of fasting in Christianity.” Kermani, Terror of God, 36.
Boylston recapitulates modern Iranian scholar’s, Taqī Pūṁāmdāriyān’s, observation that the frame tales in ‘Aṭṭār’s works can only progress on a journey “if and only if the characters of that story share a single goal.” 67 Boylston makes this observation in relation to the stalled progress of the birds’ journey, but it applies equally to the ending of Sam’ān’s sub-tale where spiritual development occurs only when the shaikh’s followers unite under the shaikh’s friend, return to him, trust him and his desire to help the Christian girl, and then move on together, as a unified group. This again reinforces the communal nature of the path for ‘Aṭṭār.

In return for all this new devotion, the new leader of the group receives a vision of the Prophet as well as word that the Prophet has “for intercession’s sake, a nocturnal dew / Sprinkled broadcast over his [Sam’ān’s] diurnal condition,” which confirms that “a hundred worlds of sin / By the spittle of one act of repentance are cleared from the Path.” 68 The group hurries the remaining way to find the shaikh who is ashamed and overwhelmed with his blasphemy. The group comforts him and leads him back to Mecca. To recognize the fullness of Sam’ān’s story, one must see that the sub-tale is about locating a deeper, esoteric faith and about community and serving others. 69

There are three elements of the story that must be emphasized to reveal the full communal and transformative nature of Sam’ān’s experiences. First, Sam’ān’s true faith cannot be recovered without the intervention and assistance of his religious companions; they cannot recall him to his spiritual senses without the help of the Prophet, but Sam’ān is shown as a member of a religious community,

67 Boylston, “Writing the Kaleidoscope,” 357.
69 Yaghoobi addresses this episode in Sam’ān’s story as an example of master-disciple subversion, which is not a reading I disagree with, but I have chosen to emphasize the communal aspect of the episode instead. Yaghoobi, Subjectivity in Ἁṭṭār, 145. Boylston makes the point that “the Way is traversed by a community, and that each of the individuals within that community possesses specific character traits and thus specific weaknesses of character to surmount.” Boylston, “Writing the Kaleidoscope,” 354.
that finally transcends its own exoteric restrictions by praying selflessly for its members regardless of their spiritual state. Samʿān’s friends and companions have nothing to gain personally by assisting him, but that they do so redeems exoteric Islamic practice within the realm of this narrative; this is necessary in order for Samʿān’s reconversion to Islam to be productive and spiritually progressive. This transformation demonstrates that Ἁττār is able to use the erotic economies to stir up questions about traditional exoteric practice, just as poets such as Geoffrey Chaucer may have used the language of religious devotion in love poetry in order to problematize erotic love. The second element that needs emphasis here is that the friends require divine aid in recovering their friend’s appropriate devotion, which again underlines the Sufi principle of constant seeking and surrender of control to the divine. As Lucian Stone writes, “One does not find God, according to Attar, one prepares oneself to be found by God.”70 For Ἁττār, union with God is both something to be sought after and something that one can only receive.71

The third element of Samʿān’s story to reveal the full importance of the community is the fate of the Christian beloved.72 Samʿān’s former temptress is driven to follow him into the desert, after she experiences divine intervention; a voice advises her to follow the Shaikh into the desert where she becomes lost, repents, and begs


71 Toussulis reports this as “one should not imagine that they [mystical stations and attainments] can be acquired or appropriated through self-will alone. It is an axiom among all Sufis that while striving is necessary, all attainments are gifts of God and come by grace.” Toussulis, Sufism, 173. See also Ritter, Ocean, 568.

72 Others discuss the Christian’s conversion as well. Yaghoobi follows Keshavarz’s close reading of the meta-sign of the sun in this sub-tale. Both authors note that the sun and its light recur when there is a moment of spiritual change for Samʿān, for the leader of his followers that helps Samʿān, and for the Christian. Yaghoobi, Subjectivity in Ἁττār, 134-135. Keshavarz, “Flight of the Birds,” 122-124. Yaghoobi closes her discussion of this imagery by saying “This metaphorical sun representing ‘the face of the other’ is what opens up possibilities for new human experiences for the shaykh, the experiences of acceptance, growth, and transcendence.” Yaghoobi, Subjectivity in Ἁττār, 135. Another response to the sub-tale’s conclusion belongs to Franklin Lewis: “Because the love he [Samʿān] showed the Christian girl had been true, it works upon her with transformative power. . . .” Lewis, “Sexual Occidentation,” 699.
forgiveness. Sam‘ān receives insight about her situation miraculously, and though he must at first convince his companions that he is not rescinding his newest conversion, they agree to help him locate her in the desert; he and they function as a united, communal entity. The Christian beloved becomes the seeking lover in the newly inverted erotic economy of the narrative. The bedraggled beloved is found on the cusp of death, no longer beautiful. She converts to Islam with Sam‘ān’s help, but dies almost immediately:

At the end of the matter, that idol [i.e. the Christian],
when she found the Way,
Of the taste for piety’s sweetness in the heart she found
herself aware.

Her heart from taste for the faith impatient became:
The yearning [i.e. for the divine] encased her that knows
no palliative.

She cried, “O Shaikh, my endurance has run out:
No more can I bear the separation [from the divine];
I am leaving this pain-wracked mansion.
Farewell, O Shaikh! Farewell to the world!”

At the conclusion of this speech, the Christian Beloved-turned-Lover dies, and we are told that “She had been a drop in this sea of fantasy [i.e. the material world]; / She went back to the sea of Reality [i.e. the divine].” These quotations demonstrate the erotic economy’s transformation yet again. In the Beloved-turned-Lover’s conversion speech, she abandons Sam‘ān as the object of her desire, taking up the divine as her beloved. In effect, she dies of love-longing for the divine. Ἁττάρ has taken a seemingly shocking and transgressive erotic metaphor and employed it to achieve spiritual growth and progress for both main characters of the sub-tale, but again, to insist on the communal and mutual nature of this spiritual growth, we should remember that Sam‘ān’s followers also grow spiritually and as a community given Sam‘ān’s relationship with the Christian girl.

73 Ἁττάρ, Speech, 142: 1581-1584. At this point the Christian has spiritually surpassed Sam‘ān, having died in pursuit of Allah. Ritter notes that “Ἁττάρ has a certain preference for stories like this in which infidels, sinners and members of despised professions appear as a standard and model for believers.” Likewise it becomes clear that “death has lost its horrors for the mystics of love [i.e., the former Christian girl]. Indeed, fear of death is replaced by longing for death and joy at time of dying.” Ritter, Ocean, 551, 552.

74 Ἁττάρ, Speech, 143: 1588.
Finally, I would add one more layer to the spiritual growth instigated by this sub-tale, which I have already suggested above when saying that the reader is invited, along with Samʿān, to sip the beauty of the Christian girl. Samʿān’s followers and ‘Aṭṭār’s audience are also called to undertake their own journey. This interpretation makes all the more sense when we couple with it the location of the tale within the whole work: it is the final tale the hoopoe presents to his fellow pilgrim-birds before they elect him their official leader for the pilgrimage. Samʿān’s story is a powerful tale calling the birds to their path, and likewise, as Keshavarz notes, “This is an evolution with no end, an evolution which begins in the text and which expands with the capacity of the individual reader defined by personal and historical conditions.”

Keshavarz’s perspective importantly recognizes ‘Aṭṭār’s didacticism while also recognizing the intensely personal reactions that readers may have to the text: “the journey to Mount Qāf is not to uncover an existing treasure but, rather, to locate the treasure house of ‘becoming’ where the Simurgh of a recreated self may be, step-by-step, ‘imagined’ into reality.” ‘Aṭṭār’s project is not mere spiritual direction; it is a poetic invitation, perhaps summons, to all who read it to begin their own pilgrimage.

The Christian’s conversion moreover marks a fuller and deeper understanding of exoteric expressions of Islamic faith by Samʿān.


77 That is, despite the ecumenical aspects of Sufism, it is shaped and guided by Islam and its rules. Toussulis, for example, identifies, albeit from a modern perspective, a “fourfold schema” of development that Sufis follow. The first of these steps for the religious pilgrim, or would-be Sufi, is “Shari’a, a phase of character refinement in which the aspirant’s aptitude to conform to the ethical teachings contained in the Qur’an is tested.” Toussulis, Sufism, 165. This is the state that Samʿān initially occupies prior to his journey to Rūm; it is his ecstatic experiences of love that allow his spiritual progression, and finally the interference of the divine directly that allows him to recuperate his adherence to exoteric Islamic values. Toussulis describes more of the Sufi practice as well, see 165-200. Ritter describes a parallel set of four values derived from ‘Aṭṭār directly: “In the first layer [of Islamic piety] the goal of life and striving appears to be acceptance in an orthodox sense into the mercy of a personal God, a Master who forgives the defective achievements and sins of His creatures and slaves, and accepts them into His Paradise after this earthly vale of tears.” Ritter, Ocean, 655. Kermani also describes ‘Aṭṭār’s attitude toward law: “‘Aṭṭār emphasizes the responsibility of the individual to experience the reality of the Creator independently, and to follow His commandments in accordance with one’s own volition, not blindly.” Kermani, Terror of God, 62.
His deep love for the Christian is transformative, of her and of him, just as the companions’ deep love for him changes them. Like the companions who sought for his spiritual aid selflessly, Sam’ān, despite having returned to the road of truth, demonstrates that his prior selflessness and obedience that he manifested in his destitute state as lover are still present. Like his companions, he provides spiritual succor to the Christian. This conclusion is not simply a reversal of roles—the readers witnessed such already in the radical transformation of a powerful leader into a slave for a heathen—but rather the required ending for a story that is meant to be about spiritual progress. In the epilogue to the “Story of Shaikh-i Sam’ān” Ἁττār reminds us of the importance of relinquishing the Self with these lines:

The carnal spirit is unable to hear these mysteries;
It lacks what it takes to be able to hook this particular ball.

This intuitive certainty through faith must be heard by the heart and soul;
Not by the spirit compounded of water and clay should it be heard.78

The repeated alterations of the identities of lover/beloved in the sub-tale mark the community and selflessness necessary for spiritual growth.

Erotic desire and the language of love in this narrative reflect complex truths about the spiritual lives and faith of the characters. Superficially, we have a story of a shaikh who is willing to give up all his spiritual status to gain access to his Christian Beloved, which leaves him destitute and powerless until his friends intervene on his behalf and return him to the proper spiritual path with divine aid. The Christian Beloved inversely experiences conversion and death-union. Yet as I have shown, Ἁττār is not so simple. As Lewisohn expresses, “Ἀττār speaks here in a language beyond language, a language comprehensible not through the faculty of reason but intuited by the

78 Ἁττār, Speech, 143: 1592-1593.
**The Princess and the Beautiful Slave-Boy**

“The Princess and the Beautiful Slave-Boy” occurs within the section of the *Mantiq’ut* identified as the Valley of Amazement, or *hayrat*, the sixth stage of movement toward the divine, which places the narrative closer to the end of the poem. As a result, eroticism in this sub-tale becomes a metaphor for the bewildering effects of temporary unity with the divine (*tawhid*), a later station in the pilgrimage. The tale involves a beautiful princess who desires a young male slave who is her equal in beauty. Her solution to this forbidden love is to involve her female companions who drug and smuggle him into her chambers. There, the slave is unconscious until nightfall when he and the princess gaze at one another, kiss, caress, drink, eat, and sleep. He is returned to his quarters during his post-encounter slumber. The princess reveals none of this to anyone but the girls who help her, and the slave is left to puzzle over his experience, one he describes as extremely pleasant and


80 Yaghoobi says even more regarding the importance of love in Ἅṭṭār’s work: “He saw love in all creatures as emanations of divine love. . . . God’s motivation for creating the world and the people in it was love. . . . The entire universe is in love with God and seeks its origin in him.” Yaghoobi, *Subjectivity in Ἅṭṭār*, 28. A less optimistic view of Ἅṭṭār’s perspective on God and humanity can be found in Kermani’s analysis of the less-examined work, *The Book of Suffering*. Kermani, *Terror of God*. Stepien too connects hierarchy, form, and cosmological patterns to Ἅṭṭār’s poetry in “A Study in Sufi Poetics” rather than placing the emotional category of love as centrally important.

81 I avoid discussing this encounter as intercourse as the text is quite unclear. This sub-tale is one in which the deeply readable Darbandi and Davis translation must be compared with Avery’s, which maintains the ambiguous character of the eroticism, while Darbandi and Davis present a fully sensual, sexual encounter. Avery’s more ambiguous translation preserves the spiritual concerns of the princess discussed below while still including sexual innuendo such as the imagery of the male slave as an erect tree. Wolpé’s translation likewise maintains ambiguity about sexual consummation, but it does not preserve the religious language encoded in Avery’s translation as clearly.
which he longs to relive, but that he cannot be certain was real. The bewilderment (hayrat) of the slave mirrors that of the individual soul in the Valley of Amazement; it represents the difficulty and impossibility of understanding contact with the divine rationally. Being swept up in erotic experience and desire, for Ἀṭṭάρ, becomes a metaphor for the confusion and intensity of desire that one must have for the divine if one is to follow the Way, or tariqah. Like Samʿān’s friends who must wait for divine intervention before successfully helping him, the same power differential between the divine and the seeker of the divine is recapitulated between the slave and the princess; she has marked out and chosen the slave for this special gift as the divine chooses those to whom it reveals itself. Likewise, as in Samʿān’s tale, there is a group or communal effort required to help the princess and the slave achieve their spiritual growth. The communal nature of the journey is less overt in this sub-tale, perhaps because the emphasis is on the emotional strain of the pilgrim soul, presented at the end of this sub-tale by the slave. Hayrat, that is, so overwhelms the pilgrim and the narrative tone that all appears uncertain, even the place of community within the narrative. That said, community remains essential to the sub-tale.

Community in “The Princess and the Beautiful Slave-Boy”

One clear indication of the importance of community to spiritual progress is Ἀṭṭάρ’s return to the blazon of the beloved and the project of nazar or gazing. The story opens with eleven verses of taghazzul dedicated to the princess herself. Immediately that blazon closes with an insistent claim by the poet that the princess, like Samʿān’s Christian beloved, ensnares all who see her:

Whoever would steal a glance at her dimpled chin,
Would fall headfirst into the well’s depths.

Whoever fell a prey to her moon-like face,
Would fall into her pit at once, with no rope to catch him.82

82 Ἀṭṭάρ, Speech, 342: 3823-3824. On the significance of this well imagery that connects to the Joseph, son of Jacob, narrative, El-Rouayheb clarifies, “In the Islamic tradition, Joseph (Yūsuf) was proverbially handsome. A saying attributed to the Prophet Muhammad even stated that ‘Joseph has been given the moiety (sharṭ) of beauty,’ in the sense that his beauty equaled—or according to other accounts exceeded—the sum of the beauty of all other people.” El-Rouayheb, Before Homosexuality, 66-67.
In this visually oriented pair of verses Ἁττār offers the princess as the shāhid, the object of nazar, to prompt the reader, to plunge headlong into desire for God. Reflective of the Valley of Amazement, however, this sub-tale’s object of nazar is not stable.

Our poetic vision suddenly shifts from the princess to the slave, “like the moon,” a description that is identical to an earlier one of the princess. Like the unstable object of the gaze, the parallel description of both objects adds to the dizzying confusion characteristic of the Valley of Amazement. The slave-shāhid merits only four verses of blazon, but even this length is significant given the relatively abridged length of this particular sub-tale.

The change in the gaze’s object is then complicated. Readers are provided a double object of nazar, namely: the princess looking at and reacting to the slave, the single object of her gaze

Her heart was lost and into grievous distress she fell.
Her reason outside the veil fell.
Reason departed and love gained power over her.
Her Shirīn-spirit in bitterness into agitation was tossed.
For a time she kept her thoughts to herself.
In the end she made the state of trepidation her practice.
She was melting with desire and at the separation burning,
In the melting and the burning, the heart full of craving.

This moment recapitulates Samʿān’s experience of desire, but there is a different communal role present here that suggests the Sufi communal rituals of samā’, described by J.T.P. de Bruijn as “a complex of artistic forms practised by the Sufis . . . : it comprises music, dance and the recitation of poetry. Their integration into Sufi practice was undoubtedly problematic, as they were derived from the kind of secular conviviality which was most objectionable to Islamic

83 Ἁττār, Speech, 341: 3814 and 342: 3825.
84 It spans verses 3814-3892.
85 Ἁττār, Speech, 343: 3830-3833.
De Bruijn notes further that “According to Muḥammad Ghazālī [c. 1058-1111], the aesthetic enjoyment of music and song could be helpful to kindle the innate ‘fire’ which God had hidden in the human heart,” but also acknowledges Ghazālī’s perspective was not universally accepted by all Sufis, let alone orthodox Muslims. 87 Samā’ apparently needed careful regulation and ought not be undertaken by Sufi initiates, orthodox stipulations that ‘Aṭṭār arguably violates in this sub-tale.

The practice of samā’ alluded to in “The Princess and the Beautiful Slave-Boy” derives from the girls in the princess’s community who are described in two full verses that invoke the Sufi ritual:

She had ten minstrel maidens,
In singing, of exceedingly lofty attainment,

All instrumentalists, nightingale-singing,
Their Davidian melodies soul enlarging. 88

These lines establish the women are instrumental to the achievement of the princess’s desires, her co-conspirators. It is their actions alone that make possible the moment of tawhid encapsulated in the narrative’s eroticism. The connection to samā’ intensifies later in the tale when we are told that part of the encounter’s ecstatic and sensual quality is provided by the musicians: “Those idols [the musicians] in unison harmonies intoned, / Reason to the soul bidding farewell, and the soul to the body.” 89 We read also of the musicians from the


87 De Bruijn, Persian Sufi Poetry, 69.

88 Ἀττάρ, Speech, 343: 3834-3835. The singers are instrumental to the spiritual growth of the princess and the slave as “Tradition . . . has it that the entire journey of Sufism is ‘in, by, and through Allah,’ but this is merely conjectural until it is directly apprehended or remembered. Ecstasy is a taste (dhawq) of this remembrance, and it can include a cathartic, although transitory, reunion with the lost Beloved.” Toussulis, Sufism, 168. As we will see, music and entertainment are central to the religious experiment of this sub-tale. Additionally, Lewisohn connects the arts more directly to divine contemplation: “while the shāhid is both ‘an interior spiritual reality’ through which the mystic experiences intimacy with the Divine, the reflection of that ‘reality’ can also become manifest in any mundane phenomenon, be it a person, song, verse of poetry or meditative mood.” Lewisohn, “Prolegomenon to the Study of Ḥāfīz 2,” 46.

89 Ἀττάρ, Speech, 345: 3856.
slave’s perspective: “His eyes on the cheeks of the heart-holder [the princess] he kept; / His ears to the sound of the pipes he held.” This quotation illustrates haryat again through the blending of both the princess and the musicians in an ecstatic synesthesia that intensifies the sense of spiritual community between the blending women. Further, the importance of the musicians is also reflected in an idea that Ritter expresses regarding Allah: “God reveals Himself to His prophets through acts of hearing, not through visions.” Thus, for the slave his shāhid, or the visual sign of God’s created beauty, blends God’s aural sign expressed in samā’.

Aside from this description that aligns the female companions with a group of Sufis who would enact samā’ together, there is more that associates them with the princess as a community of believers or seekers. Unlike Sam’ān’s followers who question, berate, and abandon him, the musicians show themselves to be faithful spiritual companions. The princess’s first action in the poem after being overwhelmed by her desire is to confess to her companions: “Her state to them she straight away told: / She cast fame and modesty, and the soul, too, away.” The community of the princess is apparently so tightly knit that her outré and forbidden desire is not debated or upbraided. Instead her confession and justification are contained in the same verse. Like Sam’ān, the princess chooses the way of blame, at least she risks it within her spiritual community when she “casts fame and modesty, and the soul, too, away.” The musicians’ acceptance of and assistance with the princess’s transgressive plans indicate that this spiritual community, more so than Sam’ān’s, can recognize the transcendent, spiritual enhancement possible through the commission of transgressive acts. Noteworthy too is the community’s unity of response to the princess: “When the sweet-

90 Ḥaṭṭār, Speech, 345: 3861.
91 Ritter, Ocean, 453.
92 Ḥaṭṭār, Speech, 343: 3836.
93 Ḥaṭṭār, Speech, 343: 3836.
voiced heard this matter, / They all said to her” that they would help. Thus, the women form one spiritual community.

Other suggestions of community derive from language in the sub-tale. First, the princess, not knowing the slave, fears a confession of love may impede his own spiritual journey: “‘If to the boy I tell my love, / Because he is not mature, he might into error fall.” Further the princess states that if she is not able to experience intimacy with her shāhid, “Behind the veil I would die piteously of frustration.” Ἁṭṭār employs images of the veil throughout Mantiqu’t to indicate the separation between the human and divine. This language, particularly that involving the veil, illustrates the slave is the princess’s shāhid, that a glimpse of the Real or the divine is accessible to her only through nazar that takes the slave as its object.

94 Ἁṭṭār, Speech, 344: 3844. My emphasis.

95 Ἁṭṭār, Speech, 343: 3838. Admittedly this spiritual concern is undercut somewhat by the next verse: “My own status also would be ruinously impaired; / When might to a slave anyone like me stoop?” Ἁṭṭār, Speech, 344: 3839. The second verse suggests a certain inconsistency, however, could be understood in light of gendered cultural norms surrounding women and the protection of their faces from the gazes of men. El-Rouayheb explains, “The visual appreciation (istiḥsān) of a ‘foreign’ woman (i.e., a woman who was neither a close relative nor a wife or concubine) was also legally out of bounds. There was broad agreement among the jurists of the period that a man was not allowed to look at a woman who was not his wife, concubine, or close relative, except for specific purposes such as witnessing in a legal case, medical treatment, or teaching. In fact, the jurists of the period tended to agree that young women especially should veil their faces in public, precisely to prevent men from contravening this very principle.” El-Rouayheb, Before Homosexuality, 111-112. See also on women and public space, Andrews and Kalpakli, Age of Beloveds, 32-58.

96 Ἁṭṭār, Speech, 344: 3840.

97 Ian Richard Netton writes “there can be a barrier between the Creator and his creation . . . articulated traditionally, through the imagery of the ‘veil’ and ‘veiling’. . . . It is revelation that raises such veils, even though there may still be some veiling of God’s deepest secrets after revelation.” Netton, Islam, 78. Further Netton notes, explicitly in relation to Ἁṭṭār, that sirr is one Arabic word for ‘veil’ that “has connotations of ‘screening,’ ‘draping,’ or ‘curtaining’ and perhaps asks us to envisage a chamber in which the human lover of God is separated from his or her Divine beloved by a full curtain . . . .” Netton, Islam, 82. Netton also suggests another word for ‘veil,’ which he does not ascribe to Ἁṭṭār, but which is nonetheless relevant given this particular tale. The word is ijb and it “embraces some of the above meanings of sirr” but “has a primary significance of ‘woman’s veil’” Netton, Islam, 82. Given the Persian practice of the veiling of young women, a cultural norm the princess actively violates, both words are relevant when the princess bemoans her separation from her would-be lover by a veil if she is not able to see him secretly.
This ambiguous spiritual language blurs the boundaries of the erotic and the spiritual. As Ἁṭṭār alters perspectives within this narrative, he also creates a topsy-turvy erotic pursuit of the God/earthly lover, again driving home the sense of haryat for readers who cannot reduce these aporia or move beyond a state of agnosia.98

This narrative structure inverts normal power structures, not unlike in Samʾān’s narrative wherein a powerful shaikh is subdued by a beautiful non-believer. Here the princess, powerful within her own social class and society, is overwhelmed by her desire for a mere slave. As certain as this perspective of power structures is, Ἁṭṭār, again illustrating the principle of hayrat, alters it. The last of the princess-as-seeker is her statement that she wants her “share” of the “erect cypress.”99 After verse 3843 the first-person speech of the princess ends, and a third-person account of the drugging and delivery of the slave to the princess by her musical, spiritual companions appears.100

Verses 3853 through 3870 detail the couple’s evening. Despite the lack of an “I,” the subject of the gaze becomes the slave and the princess is reduced to its object: “The boy had become lost in the cheeks of the princess.”101 This shift reifies the communal nature

98 El-Rouayheb highlights the interpenetration of the erotic and spiritual in the context of veils and gazing: “Phenomenal beauty is simultaneously a delusory veil and a divine revelation. The uninitiated mistakenly take it for an attribute of a particular, independently existing entity; the trained mystic sees it as a manifestation of the infinite beauty of God.” El-Rouayheb, Before Homosexuality, 96.

99 Ἁṭṭār, Speech, 344: 3842. The Encyclopedia Iranica’s entry on “cypress” indicates that the tree “is often mentioned in classical Persian poetry . . . and occurs in a variety of metaphors . . . referring to the figure and stately gait of the beloved.” Hūšang, “Cypress.” Additionally, de Brujin notes the same in Persian Sufi Poetry, 62-63.

100 This brief presentation of a woman’s desires is atypical because while “Poets could . . . mention the eulogized male youth’s attractiveness to women,” yet “their tastes were not articulated in the belle-lettres of the period.” El-Rouayheb, Before Homosexuality, 66, 71. Andrews and Kalpakli also note that “erotic poems will, for the most part, be addressed by men to young men—only occasionally my men to women or women to men, . . . .” Andrews and Kalpakli, Age of Beloveds, 39. This perhaps offers another sense of the transgressive in Ἁṭṭār, though a transgression that is ultimately tamed by the transferal of the first-person speech to a masculine “I” at the close of the tale.

101 Ἁṭṭār, Speech, 345: 3858.
of spiritual growth in *Manṭiqu’ṭ;* the spiritual pilgrimage of the princess, achieved only with the aid of her spiritual community and musical companions, instigates the initiation of the slave to *tawhid* and the journey back to the divine.\(^\text{102}\) While it is the *tawhid* the slave experiences rather than that of the princess that ‘Aṭṭār paints for the reader, the princess is not completely inactive. She gives him wine and food, but also:

> All the time that girl like a picture,  
> Was sprinkling on his face a hundred thousand tears.  
> Sometimes on his lips she’d confer kisses like sugar,  
> Sometimes she’d salt the kisses [i.e. with tears] adventurously.  
> Sometimes she would ruffle his unruly curls,  
> Sometimes he’d be lost in those two bewitching eyes.\(^\text{103}\)

This passage marks the princess’s movement from lover-seeker and beholder of the *shāhid* to beloved-sought object and *shāhid.* She is engaged in some actions in this passage but is also transformed into a mere image, and ultimately in the last half-line of the quote, she recedes from subjectivity to become the simultaneously consuming-consumed object of the gaze.

From this point, the slave moves from spiritual initiate described in third person to a first-person reporter on his experiences. Verses 3877 through the end of the tale report his first-person speech directed to a third party who wants him to explain his confusion and paradoxical speech. Yet the slave’s paradoxical speech is much like the meaning event that Michael Sells describes as stemming from apophatic writing, or writing that he says is actually an “un-saying” or “speaking away.”\(^\text{104}\) The slave is unable to articulate the erotic

\(^{102}\) I come to the recollection of the divine shortly as we move to a different portion of the sub-tale wherein the slave assumes the first-person speech that the princess was given at the start of the story. One also ought to recall the instructive nature of love: “the madhhab-i ‘ishq’ can be seen as “a register or type of knowing; the experience of love is a learning experience (or an experience of learning) that teaches the lover how to identify value (i.e., what is valuable) and to constitute the human being—both as individual and as society—accordingly, in terms of those values.” Ahmed, *What is Islam?*, 42.


\(^{104}\) Sells, *Mystical Languages*, 2-3.
experience of *tawhid*, which leaves him cast out from the divine and desiring it yet again, like an unsated lover. Indeed, his experience with the princess seems to have helped him achieve a certain amount of *dhikr*, or “remembrance of God.”

Yannis Toussulis connects such remembrance of God not with eroticism but with love, which can arguably be seen as interpenetrating. Toussulis writes, “The core of Sufism, then, is to discover one’s nonexistence in the face of something more convincingly real. And this conviction can only be found through ‘tasting’ (*dhawq*) and not through derivative knowledge of any kind.”

In this instance, the princess and her musical companions have not only fulfilled their own spiritual-erotic desires, but have provided the slave with his own experience of *dhawq*; the princess and her community spread the longing for God from their community to a new convert, the slave, just as Sam’ān’s obsession with the Christian ultimately converts her, and just as Ḥaṭṭār’s cyclical retellings of seekers’ journeys aim at recruiting his audience to a pilgrimage as well. Readers cannot assess the spiritual outcome of the *samā’* ritual for the princess; there is no more of her in the tale. However, it is clear she has rekindled for the slave a remembrance of the divine, but not one he can fully appreciate or understand yet:

> Since I do not know, what more than this can I say,  
> Although before this have I seen her?  
>  
> I, since I have seen or have not seen her,  
> Am perplexed between this and that.”

We can turn to Toussulis to further elucidate these lines from the slave:

105 Toussulis, *Sufism*, 239.


107 Ḥaṭṭār, *Speech*, 348: 3891-3892. Here his uncertain vision of the princess suggests *dhikr*. 
To love is not to have an excessive desire for someone; it is a by-product of a deeper ‘remembrance of the heart’ (dhikr al-qalb). This remembrance is something that re-members fragmented human beings by reconnecting them to their source; and the source of one’s being, according to Rumi, can only be found in ‘the desert of Non-Existence.’

To ‘non-exist’ is to love. Sufis welcome this death or annihilation (fana), but only when their consciousness has been sufficiently purified through dedicated practice: meditation, contemplation, and spiritual companionship.108

Neither the princess nor the slave of the sub-tale are purified, unlike the Christian in Sam’ān’s tale, so death plays no role here. However, the princess extends her spiritual community, at least temporarily, and the extension prompts the spiritual growth of the slave, who becomes the new “I” of seeking in the narrative. It takes exposure to the paradise of the princess’s chamber to help the slave achieve dhikr, to remember God.

The uncertainty of the identity of the subject-position in this narrative also affects the power differentials between the characters in the tale, which in turn reflects the sub-tale’s location in the overall tariqah. The Valley of Amazement follows on the heels of the Valley of Oneness—where “many are one, in One forever; / [and where] That one in One will be unity complete.”109 The movement into the Valley of Amazement comes only after the previous stage of the tariqah has dissolved all boundaries, and Ἁṭṭār writes that in the Valley of Amazement “Of whomsoever Oneness has imprinted the seal on the soul, / He becomes entirely lost, and lost to himself as well.”110 Ἁṭṭār voices the reaction of the pilgrim to this valley thusly:

…”I simply do not know anything at all,
And that I know not, nor do I know myself.
I am in love, but I do not know with whom I am.
I am neither Muslim nor unbeliever, so what am I?

108 Toussulis, Sufism, 7.
109 Ἁṭṭār, Speech, 331: 3697.
110 Ἁṭṭār, Speech, 341: 3807.
But of my loving I have no knowledge;
I have both a heart full of love, also, empty.”

These lines, which Ἁṭṭār includes as part of the frame narrative, directly precede “The Princess and the Beautiful Slave-Boy.” At the conclusion of the narrative, the slave himself echoes similar uncertainty. He reflects on his experience:

“No state has been more weird than this in the world;
A state neither manifest nor hidden.

Not a moment is she effaced from the soul,
Nor of her do I find the slightest trace.

I have beheld the possessor of a beauty from the Perfect.
No person in any state has possessed it.”

Both the slave’s words and Ἁṭṭār’s description of the Valley of Amazement suggest that the movement toward Allah or the divine is not a movement that consistently yields greater happiness for the pilgrim. The journey is difficult; progress is neither continuous nor linear. Ἁṭṭār employs the concept of love-longing in Manṭiqu’ṭ ṭawḥid as a way to communicate the desperation and desire of the pilgrim soul for union with God, and yet like the lover who desperately seeks his beloved’s approval, the lover of God must wait for God to announce his desire for his lover. The slave’s bewilderment at the end of the sub-tale reflects the feelings of a soul that has glimpsed the divine, even experienced temporary ecstatic, apophatic—here configured erotically—union with the divine, but the soul cannot understand its continued existence in the material world after this unsustained union. In this way, “The Princess and the Beautiful Slave-Boy” ultimately demonstrates not just hayrat or blessed bewilderment, but the movement to that stage from that of union or ṭawḥid. This sub-tale presents a fairly straightforward set of images initially, but these are repeatedly inverted and revised, Sells might say unsaid, over the course of the tale, marking the tale’s direct manifestation of haryat.

111 Ἁṭṭār, Speech, 341: 3811-3813.
112 Ἁṭṭār, Speech, 348: 3887-3889.
The Vazir’s Beautiful Son

“The Vazir’s Beautiful Son,” is akin to Sam’ān’s story in terms of the complexity of its symbols and metaphors.113 I begin this discussion with some framing comments from Lucian Stone: first, Ἁττάρ “allow[s] for God to show Himself contrary to rationalist metaphysics which errs in attempting to show (or ‘prove’) God” and, second, that Ἁττάρ “deplores the rational-philosophical approach,” to God.114 These concepts help account for Ἁττάρ’s simultaneous presentation and obfuscation of divine-human union in this sub-tale from the Manṭiq ʿt.

As with the Princess sub-tale, we first need to discuss this tale’s structure. A king is introduced, and his vazir has a lovely son, who is given a detailed blazon much like the blazon of the princess, the slave, and the Christian beloved in the other sub-tales; the princess and the vazir’s son both, for example, have eyebrows that are like bows, ready to shoot arrows at those who gaze upon them.115 The intensity of the king’s admiration and love for the boy, drives him to keep the boy with him constantly. When a beautiful girl enters the king’s court, the boy is infatuated and sneaks away from the drunken king to see her. He is discovered, upbraided as unfaithful, and sentenced to death. The vazir intervenes with the guards by bribing them to flay and hang upside down a criminal who has already been sentenced to death; the replacement criminal’s body placates a still-angry king the next morning. However, as time wears on, the king’s anger turns to sorrow and regret, and he realizes that wine affected his judgment. After forty days of longing for the lost boy, he has a dream vision wherein the bloody corpse of the boy (who is in fact fine and has been hidden away by his father), appears to him and upbraids him in a dream, recalling the earlier verbal assault of the king upon the boy. The dream overwhelms the king who has

113 Shackle notes that this sub-tale is “second only to the Tale of Shaykh Ṣan’ān in length and complexity.” Shackle, “Representations,” 167.


115 Ἁττάρ, Speech, 342: 3817-3818 and 384: 4307. Again, as in Sam’ān’s tale, the beauty of the beloved acts as a shāhid, or echo of divine beauty.
become emaciated “Like a hair wisp” during his mourning, and he swoons. Such fainting in Samʿān’s story prefaces death, but here none occurs; instead, the vazir sends his son to the king, who is revived by the boy’s tears. The two of them then withdraw from the reader’s and Ἁṭṭār’s view.

Ἁṭṭār ends this frustrating puzzle by concluding with quotations that state the union between the king and boy cannot be described: “At this juncture words fail the story-teller. / . . . Whatever after this I say were better left unsaid. / The pearl when it is in the depths is not for stringing.” Additionally, Ἁṭṭār suggests that not only does rational language lack the capacity to communicate the companionship of king and boy, but also that attempting to do so would be unlawful, revealing too much to someone who has not begun his or her own tariqah:

Who am I that I should give the description of this?
And were I to do so my life would be forfeit.

Not having arrived, how might I this description give?
I should hold my tongue, because I am left far behind.

. . .

Since here is not a single hair-tip,
Here there is no way apart from silence.

116 Ἁṭṭār, Speech, 392: 4398. The king’s emaciation reflects the literary tradition regarding ‘ishq: “To the extent that ‘ishq was perceived to be an extrinsic power that overwhelmed the heart and soul, it was considered to be a malady with recognized symptoms: emaciation, paleness, fluttering of the heart, insomnia, complete mental absorption with the beloved, etc.” El-Rouayheb, Before Homosexuality, 86.

117 Ἁṭṭār implies a veil is closed between himself, the poet, and the objects of his poetic gaze. Likewise, this veil blinds Ἁṭṭār’s audience: “Both [king and vazir’s son] happy, to the private pavilion they repaired.” Ἁṭṭār, Speech, 395: 4443. The veil imagery is explicit a few verses earlier when the king watches as the vazir’s son “emerged from behind the curtain like a moon from a cloud.” Ἁṭṭār, Speech, 395: 4438. Recall here the imagery of the veil as the separation of the created from the creator; at this point neither Ἁṭṭār, nor his readers have earned that revelation. Note also that Ritter points out the theological need for the veil: “Man cannot see God in the here and now. He would not be able to endure the sight of Him. If God were to uncover His countenance, the radiance of His face would burn whatever His sight fell upon.” Ritter, Ocean, 454.

118 Ἁṭṭār, Speech, 395: 4440-4441. Ritter too notes the tale’s opacity, saying it reveals “nothing as far as what characterizes the state of mystical bagā.” Ritter, Ocean, 653.
Impossible is this, that at any time, might discover
Anything but silence the temper of the tongue’s blade.

This time for once I have completed what I have to say.
Doing is needed. How much longer must I talk? Depart in peace.\(^{119}\)

This tantalizing story, almost ending in ruin, is offered as a prompt for the reader to seek out his or her own pathway to the divine, to act upon the spiritual and theological truths that Ἁττār’s \(\textit{Manṭiqu’ṭ} \) uncovers. Rafal Stepien’s explication of mystic-poetry makes this apparent:

Mystic-poetry [is] here understood, precisely in its transcendence of literality in favour of figural speech irreconcilable to the rigid, epistemologically correspondential requirements of the rational intellect . . . . Indeed, this poetry announces the collapse of the epistemological pursuit of truth as either correspondence or coherence, and constitutes the phenomenon perceived by the mystic-poet as nothing other than the thing-in-itself or noumenon.\(^{120}\)

Ἁττār wants his readers to seek the noumenon of the divine directly, so he refuses to provide further description. His frustrating closure, or refusal to end the tale, make that clear.

**Community in The Vazir’s Beautiful Son, or Ἁττār as Religious Community Builder**

As with the shifting complexity of erotic economies in the other tales, there are no direct and easy answers. The reader meets a refusal to clarify the erotic economy of the sub-tale along with the insistence that it is now the reader’s responsibility to uncover this clarity through personal, spiritual growth. Nicholas Boylston has observed that in the valley sections of \(\textit{Manṭiqu’ṭ} \) “the wayfarer [is] addressed in the second person singular and thus [is] indistinguishable from the


\(^{120}\) Stepien, “A Study in Sufi Poetics,” 104.
birds hearing the story, or us as readers.”

The same pronoun use appears in the final line of the quotation above, illustrating clearly that Ἁττār’s work is not a pure literary exercise, but one meant to inculcate its readers with curiosity about spiritual journeys. Indeed, after the Vazir sub-tale concludes, Ἁττār turns reflective and considers his authorial role:

If this volume shows even to one person the Way,
Then in front of him the veil will be cast aside.

If he attains comfort from this memorial,
Tell him to remember in his prayers the composer.

This quotation demonstrates that Ἁττār himself is a seeker, and his words reinforce the communal nature of that seeking because he turns to, acknowledges his fellow pilgrims, and asks for their help. Ἁττār’s request mirrors the cooperative and communal efforts of the various seekers across the sub-tales. For Sam’ān and his followers

a renewal and deepening of faith occurs only communally. Like the princess, the vazir’s desires can only be fulfilled through partnership and cooperation. The princess is reliant upon her female servants to taste the pleasure of the beautiful slave; the vazir can only protect his child (while simultaneously protecting his king from inflicting permanent spiritual and emotional self-harm) through the cooperation of palace guards, his son, and even the corpse of the criminal who takes his son’s place. These narratives insist on the communal nature of spiritual engagement within the world.

121 Boylston, “Writing the Kaleidoscope,” 364.

122 Ἁττār, Speech, 399: 4486-4487. Boylston shows that Ἁττār and the hoopoe share a voice: “The Hoopoe is . . . burdened with the same tasks as Ἁττār himself of communicating the ineffable in order to incite the aspiration for the journey, as the voice of the poet and the Hoopoe merge into one.” Boylston, “Writing the Kaleidoscope,” 367. See also de Bruijn on Ἁττār’s incorporation of himself in other of his works. de Bruijn, “The Preaching Poet,” 92, 96.

123 Stepien articulates Ἁττār’s communal identity through the label of mystic-poet: because he distinguishes “between religious and irreligious poetry,” Ἁττār is able to “identify his poetry with religious law itself, and thereby effectively rehabilitates it to the status of an Islamically valid enterprise; indeed, as the very summit of the divine creative act itself.” Stepien, “A Study in Sufi Poetics,” 88.
Franklin Lewis’s “Sexual Occidentation” reveals that the so-called illicit love embodied in this sub-tale models the type of union with the divine for which the individual soul should strive. Lewis puts the homoeroticism of Ἁṭṭār’s “The Vazir’s Beautiful Son” into context: there is “a sub-genre of Arabic love poetry which emerged in the eighth century of the Common Era, and gained wide currency by the tenth century. The mood of this genre is mujun or sukhf—erotic or obscene—and the thematic hallmark of the sub-genre of poetry in question is the love of an older Muslim male, usually the speaking persona of the poem, for a Christian boy.”125 The vazir’s son is not Christian, nor is the king’s voice the only one heard within the tale, but clearly Ἁṭṭār is working within this eroticized tradition that radicalizes the interpretive possibilities of erotic love.

124 I avoid the word homosexual as I am following Khaled El-Rouayheb’s observation in Before Homosexuality: “The modern concept of ‘homosexuality’ elides a distinction that, in the Middle East, was (and still is) fraught with symbolic significance: that between the penetrator and the penetrated. Not surprisingly, in ordinary language there was no corresponding concept that would apply to both those who preferred the active-insertive role and those who preferred the passive-receptive role in a homosexual act.” El-Rouayheb, Before Homosexuality, 15-16. On the aesthetic traditions of love poetry, including that directed to male beloveds, see El-Rouayhed, Before Homosexuality, 53-110. Additionally, El-Rouayheb clarifies differences between legal and cultural practices involving same-sex participants: “Islamic law prohibits . . . sexual intercourse between men, especially anal intercourse. It is hardly credible to suggest that such illicit intercourse was carried out in public. What unfolded in public was probably such things as courting and expressing passionate love. It may seem natural for modern historians to gloss over the distinction between committing sodomy and expressing passionate love for a youth, and to describe both activities as manifestations of ‘homosexuality.’ But this only goes to show that the term is anachronistic and unhelpful in this particular context. Islamic religious scholars of the period were committed to the precept that sodomy (liwāt) was one of the most abominable sins a man could commit. However, many of them clearly did not believe that falling in love with a boy or expressing this love in verse was therefore also illicit.” He also finds a number of other distinctions between modern homosexuality and early modern attitudes toward male-male relationships: “Another distinction is that between passionate infatuation (’ishq) and sexual lust—emphasizing this distinction was important for those who would argue for the religious permissibility of the passionate love of boys. A third distinction centers on exactly what sexual acts were involved—Islamic law prescribed severe corporal or capital punishment for anal intercourse between men, but regarded, say, kissing, fondling, or non-anal intercourse as less serious transgressions.” El-Rouayheb, Before Homosexuality, 2 and 6.


126 This is a well-attested tradition. Jim Wafer, for example, notes, “For secular writers who regarded themselves as orthodox Muslims, ‘gazing’ at another male was the principle expression of their love, since a sexual consummation was forbidden. The mystics gave this idea a religious meaning by treating nazar as equivalent to the vision of God Himself.” Wafer, “Vision and Passion,” 108. However, most critics who discuss this trope do not address “The Vazir’s Beautiful Son,” but rather the shorter recurring homoerotic sub-tales about Ayāz and Sultan Maḥmūd. This is true of Yaghoobi, Wafer, and Lewisohn. Only Ritter discusses this tale, but his comments are relatively brief.
discusses this literary tradition as well, showing that it “conforms to the standards of the Sufi philosophy known as ‘gazing at male beauty’ or ‘the love of a beautiful youth’ (shāhidbāzī or naẓarbāzī)” and as such cannot be construed as “necessarily transgressive.”

The concept of gazing, or nazar, clearly structures part of “The Vazir’s Beautiful Son,” given the prominence of the blazon of the vazir’s son that directs not only the king’s gaze, but the reader’s gaze as well. Again, this directed gaze is Ἁṭṭār’s prompt for the audience to participate in the tariqah, presenting the communal nature of the journey. While the homoerotic gaze may not be transgressive, Yaghoobi specifies details of the homoerotic narratives that feature Mahmūd and Ayāz, which she identifies as having “deviated from the standards of the philosophy of shāhidbāzī”: the lovers are both adults, which requires passivity of one of them; the relationship takes place outside a religious environment (i.e. at court, not a Sufi settlement); it is not a discreet affair; and it takes place between a master and slave, a relationship type “common in medieval Iran” but undertaken “to experience sexual pleasure rather than the love of

127 Yaghoobi, Subjectivity in Ἁṭṭār, 71. El-Rouayheb also comments: “according to most schools of law only anal intercourse was deemed a cardinal sin. Anything that could be perceived to be the first step along the slippery slope to such transgressions, such as gazing at beardless youths or being alone with them, became deeply problematic. However, jurists were also committed to the principle that one ought not prohibit what God has made licit, or think ill of one’s fellow Muslims, and the efforts of especially zealous jurists to prohibit outright such ‘preliminaries’ of sodomy met with resistance from other jurists. Most jurists did not deem that a man’s passionate love of a youth was in itself a sin, and permitted the composition of pederastic love poetry.” El-Rouayheb, additionally reveals the justifications for writing love poetry to young men: “According to traditions that were widely accepted as authentic, the Prophet himself had said that ‘God is beautiful and loves beauty’ and that ‘three things refresh the eyes: looking at greenery, flowing water, and the handsome face.’ He also reportedly exhorted his followers to ‘seek the good from handsome countenances.’” Further, El-Rouayheb explains that “the prohibition of liwāṭ [sodomy] will not carry over into the next world: the prohibition is based partly on the this-worldly end of sexual intercourse, namely procreation, and partly on the ‘uncleanliness’ of the anus. Neither factor would be relevant to a world in which sexual intercourse was for pleasure only, and in which there was neither procreation nor excrement.” This final observation suggests that if one reads the relationship between the king and the vazir’s son as a relationship that ought to be read as an allegory of the union of the individual soul with the divine that any potential opposition to same-sex anal intercourse is thereby entirely diffused. El-Rouayheb, Before Homosexuality, 12, 59, and 132. Ritter offers a theological justification for the homoeroticism: “In Islam, where feminine traits are unthinkable in God, the masculine rather than the feminine form offered itself to the mystics of love as a symbol for the Godhead, although... the watered-down, clichéd feminine forms of earlier Arabic love poetry were also used as a symbol for the Godhead.” Ritter, Ocean, 457.

128 The vazir’s son, like the other beloveds, receives an extensive blazon from verses 4294 through 4313.
These features of the Maḥmūd-Ayāz sub-tales reinsert the transgressive element into the homoeroticism ‘Aṭṭār presents, but they do not all appear in “The Vazir’s Beautiful Son.”

There is an age differential between the vazir’s son and the king, so in terms of beloveds, this sub-tale adheres to the literary tradition’s expectations, but like Maḥmūd and Ayāz, the king and the vazir’s son are at court, not a religious settlement, nor is the affair private. Further transgressive but divorced from sexual orientation, there is a debased quality to this relationship connected to Ἁṭṭār’s critique of tyrants. This element of the relationship also suggests more material sexuality than might have been acceptable for the literary trope. “The Princess and the Beautiful Slave-Boy” and the “The Story of Shaikh-i Sam’ān,” involve explicitly illicit love affairs that violate boundaries. Here the partial violation of the literary requirements of nazar (and thus the partial usurpation of heteronormativity) is purposeful: Aṭṭār dislocates the religious pilgrim seeking divinity from exoteric understandings and logical approaches to the divine. Aṭṭār deploys theologically problematic erotic love economies to jolt the religious pilgrim through discomfort into spiritual engagement.

Additionally, while the vazir’s son is not a slave, there is a clear power differential between the lover and the beloved. ‘Aṭṭār writes of the obsessive, perhaps tyrannical, nature of the king’s love:

If he [the beloved] were ever one moment to leave the royal entourage,
Out of jealousy the Shāh would have cut off his head from his body.

129 Yaghoobi, Subjectivity in Ἁṭṭār, 72. See also Yaghoobi, “Against the Current,” 102-103 for a condensed discussion of what is and is not acceptable within this tradition. See the sub-tales that discuss the slave Ayāz and Sultan Maḥmūd of Ghazna’s devotion to him. See Aṭṭār, Speech, 104-108: 1133-1185; 276-278: 3078-3102; 280-281: 3121-3137; 337-340: 3762-3800.

130 Of note in relationship to age, Ἁṭṭār describes the beginnings of facial hair on the vazir’s son: “The newly sprouting green of beard, the red of his beauty’s visage, / The mottled parrot, source of perfection’s furthest limit.” Ἁṭṭār, Speech, 384: 4310. El-Rouayheb explains the significance of beard growth in aesthetic circles and the debate over whether a beardless youth or a youth with the start of a beard is most attractive. For example, the youths of same-sex relationships are “referred to in the texts as amrad (beardless boy); ghalām or sabī (boy); or fatā, shābb, or hadath (male youth)” and “though biologically male,” these youths were “not completely a ‘man’ in the social and cultural sense . . . .” El-Rouayheb additionally notes that amrad “could be used to refer to prepubescent, completely smooth-cheeked boys, as opposed to adolescent, downy-cheeked youths, but it could also refer to all youths who did not yet have a fully developed beard, and hence to youths who were as old as twenty or twenty-one.” El-Rouayheb, Before Homosexuality, 26 and 31. The vazir’s son is in the latter category.
Also were desirous both his father and mother
Of for a moment themselves seeing the son’s face.

But, because of fear of the Sháh, they lacked the courage
For a long time, to bring this matter out into the open.\textsuperscript{131}

Given this partial adherence to the literary practice of \textit{nazar}, Āṭṭār skirts the edge of acceptability in this particular sub-tale, flaunting some of the accepted standards of literary homoeroticism. The deeper transgression of the tale derives from the inversion of typical power structures. The king becomes irrational, obsessed with his \textit{sháhid}.\textsuperscript{132} He even drinks and allows the alcohol to overtake his ability to mete out appropriate justice. We might say he is intoxicated with desire for his \textit{sháhid}, emblematic in the case of figures like Sam’ān as foolish but ultimately spiritually edifying. The king’s foolishness, however, is more difficult to excuse; Āṭṭār creates a powerful, condemnatory image of the king as a capricious fool who violates sobriety in a manner that directly and negatively affects his citizens.\textsuperscript{133} These tyrannical traits are less a metaphoric indication of the king’s spiritual struggle than they are a critique of the leaders of Āṭṭār’s time as well as a narrative necessity given the centrality of suffering and longing necessary for spiritual growth.

\textsuperscript{131} Āṭṭār, \textit{Speech}, 386: 4330-4332.

\textsuperscript{132} The king’s being in love is not a character flaw: “Falling in love with a boy was widely considered to be an involuntary act, and as such outside the scope of religious condemnation.” El-Rouayhed, \textit{Before Homosexuality}, 139. Additionally, Walter Andrews and Mehmet Kalpakli note the elevated position given male-male relationships in the past: “among both Hellenic and Roman elites the assumption was commonly made that the most complete love, the love that exhibits the highest degree of mutuality and satisfaction, is the love of one educated man for another, usually younger (educated) man.” Andrews and Kalpakli, \textit{Age of Beloveds}, 14.

\textsuperscript{133} Ritter writes of jealousy and the literary appearance of tales like “The Vazir’s Beautiful Son”: “kings are hasty to become angry and in their anger issue commands which they regret afterwards. Those in a king’s company sometimes do not carry out his order and protect him from his own outbursts of rage.” Ritter goes on to say specifically of the king’s jealousy that it is “bad and improper.” Elsewhere Ritter also notes that he “know[s] of no other Islamic writings in which social criticism of the rulers is expressed with such severity.” Ritter, \textit{The Ocean of the Soul}, 394-395 and 123. Navid Kermani discusses the realism of Āṭṭār’s poetry: “in his verse epics one feels the sharp air of earthly conditions, of social and religious reality. . . . Āṭṭār’s rulers constitute a threat to all decent people.” Additionally, Kermani discusses the corrupt Seljuk rule under which Āṭṭār lived part of his life: “In the twelfth century, the caliphate in Baghdad maintained the religious character of its rule over the Muslim community only as a formality; the real power had long since been transferred to secular authorities, which often no longer even pretended to justify their actions theologically.” Kermani, \textit{Terror of God}, 58, 59. Netton, of mystics more broadly, points out that “nearly all . . . emerge against a backdrop of political or spiritual or religious or intellectual upheaval, even chaos, . . . .” Netton, \textit{Islam}, 77. Netton does not intend Āṭṭār here specifically, but this description taken into perspective with Kermani’s discussion of the turmoil of Āṭṭār’s life suggests that Netton’s sentiment about the upheaval that surrounds mystics applies to Āṭṭār.
the poem.\textsuperscript{134} While critics like Lewis have pointed out that Ἀṭṭār “is primarily interested in depicting the religion of love, maktab—i ’ishq, and not the human vita sexualis,”\textsuperscript{135} the relationship in this sub-tale echoes a more visceral, material desire to control the vazir’s son rather than merely gaze upon him as shāhid. The king is violent and jealous, insistent on controlling the vazir’s son and refusing him his own sexual will, which the boy tries to direct at the beautiful girl in the king’s court. The king’s decree for an immediate, violent punishment for the boy’s infidelity solidifies the corporeal nature of the relationship early in the sub-tale. Additionally, while we might expect divinity to be aligned with the forces of royal power and status, as indeed “The Princess and the Beautiful Slave-Boy” aligns divinity with the princess at the close of the tale, in this sub-tale, Ἀṭṭār inverts the expectation. He does so with a somewhat shocking depiction of both parties: the king becomes enraged and jealous after drinking, and the boy turns away from the king and toward a heteronormative but still theologically problematic sexual relationship with a girl from court. If, however, we consider that in order for this to be a sub-tale that is spiritually instructive, Ἀṭṭār must require the seeking soul to suffer, then the king’s rash actions, which generate his later suffering, become logical, at least in the sense of the narrative structure of the tale, i.e. the king’s actions interrupt the king-boy dyad that is primarily corporeal in nature so that suffering and a spiritualized eroticism can take over later in the sub-tale.

Once his sobriety returns, the king must live with his choices. At this point, a radical inversion of the power structures of the narrative occurs; the tyrant becomes powerless and must learn submission. At this point the corporeal relationship in the narrative begins to take on an overt spiritual meaning, more commensurate with established homoerotic literary tropes. The unexpected power inversion, as with the Princess sub-tale, ties into the structure of the journey. “The Vazir’s Beautiful Son” is one of the final portions of “The Valley of Poverty and Annihilation,” appearing after the resolution of the frame tale.\textsuperscript{136} Ἀṭṭār’s indirect description of this Valley in another

\textsuperscript{134} That is, the king must suffer to grow, and his foolishness engenders that suffering within the narrative structure.

\textsuperscript{135} Lewis, “Sexual Occidentation,” 710.

\textsuperscript{136} “The Vazir’s Beautiful Son,” then appears after the birds discover the Simurgh and directly precedes Ἀṭṭār’s discussions of his spiritual state and rhetorical purpose in the poem section “Concerning his Own Condition.”
sub-tale, “Ma’shúq of Ṭús Tells a Novice to Melt Always,” directly parallels the king’s experiences:

. . . “Melt always

So that, when in love you melt completely,
Then will you become through debility forever like a wisp of
hair.

When your person becomes as slender as a hair,
There will be room for you among the locks of the Friend.

Whoever becomes like a hair in His lane,
He will assuredly become one hair among those of Him.

If you are to be an observer of the Way and perspicacious,
Look to see the hair-fine subtlety of such as this.

If not a hair-tip of your selfness remains,
The seven degrees of Hell will overlook your badness.”

This passage gives the words of Ma’shúq of Ṭús describing the proper attitude of a pilgrim toward the divine in erotic terms. The imagery of a lover reduced to a hair through starvation recurs in the description of the devastated king in “The Vazir’s Beautiful Son.” The imagery reflects Ἁṭṭār’s understanding of the requisite suffering of pilgrims. The physical signs of the king’s distress are amplified to his emotions, evident in the king’s passionate plea with the dream-boy, in which he also confesses his treachery: “Do you no evil, although I have enacted evil, / For all this badness to myself I have done.”

The king reveals his recollection of the interconnection between himself and the boy, which comes to him only after the extreme suffering caused by their separation. His speech further indicates a bewildering loss of identity and inability to exist without the boy:

137 Ἁṭṭār, *Speech*, 354; 3957-3962. Avery’s translation here reflects the uncertainty of the *haryat* from earlier in the poem; the king is overwhelmed and confused by his new spiritual discoveries. Darbandi and Davis’ translation is more readable in excerpted form:

“If you have left the world before me, how
Can I endure the world without you now?
One moment’s absence kills my life and heart;
One moment more, my life and body part—
Your king’s soul hovers ready now to pay
Blood-vengeance for your death and die away!” (52)

138 Suffering is a central motif in Ἁṭṭār’s poetry. Kermani explains that in *The Book of Suffering*, the pain alluded to in *Mantiq’ut* is intensified: “海口̣er develops a cosmology of pain, as comprehensive as it is radical, in which all worldly and transcendent phenomena . . . are signs; not signs of God . . . signs of God’s abstinence and the painful nullity of the world’s course . . . .” Kermani, *Terror of God*, 43.

139 Ἁṭṭār, *Speech*, 393; 4419.
“Were you of a sudden from before me to go,
How without you might I in the world stay alive?
Without you, since not for an instant might I remain myself,
Life not for more than one or two moments remains to me.
The soul to expiry’s lips has this prince brought,
In order in blood to dispense your blood-money.”

The king’s words reflect a devotion that, at least while drunk, he cannot maintain; he admits his suffering is of his own making, but the admission cannot reduce its keenness. Likewise, the king’s patience and will have been excised. His suggestion that he cannot exist without the boy is a claim that his individual self (naf) has been eradicated, that he, like the pilgrim whose soul temporarily dissolves in God during tawhid, is prepared for such union. The king’s transformation through suffering then is commensurate with what Leonard Lewisohn has described in Ἁṭṭār’s work:

The philosophy of love in Ἁṭṭār’s poetry expresses simultaneously an ascetic theology, an aesthetic, and [...] the soteriological belief that salvation can be found only through love. This belief was summed up in the Sufi teaching that the lover contemplates the eternal forms of the celestial realm of the Spheres by the medium of human forms in the physical world. [...] The sentiment underlying ‘Ἁṭṭār’s erotic lyrics is thus quite similar to the fin’amors (refined, purified love) of medieval Provencal ‘courtly love.’

Lewisohn’s comments apply to the erotic masnavi as well. Further, conceiving of the passage as a reflection of this philosophy of love radicalizes Ἁṭṭār’s poetry even more poignantly. The undercutting of erotic and behavioral normativities in this sub-tale marks the irrelevance of things sexed bodies in Ἁṭṭār’s eroticism; if love is involved, spiritual growth is possible—no qualifiers necessary.

In addition to the radicalizing effect of the gazing lover tradition, or shāhidbazī, there is another mode in Islamic mystical literature wherein the homoerotic occurs. Jim Wafer explains, this is a passion mode that involves “a symbolic physical interaction in which the lover is wounded or killed by his beloved.” This mode appears prior to the king’s spiritual awakening. Sadism is clear in the drunken king’s punishment for the boy:

140 Ἁṭṭār, Speech, 394: 4425-4427.
... that puissant prince give[s] the order
That the boy be manacled in heavy irons.
His unalloyed silver [i.e. the boy’s skin] in the midst of
the dust of the street,
Tanning [i.e. beating] by the Sháh’s sticks made like
indigo [i.e. bruised black].

The boy is additionally to be publicly hung upside down and flayed.
His body is to remain as a warning “So that no-one who, as he had,
had been the Pádsháh’s companion / Should after this look at anyone else.”
The sadism of this spectacle, however, radically reverses
with the king’s spiritual awareness. The destruction is redirected at
the king himself when, before he faints in a swoon after his dream
of the boy, he exclaims: “Take my soul, oh Judge, out of favour, / for no endurance is any longer mine.” This speech act marks
the interchangeability, from the king’s perspective, of the vazir’s son
and the king, who here asks to die out of love, as he has previously
subjected his lover to death—so he thinks. The interplay of sadism
and masochism reverberate in this line of the king’s speech. The
seemingly active, worldly power of the king is nearly his emotional
and spiritual undoing. It is the powerless boy at court who disrupts
the power structure, with the intervention and aid of his father and the
community of guards. The community keeps the boy passive, but at
the conclusion of this narrative that passivity is undone dramatically
when he is able to save the king by appearing to him, crying over
him, and finally reuniting with him in a manner that Ἁττάρ says defies
language. The boy, the king’s former play thing, is the only one who
can restore the king’s health and offer him mercy for his misdeeds.

Erotic Metaphors for Spiritual Growth
through Community Action

These sub-tales and their inclusion of erotically charged
transgressions demonstrate that Ἁττάρ simultaneously embraces the

143 Ἁττάρ, Speech, 388: 4348-4349. The description of the vazir’s son’s skin as silver is
part of a collective of accepted imagery usually employed for a feminine beloved. Yaghoobi
explains in relation to Ayáz, who is similarly described by Ἁττάρ: the description is “very sensual and mostly feminine. . . . Dihkhudā’s Lughat-nāma indicates that the
adjective [i.e. silver] is applied to someone with a very white body and skin.” Yaghoobi,
Subjectivity in Ἁττάρ, 83.

144 Ἁττάρ, Speech, 388: 4352.

145 Ἁττάρ, Speech, 395: 4433.
aesthetics of erotic poetry and religious didacticism. The sub-tales also show that in esoteric theological writing, such as the Manṭiqu’ṭ, paradox and inversion can be harnessed to encourage what might otherwise be considered theologically orthodox goals: in Ἀṭṭār’s case, greater devotion and connection to Allah. Thus eroticism in Manṭiqu’ṭ is an essential literary mode for achieving the spiritual goals of the writer; the spiritual and the erotic interpenetrate and cannot be disentangled.

In the closing moments of the poem before Ἀṭṭār turns to his own path, he hints at a tantalizing image that he also occludes. The image is both alluring and forbidden to readers such as ourselves, those who are yet in the world. Ἀṭṭār extends this veiled image to us to prick our desire to explore and pursue our beloved, thereby transforming transgressive eroticism into a potent metaphor that hints at the spiritual longings of the individual soul for the divine, but simultaneously leaving that metaphor with an insecure tenor-vehicle relationship. We are left asking, is this poetry about love? Is this poetry about loving God? Stepien’s recapitulation of Sells reminds us: “the mystic writer . . . is one whose discourse continually shifts between the saying and the un-saying of a given position,” and whose “meaning” derives “not through any one or other of these statements, but rather through their interplay or tension.” Ἀṭṭār provides his readers but a taste (dhawq) of the divine, not a fully positivistic theological description. He calls us to our own journey. Ἀṭṭār’s eroticism, then, carries a spiritual motive and that spiritual motive is at its core a communal motive, one fostering interconnection between all existents, and one simultaneously acknowledging only in that interconnection can existents find the divine.

146 Scholars have pointed out the tendency to divorce Sufism from Islam itself. For example, Robert Abdul Hayy Darr, the author of the foreword of Toussulis’ book, describes misconceptions about Sufism, namely that “Sufism operates above and beyond religion,” and he adds that “as Sufism became more popular, it was often watered down. Popular reductions of Sufism offered simplified spiritual teachings and practices dissociated from their Islamic context.” Darr, Foreword, x. Ahmed also points out the inverse, that “Sufism—the theory and practice of holistic, experiential knowing of Divine Truth—was, for over a millennium, a foundational, commonplace and institutionalized conceptual and social phenomenon in societies of Muslims.” Ahmed, What is Islam?, 20.


148 Keshavarz has written, “journeying with the birds entails re-imaging and re-imagining the tale of our own journey and the opportunity to alter the course of the journey that is life.” Keshavarz, “Flight of the Birds,” 116.
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Bibliography


The World of Miracles: Science, and Healing in
Caesarius of Heisterbach’s *Dialogus miraculorum* (ca.1240)
in Competition with Magic

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This paper offers a close reading of some of the miracle tales dedicated to the
Virgin Mary as contained in Caesarius of Heisterbach’s *Dialogus miraculorum*
(ca. 1240) in order to shed light on the fundamental narrative structures of this
genre, the association between the narratives and their material background, and
to build a case to argue that medieval miracle narratives actually shared much
in common with the discourse on magic. After a critical examination of magic
itself and its properties as imagined or realized in the Middle Ages, the analysis
highlights the ‘miraculous’ or maybe even ‘magical’ features of Caesarius’s tales.
Those prove to be not only important narrative documents of the religious mental-
ity of the late Middle Ages, they also reveal the extent to which they served as a
complimentary discourse to or even substitute of the narrative of magic. As much
as the latter was mostly repressed in the pre-modern world and also beyond, its
presence can be observed particularly ex negativo where it seems to be com-
pletely absent, in the miracle tale.

Magic and Miracles in the Middle Ages:
Complementary Phenomena or Hostile Opponents?

Hardly any other fantastic or imaginary features in the Middle
Ages have caught the attention of medieval contemporaries and
modern audiences alike more than magic and miracles. The close
analysis of the miracle narratives by the Cistercian author Caesarius
of Heisterbach represents a unique opportunity to explore the shared
fundamental principles underlying magic and miracles, each aiming
at the transformation of material conditions through esoteric means.
Magic is, as the adjective implies, magical, and transforms this con-
crete world into something different without a rational explanation
available. The word has ancient Persian roots, ‘magu,’ which was
then adopted into ancient Greek, and finally into Latin and then into
countless vernaculars.¹ But while magic was regarded with great respect in ancient times, Christianity consistently endeavored to distance itself from magic as a form of power associated with demons and the devil, hence as a kind of illusion to deceive the viewer.² Many people, both in the past and in the present, have always felt intrigued, yet then also scared by magic, and dreaded the power of the magicians, unless they called upon their help, as is documented by countless references to magic in medieval romances and other texts, both in Europe and elsewhere.³ From the perspective of the Christian Church, magic was, of course, regularly associated with dark forces that they could not control effectively, or simply did not fully understand. Hence, already since antiquity, Christianity and magic have been competitors, each side trying to impress the audience as being authentic, true, being a real force, and not just deception or illusion. In the course of time, that actually led to many forms of facetious entertainment, far removed from demonology or the world of the devil because magicians succeeded in performing very similarly as so-called wondermakers in a religious context.⁴ Magic disappeared, however, into the ‘underground’ or into obscurity because it was not predicated on a systematic, hierarchical, highly organized and well-publicized structure, such as the Christian Church.

Concomitantly, the role of miracles cannot be underestimated as to people’s needs to find solutions for existential predicaments, especially in the world of the Middle Ages, and they continue to matter for vast sections of contemporary society despite the huge role

¹ For the history of this word in the English language, see http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/112186?rskey=7a2gXU&result=1#eid; in German, the word ‘Magie’ also exists, but the much more relevant term, with an ancient pedigree, is ‘Zauber,’ see http://woerterbuchnetz.de/cgi-bin/WBNetz/whgui_py?sigle=DWB&mode=Vernetzung&lemid=GZ01529#XGZ01529 (both last accessed on Jan. 14, 2019).


⁴ Rollo, Glamorous Sorcery. Tuczay, “Medieval Magicians.”
played by modern sciences and rationality. General belief in the workings of miracles might have been stronger prior to the Protestant Reformation than it is today, but the public media and an infinite number of narratives continue to confirm the validity of miracles in the eye of the faithful, such as the allegedly miraculous appearance of blood on a crucifix, on a painting, but also on tree trunks, and elsewhere, not to mention the numerous miraculous medical healings as a consequence of prayers, pilgrimages, or many types of religious rituals or donations. Until today, the Catholic Church identifies some individuals as saints because of miracles that happened at their graves or at the sites where their relics are housed, such as the Belgian Pater Damien (1844-1889), who was canonized on October 11, 2009, or Saint Hildegard of Bingen (1089-1179), who was named Doctor of the Church on October 7, 2012.

All religions know of or believe in miracles because they represent extraordinary experiences and connect the individual with the numinous, that is, the divine, or superior powers far beyond the human domain, or globally, beyond critical, rational thinking. We could thus speak of a hermeneutics or discourse of miracles, along with its correlated narrative, though it is much more repressed, the discourse focused on magic. Both in paintings and in sculptures, both in literary texts and in sermons, and so also in medical and scientific treatises and didactic accounts do we hear of the devil and the demons,
and those are then contrasted with angels, saints, martyrs, and others who create ‘real miracles,’ and not just ‘illusions.’

For Christians, the world was deeply determined by fear of that uncanny otherworld, as Peter Dinzelbacher and Nancy Caciola have already illuminated at great length. But not every magician was hence automatically evil, despite a consistent tenor throughout the pre-modern world condemning those powerful individuals. White magic was often carefully differentiated from black magic, but it operated, of course, on the same level, elucidating and invoking the ineffable powers, and all this by means of stunningly parallel elements: words, rituals, and gestures.

From early on in medieval literature, Merlin, just like Morgan le Fay, for instance, regularly emerged as a curiously hybrid creature, to be feared and to be revered, both able to exert power over other people by means of his magical skills, which were, however, not demonic in nature. However, if we draw from any of the many collections of miracle accounts, such as by Gautier de Coincy (1177-1236), we can easily discover striking parallels. Here, however, the focus will rest on those miracles told by Caesarius of Heisterbach, who also referred to Merlin twice (Distinction I, 34; VII, 16), with the intention of bringing to light the surprisingly shared narrative impetus and the parallel features in both discourses dealing with these two phenomena, even though this Cistercian monk did not address magic specifically, except in the case of heresies, for instance, or when the devil is trying to seduce people.

10 Dinzelbacher, Angst im Mittelalter; Caciola, Discerning Spirits.

11 For both figures, and many other uncanny characters, see Verführer, Schurken Magier; Campbell, The Medieval Merlin; see also the still valuable study by Weiss, Merlin in German Literature; cf. also, Larrington, King Arthur’s Enchantresses; Hebert, Morgan le Fay. The literature on Merlin and also on Morgan le Fay is rather vast and does not need to be reviewed here.

In the late Middle Ages, we do not only hear much about the workings of the Virgin Mary, but also about various magicians who even enjoy highest respect for their learnedness, confirmed by a university degree, such as Maugis or Malagis, who is, however, persecuted by Charlemagne out of a personal vendetta. In those Old French, Middle Dutch, and Low Middle German versions all closely related to each other we are confronted with a fascinating figure who is truly powerful as a magician, but never really pursues evil deeds with the help of magic. We admire him and laugh about his pranks performed in public, which gives us a very different perspective toward magic at that time.13 As much as medieval theologians believed to have a clear notion of magicians and condemned them whenever possible, the available evidence concerning their appearance and operations sheds, however, quite a different light on them, complicating considerably the traditionally binary impression of magic and miracle.

If we think of the famous learned author Johannes Hartlieb (ca. 1400-1468) and his *puch aller verpoten kunst, ungelaubens und der zaubrey* (Book of All Forbidden Arts) from ca. 1450, who outlines virtually every possible facet of necromancy for his two ducal patrons in Bavaria, we face another remarkable example of the dialectics surrounding magic, especially in the late Middle Ages, being feared, rejected, sought after, delighted in, dreaded, studied, and closely observed for many different purposes, and this while the interest in miracles was equally high, as we will see below.14 Finally, in 1587 the highly influential *Historia von D. Johann Fausten* appeared in print in Frankfurt (Johannes Spieß), where the deeply dissatisfied Dr. Faustus signs a pact with the devil and can thus finally learn many secrets of the world and beyond, can enjoy many hilarious moments, experience unknown pleasures, but ultimately becomes the devil’s victim. This vastly popular narrative reveals, once again, a curiously dialectic approach to magic, being both condemned and

13 See now the contributions to *Magic and Magicians in the Middle*.

14 Hartlieb, *Das Buch aller verbotenen Künste*. For an English translation, see now *Hazards of the Dark*. The manuscript was copied down by the well-known female scribe, Clara Hätzlerin, in Augsburg. I have discussed Hartlieb and the relevant research at length in the Introduction to *Magic and Magicians* (see note 13), 47-56.
admired, regarded with great fear and as highly dangerous, and yet also with significant intrigue and curiosity.\textsuperscript{15}

In short, to reemphasize and refine our initial observation, if there might be any topic with a significant impact on a vast section of the population at that time, which has continued to be highly influential from the Middle Ages until today, then it is first, the treatment of magic, regarded either as a danger to one’s soul, or as a powerful instrument for learning, and second, the appearance of miracles. Magic stands out for its major appeal even in the twenty-first century, as documented, for instance, by the global success of the \textit{Harry Potter} novels by J. K. Rowling (since 1997). If we think carefully about the very nature of magic, we would have to realize quickly that, translated into more general terms, it proves to be a universal phenomenon in which human reality, in its physical-rational properties, is transformed through some kind of external powers, whether the demons, the devil, or some other forces, such as God Himself.\textsuperscript{16}

The same, however, basically applies to miracles as well, if not even much more so, brought about by the Virgin Mary, a saint, a martyr, or by Christ, once a devout individual has formulated a prayer or given a donation. This general definition connecting, if not aligning, both phenomena in an unintended fashion allows us to move to a higher plane where we can gain a better understanding of medieval mentality at large, especially if we include the world of wonders and miracles, superstition, and demonology. Superstition also belongs to the larger field to be examined here, but the term itself implies a modern rational criticism that does not bear much fruit for a thorough study of the specific medieval topic that I want to examine here.\textsuperscript{17} Both miracles and magic represent one side of the same coin,

\textsuperscript{15} \textit{The Faustian Century}; for the history of research, particularly focusing on the \textit{Historia}, see Classen, \textit{The German Volksbuch}, 213–43. I quote the text from \textit{Romane des 15. und 16. Jahrhunderts}, most valuable proves to be the extensive commentary, 1319–1430.

\textsuperscript{16} See now Miles, \textit{The Devil’s Mortal Weapons}; cf. also Michael Bailey, \textit{Battling Demons}: \textit{Witchcraft, Heresy, and Reform in the Late Middle Ages}; id., \textit{Magic and Superstition in Europe}; id., \textit{Magic and Witchcraft}; id., \textit{Magic}.

\textsuperscript{17} Harmening, \textit{Superstitio}. 
the first being admired and sought after, the latter also regarded with fascination, but then also feared and condemned. For most people in the Middle Ages, miracles and magic were part of the reality they were confronted with every day by the clergy, either as an ideal or as a danger for their souls.\textsuperscript{18}

\textbf{Magic and Miracles – Partners or Opponents?}

In essence, a central question quickly rises when we examine the large corpus of miracle tales from the Middle Ages, that is, what the true difference might be between miracles and magic. Something magical happens in either event, something which the ordinary person cannot understand, and yet accepts as a reality that has transformed the material existence. Whether miracles are imagined or not, faithful people have always responded to them with amazement, jubilation, fascination, and credulity. In other words, without any doubt, miracles, and by the same token, magic, belong to the core of the history of medieval mentality and must be reckoned with as an essential component of everyday culture, as the rich body of scholarship has already documented. As Daniel E. O’Sullivan now summarizes,

\begin{quote}
Cultural historians have read tracts of medieval miracle narratives as evidence of cultural attitudes held in regard to various sectors of society, especially children—often the victims in need of miraculous intervention—and Jews—often the accused perpetrators who are the victimizers. . . . Literary scholars, on the other hand, have studied miracle narratives, in both Latin and the vernaculars, for their literary merit and often folkloric qualities.\textsuperscript{19}
\end{quote}

Miracles fulfilled basic needs for people who were desperate and could no longer help themselves. Miracles served the clergy to strengthen their authority since they built direct connections between this world and the divine. Miracles inspired and enthused people, and made them do many things they normally would not

\textsuperscript{18} Dinzelbacher, \textit{Lebenswelten}, 414-24.

\textsuperscript{19} O’Sullivan, “Miracle Narratives,” 1911. He offers an excellent survey of the relevant research literature.
be prepared or willing to do. Witnessing or personally experiencing miracles had a transformative power and created new community bonds, helping the ecclesiastics, of course, to maintain their authority position, even though the direct workings of a saint or of the Virgin Mary emphasized, at the same time, the clerics’ ‘only’ representative function.

Many medieval theologians and philosophers were involved in the public discourse on miracles, or the miraculous, such as Anselm of Canterbury, Abelard, Thierry of Chartres, Adelard of Bath, or William of St-Thierry, not to forget such intellectual giants as Augustine, Gregory the Great, Gregory of Tours, Thomas Aquinas, and Albertus Magnus. Little wonder that accounts of miracles were soon regarded as essential for sermon literature, such as Jacobus de Voragine’s *Legenda aurea* (ca. 1260). This also led to a proliferation of technical terms for this phenomenon: *prodigium, signum, miraculum, virtus*, or *mirabilia*. In short, the medieval world was abuzz with and about miracles, some dismissed as fake, many others regarded with greatest respect, which, not surprisingly, also explains the ubiquitous nature of magic, although that was viewed with great distrust and even fear. Miracles and magical feats created narratives, which could be related, dispersed, dilated, translated, and passed on, whether we want to regard those accounts as literary or not.

If we applied a comparative lens, in essence, magic and magicians triggered rather similar responses compared to those produced by individuals who related miracles, although the Church was always adamantly opposed to them because the Church rightly regarded them as dangerous, perhaps rather attractive, competitors to its own teaching.

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22 See now Waters, “What’s the Use?” 15-34; the other contributors to *Medieval Literary expand on this discussion in other areas of medieval culture and textuality.

The narrative property of all miracle stories invites us to take into consideration the fact that all accounts about magic fall into the same conceptual category. As Christa A. Tuczay now informs us, “Miracles are worked both by God and by demons, but there are three categories of wonderworkers: firstly[,] magicians who have summoned demons and entered into pacts with them; secondly[,] good Christians who depend on God’s help to work miracles; and thirdly[,] evil Christians and heretics who rely on God but are not followers of Christ.”

Caesarius of Heisterbach

When we turn to the countless miracle stories told by the Cistercian monk and novice master Caesarius of Heisterbach (ca. 1180-ca. 1240) in his *Dialogus miraculorum*, we face a most valuable opportunity to examine this phenomenon through a truly kaleidoscopic lens. Subsequently, we can then raise the question, once again, what the fundamental difference to magic might be, if any, apart from the evaluation of each, as our analysis of those popular miracle stories will illustrate.

As an author, Caesarius of Heisterbach is best known as the compiler of a book of religious tales, the *Dialogus miraculorum* (ca. 1219-1223), a collection of 746 miracle stories grouped into twelve distinctions or thematic categories relevant for the teachings of Christianity and the essential approaches to be taken by the faithful. The tales are told in the form of dialogues between an experienced and learned monk, a master, and a novice, and because of their almost folksy style relying on a rather simple form of Latin they were highly sought after by preachers in need of material for sermons in the late Middle Ages. Apart from Jacobus de Voragine’s *Legenda aurea*, the *Dialogus miraculorum* was one of the most popular works prior to 1500 all over Europe, as the vast number of manuscripts in Latin indicates (ca. 100). The *Dialogus* was also translated twice into German and once into Dutch, and we have been able to

identify many other collections of sermons and other narratives that drew directly from Caesarius’s *Dialogus miraculorum*.\(^{25}\) Although Caesarius lived most of his life in the monastery of Heisterbach near Bonn, Germany, he often accompanied his abbots, first Gevard and then Heinrich, on their visitations of other monasteries, such as in Aachen and Hadamar in Nassau, then in the area of the river Moselle, in Eberbach, Utrecht, Groningen (Holland), Marburg, and elsewhere.\(^{26}\)

The major topics of the twelve distinctions are: 1. the external conversion of individuals as a preparation for joining a monastery; 2. the internal conversion (*contricio*); 3. confession; 4. temptations; 5. demons; 6. the simplicity of the heart; 7. Marian miracles; 8. diverse visionary experiences; 9. the Eucharist; 10. again, miracles. While all these exempla served for religious illumination, their essential purpose was always didactic and instructive, teaching the novice the fundamental aspects of the life of a good monk, his temptations, his contrition, his service and performance, and his faith. The majority of accounts introduce events involving people from all social classes, gender, age, and level of education. They normally take place in the areas of Cologne and Heisterbach, in the Rhineland, and the Netherlands, and they are mostly derived from oral sources, chronicles, and many different kinds of narratives. Scholars have been able to identify, as written sources, the *Vitas patrum*, the *Dialogi* by Gregory the Great, Herbert of Clairvaux’s *Liber miraculorum*, Bernard of Clairvaux’s *Vita*, and Thomas Oliver’s *Historica Damiatana*. Caesarius also drew from the Church Fathers, Ambrosius and Augustine, and from the biblical text, of course.

Wherever possible, the author constantly strove to authenticate his accounts, providing concrete names of people and locales, the time of an event reported about, or the names of those who had related

\(^{25}\) http://www.handschriftencensus.de/werke/6373; http://www.handschriftencensus.de/werke/2869 (both last accessed on Jan. 12, 2019).

\(^{26}\) von Heisterbach, *Dialogus miraculorum*. See also the English trans., *The Dialogue on Miracles*. Here, however, I have created my own translations.
a story to him. He was so concerned about veracity that he sometimes breaks off an account because it seems to be too inconclusive or unreliable. At the same time, Caesarius never questions what he has heard from others and relates as truth what would be really a fairy tale or a legendary account (vol. VIII, 59, VII 34, V 27). For him, miracles happened everywhere since the life of all people was determined by them. It is worth noting here that the great authority on magic, the fifteenth-century medical doctor and scholar Johann Hartlieb, translated the chapters VII-XII of the *Dialogus miraculorum* into German ca. 1460, which clearly indicates that magic and miracles were regarded with very similar interest.

**Miracles According to Caesarius of Heisterbach**

In the introduction to the seventh distinction, Caesarius explains himself that the workings of the Virgin Mary transcend all natural laws: “supra naturam fuit” (vol. III, p. 1276), which finds its explanation in the fact that she descended from the Tree of Jesse. There is no question, of course, that the author fully admires the Virgin and would never associate her with magic, but we will observe striking parallels between this discourse on miracles and the discourse on magic. As to be expected, Caesarius sings an extraordinary paean on Mary and describes her as a most saintly person who stands beyond all worldly matter and elates everyone who believes in her and is then graced with a vision of herself (p. 1278). He also characterizes her as a helping and loving mother who can always be called upon in all situations of suffering, emergency, pain, danger, sickness, death, and then as well in natural disasters. All this is very much in line with common tropes for the Virgin Mary in medieval and early modern Europe.

27 Langosch, “Caesarius von Heisterbach,” 1152-68.

28 Wagner, “Caesarius von Heisterbach,” 1363-66; for a detailed study on Hartlieb, see Johann Hartliebs Übersetzung; Caesarius von Heisterbach, *Dialogus Miraculorum* (see note 26), vol. 1, 87.

29 Maria, Abbild oder Vorbild; Oakes, Ora pro nobis; Maria in Hymnus und Sequenz. The literature on this topic is legion.
The first two miracle tales reflect on this topic with great intensity, the first dealing with massive thunderstorms and rainfall, the second with a major flooding in northern Germany. Each time, Mary became involved on behalf of people and saved them. In the first case, this becomes visible through the appearance of drops of sweat on the “imago Dei Genitricis” (p. 1280), which amazes everyone and finds its explanation by an individual whom the narrator calls “ob sessus” (p. 1282), or lunatic. According to him, Christ had already intended to strike the earth and destroy it, as indicated by the mighty storms, but His mother held his hand back and so saved the world.30 Her great effort, however, made her perspire, which thus would explain the drops on her image.

In the second tale, we hear of a major flooding of the land facing the North Sea affecting Frisia above all in 1218.31 Here we find a perfect example of Caesarius’s constant effort to be as concrete and specific as possible, which then allows him to embed the miracle tale within a highly realistic framework. As he tells his student, more than 100,000 people died, and the floods almost extended as far south as Cologne. However, finally, the water receded again because Christ ordered it to do so, but only once His mother had pleaded with him (p. 1284). Behind all miracle stories or accounts about magic rests a deep desire to understand the reasons for certain phenomena happening in this world which humans either cannot comprehend or which cause them much suffering and confusion. The story offered here contains a complex account of a drunken man who had tried to hurt a priest but only hit his chalice with the wafers for the Eucharist, the pyxis. As a punishment, the provincial deacon later excommunicated him until he accepted his guilt and went on a crusade (fifth crusade; Damietta, Egypt, c. 1217-1221) to repent his sins, and he died there, together with the priest who had accompanied him.

30 There would be a contradiction here since God had promised people after the deluge to spare them ever since, and Christ would not have reneged His Father’s pledge (Gen 9: 9-11). But Caesarius does not consider this problem.

31 The history of natural catastrophes in the Middle Ages still has to be written, but see Jacques Berlioz, *Catastrophes naturelles*. 
Nevertheless, subsequently the flood hit Frisia, and a devout woman received a vision from the Virgin who informed her that the flood was a punishment for the knight’s misdeeds that he had not fully repented. In fact, he had been sent to hell, as Mary informed the woman, and, as we can deduce from the following events, all of Frisia was also guilty since they had not built a church on the spot where the wafers had been scattered on the ground. That happened only later, after a second flooding had hit the land, which resulted again in the death of thousands of people (p. 1288). Apparently, following this account, despite the appeal by the Bishop Theoderic of Münster to the population to carry out a global repentance, all actions done against God found a direct response here on earth. Returning to the introductory remarks, the rescue then followed only because Mary created a miracle and convinced her son to stop the water. She could as well have worked as a magician and spoken a charm to achieve the same effect, but Christian authors would never admit that their beliefs in miracles strongly resembled the belief in magic.

Cause and effect are hard to understand here, and Caesarius makes only a feeble attempt to connect the influence the Virgin has upon her son with the receding of the flooding. Divine retribution is swift and affects a massive number of people all over Frisia although they had nothing to do with the drunken knight and his attack against the priest. In fact, the narrator himself admits that all the best efforts by the Frisians to do penance collectively were not enough to satisfy God, which triggered the second flooding (p. 1288). He also has trouble aligning the report by the Prior Theoderic, according to which the knight had demonstrated honest contrition for his evil deed, with the comments by the Virgin granted to the devout woman, according to which the knight had ended up in hell for his sins (p. 1286). At any rate, a miracle happened at the end, as far as we can tell, because the third flooding did not occur. Causing damage to the host, hence to the body of Christ, results in punishment affecting the entire country: “Propter iniuriam filii mei . . ., submersa est Frisia” (p. 1286). Indirectly, hence, the Virgin can control the forces of nature; she only has to request her son’s help, who thus proves to be the greatest magician of them all, so to speak.
We encounter a very different projection of the Virgin Mary in the sixth chapter that deals with a severe conflict between the entire Order of the Cistercians whom Pope Innocent III ordered to hand over the 40th part of all of its movable properties to the Church for the preparation of the fourth crusade. The Cistercians refused to submit, however, pointing out that they had been exempted from such a heavy burden by privileges issued by various previous popes. This resistance angered Innocent so much that he invited the worldly lords to take all the properties owned by the Order in a violent fashion, offering them even indulgences as a reward for their action. Undaunted, the Cistercians turned to prayer, appealing to the Virgin for help in that matter, especially because she was the patroness of the Order.

They had success with their request since Mary then appeared in a vision to the pope’s confessor, Renerio, warning the pope with severe consequences: “ego te et omnem potestatem tuam conteram” (p. 1298). Since Innocent believed what his confessor told him, he immediately repented and reversed course entirely, submitting under this powerful and aggressive threat by the mother of God. For the Cistercians, this turnout represented a miracle and underscored, once again, the power of prayers.

Some of the miracles told represent highly complex cases of legal wrangling involving many different parties fighting over property handed over to the Church for the erection of a monastery (ch. 7). Numerous nobles struggled hard to regain those lands and their money by means of the courts, or violently. The Virgin, however, identified as the patroness of the monastery, knew how to defend herself effectively, and had most of the nobles suffering terrible defeat, bad physical injuries, or even death. One of them simply burst apart: “in via crepuit medius” (p. 1300). In a vision, the Virgin informs the recipient that she would go to see her son and ask for his actions punishing the perpetrators (p. 1304). After all, as Caesarius is not tired of emphasizing, anything done against the monastery was actually committed against the Virgin herself, who thus was
forced to take specific actions. Thus, praying to her was tantamount to calling upon the most powerful entity in the other world and requesting assistance in a most difficult case. Extreme dangers or desperate situations are regularly coped with by means of the Virgin’s direct involvement, which proves to be intriguingly parallel to the workings of a magician, such as in the case of Boccaccio’s ninth story of the tenth day in his Decameron (ca. 1440) or in Geoffrey Chaucer’s The Franklin’s Tale (ca. 1400).\(^{32}\)

Many miracle stories relate of individuals who fall sick or are about to die when they have visions of the Virgin and then feel contrition, quickly repent their sins they had committed a long time, confess, and then either recover or die in the hope that their soul will be saved, all this closely following the standard model of countless other medieval miracles. Other accounts relate of various types of visions, of Mary blessing some individuals, helping others, often against evil demons—especially in Distinction V—so we are constantly exposed to the narrative struggle between miracle and magic, as the working of the demons is described in this context. There we also learn about magical charms and magical rituals, which, however, achieve only temporary solutions, drawing upon the devil, for instance, who then kills the individual who had tried to gain power through those means. For Caesarius, like all other authors of miracle tales, the devil only deceives his victims and makes them believe that they have gained riches, influence, official posts, love, and the like, but they are all exposed and then condemned (see, e.g., Distinction V, p. 16).

When we consider the nineteenth chapter (pp. 1344-46), we come across a different encounter between the Virgin Mary and a monk, who is invited by her to read what is written on her crown. This requires three attempts, with angels lifting him up and letting him

\(^{32}\) Boccaccio, The Decameron, 764-83. In other tales, Boccaccio takes a rather skeptical, sarcastic position regarding magicians, such as in II, 1, III, 8, VI, 10, VIII, 3, VIII, 7, and VIII, 9. The fifth story of day ten was obviously the basis for Chaucer’s The Franklin’s Tale. See Geoffrey Chaucer, The Canterbury Tales, Sec. ed. by Robert Boenig and Andrew Taylor (Peterborough, Ont.: Broadview Editions, 2012), 243-58.
down again, where he has to do his special prayers, until he is finally able to read and understand the words. However, he is then obliged not to reveal to anyone what he had read (“ne scripturam ulli hominum proderet,” p. 1344). Caesarius knows about this monk’s vision, but he cannot tell the novice anything else because the monk had observed the Virgin’s order and kept the words a secret. Again, this proves to be a direct parallel with the purpose and function of magical charms that have to be kept a secret serving the inductees only. Throughout the Middle Ages, the various mystics had similar experiences, facing great difficulties to come to terms with the divine message, not knowing how to translate the apophatic into ordinary language. Moreover, numerous poets included comments about mysterious texts that carried religious or other meanings that were only intended for chosen individuals.

Both there and in many medieval and early modern grimoires, and so here as well in Caesarius’s miracle tales, the same phenomenon comes to the surface, the profound struggle to overcome the epistemological difference between the human and the spiritual dimension, and thus to control the conditions here on earth, especially when they appear as desperate and devastating. Secrets always remained in place, though the miracle account builds already concrete bridges between the ordinary person and the Virgin Mary. The author here confirms this by way of citing a passage in the New Testament, 1 Corinthian 2, 9: “quae oculus non vidit, nec auris audivit, nec in cor hominis ascenderunt” (“The eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man what things God hath prepared for them that love him”). The Virgin Mary thus emerges as the critical communicator between the faithful and Christ, conveying His messages and informing Him about people’s needs, and at times asking her son to intervene and to protect or to punish some.

33 Daxelmüller, Zauberpraktiken; Rider, Magic and Religion; Benati, “Painted Eyes,” 149-218. As to the magical function of written texts, see the contributions to The Book and the Magic of Reading.

34 “Spiritual and Existential Meanings of the Word,” 221-39; see now also Amsler, Affective Literacies.

35 The Vulgate Bible. Vol. VI, 871.
As the monk then adds, the Virgin could also appear in a quiet vision and bless a devout nun, for instance. But even under those circumstances, a magical moment happens, and the individual is taken out of the ordinary and graced with a miraculous experience. For Caesarius and his audience, and for countless other Christians, those miracles had to be believed and had a high and very positive reality value. Accounts of magic, though regularly demonized, in a literal sense, operate virtually in the same way, make the impossible possible, and transform the physical dimension to the advantage of those who practice magic. However, since magic was regularly associated with demons and the devil, it was rejected, at least by the Church authorities.

The literary evidence, by contrast, often spoke a different language, if we think of magic practiced in Wolfram von Eschenbach’s *Parzival* (ca. 1205), in Konrad von Würzburg’s *Partonopier und Meliur* (ca. 1290), or in the anonymous *Perceforest* (ca. 1330-1340), to name a few. There we read not simply of demonic forces, which are actually absent, but of highly skilled practitioners of superior skills that amount to magic, but are not derived from the devil or any of his companions. Unfortunately, magic did not succeed in becoming the fully-fledged focus of medieval narratives and always remained, quite understandably, at the margin as something uncanny and incomprehensible. Nevertheless, there is magic in many medieval and also early modern narrative accounts, and despite many efforts by religious authors to denigrate and eliminate it, magic continued to prove its astounding mainstay power, at least in narrative terms, and this very parallel to the genre of miracle tales.

Gestures, rituals, performances with words and objects gain miraculous power, just as in cases of magical incantations. In the twentieth chapter (pp. 1346-56), a quadriplegic young woman experiences a vision in which her soul is taken to heaven, and once it has returned, she still clutches to the lower part of a candle in her hand. The narra-

36 Tuczay, *Magie und Magier*, 105–20; see also Tuczay, “Medieval Magicians as Entertainers.”
tor emphasizes that it holds miraculous power, such as when water is poured over it and then given to sick people, they would immediately regain their health (p. 1352). Caesarius does not question this and simply presents this account as something that he has heard and believes, and the novice is supposed to follow this model. Since this ‘miracle’ is associated with the teachings of the Church, it is, indeed, a miracle; otherwise, it would be regarded as magic, considering the basic elements contained in the narrative: visionary experience, external power or creature, exchange of objects, ritual, and subsequent healing.

The twenty-third chapter relates of a vicious attack by some Albigensians (Cathars) against two Catholic clerics, one of whom they torture by cutting out his tongue. He survives, however, and is taken to Cluny, where he receives all possible help in such a desperate situation. At night, he suddenly urges with all his might the hospital staff to take him to the altar in the church, where he experiences a vision of the Virgin Mary, who places a new tongue into his mouth. Overjoyed about this miracle, he joins the monastery and can demonstrate to anyone interested in getting proof for the Virgin’s working that the new tongue is of a lighter color than the other flesh at the root, separated by a scar: “adhuc cycatricem in loco praecisionis servans” (p. 1368).

Intensive faith, ritualistic prayer, and the visitation of the holy space before the altar make this miracle possible, and so the impossible actually happens, which can be verified, as the narrator emphasizes, through the physical signs. Again, reality is transformed through the intervention of outside forces, here the Virgin Mary, but it could also have been any other power, as practiced by, or resorted to, magicians, although their efforts were commonly identified as necromancy, hence as evil. Nevertheless, the interest in both aspects was great throughout the entire Middle Ages, often because individuals suffered from illness or severe sickness which no medical doctor could heal.
This is impressively illustrated in the account of a boy who suffers from festering eczema on his head that smells so badly that not one of his peers wants to sit next to him in class. But one night, while he is going to church, being in error about the correct time, meaning that the church is still locked, he suddenly finds it open and encounters the Virgin Mary, who blesses him and grants him recovery from his wounds with the help of some natural remedy (“fructus ligni fusilis,” p. 1370, ch. 24). The combination of prayer, deep faith, and the subsequent ritual, washing his head with resin-filled water, actually brings about complete healing.

For the master narrator, this proves to be not surprising because she was the mother of the divine physician, ‘Christus medicus,’ “Ipsa medicum genuit, ipsa medicinam generis humani ex se produxit” (p. 1372), a common medieval and early modern trope, which is rooted, however, in the Old Testament (Ecclesiasticus, Sir 38, 4), which Caesarius quotes here appropriately. He actually extrapolates this further and identifies Mary as the Earth and Jesus as the Savior, meaning the physician. In a further variation, he goes so far as to call the Virgin a garden of aromas, “hortus est aromatum” (p. 1372). Despite such a poetic expression, the narrator here also proves to be grounded in reality since he knows not only of pilgrimage sites such as Rocamandour north of Cahors or Vaux-de-Cernay, southwest of Versailles, both dedicated to Mary, but also of the medical school of Montpellier, where the physicians have become jealous of the many miracles that the Virgin has worked in a special church for which she is the patron. The medical doctors refuse to treat the poor patients and mockingly refer them to that church, and yet just there they receive miraculous healing after having pledged to fast for a specific amount of time on her behalf (p. 1374). While Caesarius does not refer to magicians in this context, he specifically emphasizes that healing could happen in several ways, either through a learned, practical treatment in return for money, or simply through

faith. The third option, here not mentioned, thus would be to resort to magic, that is, incantations or charms, but all these approaches aimed, of course, at the same goal. And, in essence, the religious strategy easily proves to be very similar to the magical one.

No collection of miracle stories would be complete without references to the devil, against whom a prayer to the Virgin Mary always proves to be effective, as we learn in some of the following chapters (chs. 25-26). Then, however, Caesarius also reflects on the miraculous power of an ‘Ave Maria’ spoken in the right moment when a knight is trying to rape a lady and suddenly loses all of his strength (ch. 27). Another knight is miraculously freed from very strong iron shackles after he has prayed to the Virgin, who also protects him in his flight from the castle, although many servants try to catch him while pursuing the escapee (p. 1382). A priest survives a mighty thunderstorm and is then freed from his fright through the appearance of the Virgin (ch. 29).

The pattern is always the same: the individual persecuted by others, suffering from physical tortures, or in danger of losing his or her life only has to formulate a prayer, sing an antiphone or a sequence, and thereby express deep faith, whereupon the Virgin Mary appears and solves the issue. Magical words, as we could almost say, ritualistic behavior, and a strong faith represent the perfect combination to bring about the miracle, as this entire distinction illustrates through many other examples. Of course, all these narratives remain firmly within the Christian framework, and Caesarius himself would strongly object to any attempt to recognize parallels between magical charms and prayers to the Virgin Mary, but both the performance of the faithful and the actual outcome then prove to be very similar. Could we then call magic perhaps simply an alternative religion?

Caesarius also did not feel any hesitation to regale his audience with rather sensuous tales that result in the rescue of the individual

38 Rape was a topic of intense interest in medieval law, theology, and literature; see now Classen, *Sexual Violence*. 
tortured by erotic desires for a married woman, for instance (chs. 32-34). Faith alone suffices, and since the various protagonists ultimately turn to the Virgin Mary, they are always rescued, that is, they cool down and lose their sexual passion, and this regularly after they have experienced a vision. Both the miracle account and the magical narrative rely heavily on the transformation of the physical reality by means of non-material beings or forces that come to the rescue in human affairs after certain conditions have been met beforehand. Both the magician and the faithful Christian resort to specific words, to rituals, and to gestures in order to achieve the desired goal of regaining one’s health or being rescued from a life-threatening danger, or to realize a personal goal of great importance.

Most importantly, as chapter fifty-one illustrates, the Virgin Mary comes to the assistance of those who are faithful and are about to die. She serves as a helper and as an intermediary between heaven and earth, and particularly in the last hours of life, either defending the individual against the attack by demons, or simply by taking the soul of the deceased up to heaven. Even those who are identified as having been criminals and tyrants on earth suddenly receive grace in the last minute before they are executed because they demonstrate contrition, repent, and entrust their soul to the virgin (ch. 57).

Most curiously, even the worst robbers can find help with the Virgin Mary, as is the case with the captain of a gang of robbers near Trieste, in Italy. Although he has committed countless acts of violence and even murder, he had started to fast one day a week in honor of the mother of God, as a Cistercian monk had encouraged him to do (ch. 58, p. 1494). Later, by accident, he is apprehended and executed, and then buried outside of the city. At night, however, the Virgin arrives with four other women, retrieves the body, re-attaches the head, and carries the corpse to the city gate where she orders the men to inform the bishop to bury her own chaplain, “capellanum meum” (p. 1498), as she now calls him, honorably in the church, which then also happens. As much as the novice questions how this one day of fasting could have secured the robber the Virgin’s grace,
as much the master assures him that “per finalem contritionem factus est filius gloriae” (p. 1498), leaving the audience with a curious conundrum that worldly law would not be able to solve.

Surprisingly, we also encounter miracle tales involving the devil who carries out everything his ‘victim’ wants him to, but then he never hurts him or robs his soul. The knight Everhard from Amel falls into a serious brain sickness and suddenly rages against his wife whom he had loved dearly before. One night, the devil appears in a human shape and offers him to fulfill all of his wishes without requesting any commitment in return. First, he takes him to Rome to see the pope who grants him a dispensation from his marriage. Then, he transports him to Jerusalem where he can visit the church of the Holy Sepulcher and other famous Christian sites and say his prayers, and this in the presence of the demon. Subsequently, he is allowed to visit the military camp of the Sultan Saladin, then returns home, can warn in time one of his own merchant of the imminent danger as prophesied by the demon, and finally witnesses a military attack against his territory, which in reality was then to happen.

The entire travel, however, is undertaken only by the knight’s soul, and yet, once it has returned to the body, which then recovers from its coma, he can relate all the details of his journey in great precision, which others can authenticate (Distinction V, ch. 37). There are no further comments by the narrator, but the novice remarks that he has heard that sometimes demons torture their victims, but do not allow them to commit any serious sin: “sed eosdem criminaliter pecare non sinant” (p. 1086). This is then confirmed through the next chapter where a demon does not allow an obsessed person to eat because the food derives from a calf that had been born from a cow that, five generations ago, had been robbed from someone (ch. 38).

**Conclusion**

Let us conclude here and state, first of all, that the *Dialogus miraculorum* proves to be a treasure trove for the entire history of mentality and the history of everyday life in the Middle Ages. This body of
texts is actually very similar to the huge corpus of texts contained in the papal Penitentiary in which countless people related their personal concerns, worries, fear, anxieties, and even terrors in order to regain their social status or rank.\(^{39}\) However, Caesarius projected miracles, that is, accounts about the most improbable transformation of people, about the realization that a spiritual approach to material problems can solve the issue, and narratives about how sick or desperate individuals could gain salvation despite a person’s sinfulness. Miracles are much about grace and mercy, whereas magic brings about change in material conditions by means of powerful forces beyond the human reach.

Irrespective of how we might want to evaluate the *Dialogus miraculorum*, here we face a narrative world where religious events take place that would seem highly impossible to a realistically and rationally thinking individual. Nevertheless, faith underscores all those events related here, and because of that the Virgin is always willing to intervene and help, even in desperate situations. At the same time, whenever we learn about magicians operating by themselves to bring about marvelous changes, such as in the works of Wolfram, Boccaccio, or Chaucer, we recognize that the fundamental conditions are the same. The individual is in terrible conditions and needs rapid and mysterious help to solve the problem. Prayers or charms serve as the narrative medium to reach out to the higher being, and consistent and regular rituals help to bring about the miraculous change. There is little wonder that the representatives of the Christian Church consistently argued against magic because it was one of its greatest competitors.

The *Dialogus miraculorum* mirrors the world of Christian miracles exclusively, so it seems, but the close reading also sheds significant light on the hidden discourse, based on magic, behind the scene. Ironically, as we might claim, even though the discourse on miracles certainly won over the discourse on magic, at least in the Middle

Ages, in the modern world the very opposite seems to have been the case, with magic appealing primarily to the contemporary audiences, while the genre of Christian miracles attracts only a subordinate interest by religiously devout people. Nevertheless, as our analysis can now confirm, despite the predominantly religious orientation in all of these miracle tales, a close reading reveals everywhere the same narrative strategy as in the discourse on magic, as much as the authors of miracles tried hard to dismiss the latter as thoroughly as possible and to claim the very same power as offered by the spirits, demons, or even the devil for themselves.  

The very opposition to magic, which appears to be the benchmark for many of the miracles and the entire dominant discourse by the Church, supports the actual impact which magic truly had on pre-modern society, even though it hardly ever gained a major role in pre-modern narratives because of the supremacy of the Christian framework, here disregarding curious but significant connection points between both domains. While the focus of this study has rested on Caesarius’s miracle tales, the real conclusion underscores the significant parallels between both worlds and encourages us to investigate much more closely the anthropologically and mentally shared common ground of miracles and magic, which finds some of its best expressions in the large corpus of magical charms and then also prayers.

For Caesarius, and like him for most of his contemporaries within the Christian fold, the individual possessed free will and could choose between the good and the evil. The devil, however, knows, according to our author’s own statements, how to utilize the weakness of

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40 Peters, *The Magician*; see now also, for modern perspectives, Subbotsky, *Science and Magic*.

41 *L’Ars notoria* au Moyen Âge; Subbotsky, “Magic, Theurgy,” 37–78; Page, *Magic in the Cloister*, and Page “Uplifting Souls, 79–112; Fanger, *Rewriting Magic*. We are still far away from fully understanding the complete extent to which magic was practiced and studied by the learned intellectuals in the pre-modern world. I have not been able to see the latest publication on this topic: *The Routledge History of Medieval Magic*.

42 Classen, “Zauberzüge, Beschworungen,” 231-39; Classen,“Old High German Missionary Activities,” 77-88; Benati, “Charms and Blessings,” 115-43; Benati, “*Swa breðel seo,*” (forthcoming); Ciaran Arthur, Ciaran, “*Charms*, Liturgies, and Secret Rites.”
the human flesh and the seductive power of this world to convince the individual foolishly to select the evil and thus to lose his or her soul (Distinction VIII, ch. 44). Nevertheless, the miraculous involvement of the Virgin Mary provided much protection, especially for the faithful. Those on the other side of the divide, relying on magic, would have easily agreed if the name had been replaced by a magical power. We are facing, thus, a major feature both of Christianity and medieval culture at large, the constant, though often rather muted or even repressed, competition of the official Church with the representatives of magic and other powers. While the miracle tales were predicated on a general level of belief among the faithful, the tales about magic represented a dimension that was systematically repressed and yet did not disappear altogether throughout the ages.

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Using a spreadsheet tracking touring in England’s counties by entertainers attached to members of England’s royal families suggests that such activity was wide-spread dating from the time of Edward III, and that those entertainers may have served to “advertise” royal power.

For years I’ve been rummaging about in the published volumes of the *Records of Early English Drama (REED* for short), and other printed sources, which like the data in the *REEDs*, comes from parish, household, court, and various types of municipal records concerning performance activities in medieval and early modern England. My focus here is the evidence of travelling entertainers sponsored by royalty—reigning monarchs and their immediate families. I use the term entertainers to include not just players but minstrels, musicians, jesters, jugglers, acrobats, and animal keepers (most often bearwards).¹ There does not seem to be a bias in the records that indicates performances of royal entertainers are listed any more than others—for the records include references to noblemen’s and noblewomen’s performers, those of knights, those of gentrymen, those sponsored by various towns, and unnamed groups of entertainers. Unfortunately, rarely do they inform us what the entertainers performed. These are financial accounts, so their focus is upon how much was spent. Most of the time the records only give a total expenditure; infrequently some records include amounts for auxiliary expenses like wine and food furnished to the visiting entertainers.

¹ Records in Latin mention *histriones*, *mimis*, *luditores*, and *lusitores*. *Histriones and mimi* probably designate some sort of actors, and *luditores and lusitores* are generic terms for players. See William Smith, *A Smaller Latin-English Dictionary*, rev. ed., J. F. Lockwood (New York, 1962), 311, 410-11, 435. Minstrels may be actors, musicians, dancers, or all of these. Bearwards, and animal keepers, jesters, jugglers, and acrobats (tumblers) usually are specified as are musicians: trumpeters, pipers, harpists, drummers, and waits.
To date I’ve collected data from 35 English counties. Since the REED project has not published volumes for all of England’s counties, my data also comes from several other sources such as Ian’s Lancaster’s *Dramatic Texts* and the Malone Society’s *Plays and Players*. Each time I find a new record I enter it into my master spreadsheet, which now is jumbled up with a little over 10,100 entries. But the nice thing about a spreadsheet is that it is easy to sort, which can allow one “sapere videre” “to know how to see” what exists in the jumble of data (to quote the theme of the 2019 Rocky Mountain Medieval and Renaissance conference where this paper was presented).

Sorting the spreadsheet according to patrons is one approach. Using that criterion one “sees” that the spreadsheet contains lots of kings, princes, and queens. Excluding court performances (that I would characterize as “in house”), England’s dramatic records reveal appearances throughout the realm by the entertainers of every single reigning monarch except Edward V, who was deposed within 3 months of his accession in 1483. Over 365 years, from 1227, when Edward I’s “ystroni” received twelve pence at Canterbury, until 1642, when Charles I’s trumpeters received 120 pence at Oxford,² dramatic records from 35 counties reveal a bit over 2,548 performances by entertainers who were “servants” of England’s reigning monarchs.³ When comparing that number to about 10,000 records of all touring performances in those 365 years, we can “see” that one-fourth of all touring entertainers were those attached England’s kings and queens-regnant.

Though not as frequently, we also can “see” that the dramatic records contain performances by entertainers of every Prince of Wales, save the future Edward II and the future Richard II—from the entertainers of Prince Edward of Woodstock (the Black Prince) at Canterbury in 1339 to the trumpeters of the future Charles II at York in 1642. (I include Princess Mary who was de facto princess of Wales from 1525 until her bastardization in 1533 with her own Court and

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² REED Kent, 28; REED Oxford, 80.

³ See Appendix: Reigning monarchs.
Household at Ludlow.)⁴ And also the dramatic records show frequent performances by several “spare” heirs—four sons of Edward III, two of Henry IV, the second sons of Edward IV, Henry VII, and James I, James’ daughter Lady Elizabeth, and Henry VIII’s illegitimate son Henry Fitzroy.⁵ Interestingly, the only child of Henry VIII who never had a troupe of entertainers attached to her name was the future Queen Elizabeth.

But wait, England’s dramatic records also contain tours by entertainers of several queens-consort: Queen Philippa (wife of Edward III), Queen Margaret of Anjou (wife of Henry VI), Queen Elizabeth Woodville (wife of Edward IV), Queen Anne Neville (wife of Richard III), Queen Elizabeth of York (wife of Henry VII), four wives of Henry VIII—Queens Catherine of Aragon, Anne Boleyn, Jane Seymour, and Catherine Parr—and Queen Anne of Denmark (wife of James I).⁶ And we can add to that number the entertainers of two mothers of reigning monarchs, Cecily Neville (Edward IV and Richard III), and Margaret Beaufort (Henry VII),⁷ as well as the brothers of Edward IV, George, duke of Clarence, and Richard, duke of Gloucester.⁸ When we add all of those immediate members of royal families, we “see” a total of about 3,738 performances about England by their respective entertainers (see table below). That means about 37% of all data in England’s dramatic records printed to date refers to entertainers attached to “the royals.”

⁴ REED York, 615; REED Kent, 41. See Starkey, Six Wives, 169-71, 442-43, and 521-22. For her performers on tour see Appendix: Princes of Wales.

⁵ See Appendix Spare Heirs.

⁶ See Appendix Queens-consort.


## Royal Entertainers in County Dramatic Records, 1277-1642

<table>
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<th>FIRST YR</th>
<th>LAST YR</th>
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<td>Middlesex</td>
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<td>Nottingham</td>
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<td>Oxford</td>
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<tr>
<td>York</td>
<td>1442</td>
<td>1642</td>
<td>106</td>
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**TOTAL** 3738
What were the purposes of these “royal” entertainers touring England’s counties? After all their main raison d’être was to entertain their patrons; but most of these recorded performances were not necessarily in conjunction with visits by their patrons. Perhaps one reason they toured was to augment the incomes they received from their patrons. Yet it must be remembered that these performers were the servants of their patrons and would not be touring unless given leave by their masters. Hence, their mere presence in the localities in which they performed may have been what Leonard Tennenhouse calls Power on Display (to quote his book title). Travelling entertainers indirectly served to represent, to “advertise,” their patrons’ power and status. We know that the Lord Chamberlain paid allowances for liveries for his acting company to march in his entourage in Queen Elizabeth’s funeral procession, and its new, royal patron did the same so that the King’s Men could march in James I’s “official” entry into London in 1604. King James also sent members of the company to attend the Spanish ambassador.9 Probably they also served as intelligencers and messengers, carrying messages and bringing back tidbits of information about people and events in the provinces,10 and though our knowledge of repertories is very slim, some performers may have promoted policies advocated by their patrons. Such certainly was the case during the religious reforms of Henry VIII and Edward VI. Some evidence also suggests that increased touring coincided with times when their patrons sought to emphasize their status and power within the realm.11

According to the dramatic records published to date, we find “royal” entertainers performing in 35 counties. But which counties saw

9 Tennenhouse, Power on Display. Forse, Art Imitates Business, 164; Bate, Soul, 209.

10 Records from Exeter (1533) note 6s. 8d paid to King Henry VIII’s minstrels ‘that brought the letters to Master Mayor’ (REED: Devon, 132). Records from Canterbury (1340) and Battle Abbey (1346) list payments to messengers and entertainers of Prince Edward of Woodstock (the ‘Black Prince’), his father Edward III, his mother Philippa of Hainault, and other nobles (REED Kent, 41 and REED: Sussex, 182). I think it probable that the messengers were their entertainers. Also see McMillin and MacLean, 22-32; McLean, “The Politics of Patronage,” 175-82; and Forse, “Advertising,” 118-19.

11 See Walker, Plays of Persuasion; White, Theatre and Reformation; Westfall, Patrons and Performance, 121-22, 134-35, 233; McMillin and MacLean, Queen’s Men, 39, 44, 48-49; Forse, “Getting Your Name,” 91-108, 117.
them most often? We can “see” from the table in the appendix that County Kent, with 1158 performances, leaps to the forefront of preferred destinations. Performances in Kent account for over 30% of all touring performances by “royal” entertainers. Next comes Middlesex with 309 recorded performances, but most of these were at Court. Various entertainers attached to the royal families visited Oxford 294 times, Devon 239 times, Cambridge (230), Sussex (162), Shropshire (170), Sussex (162), York (106), and Norfolk (105). The data published to date from the remaining counties yields fewer than 100 appearances per county by “royal” entertainers.¹²

Geographically, royal entertainers performing in those six counties means the badges of the monarchs and other members of the royal families were frequent reminders of royal authority in areas of economic and strategic importance: Kent, and neighboring Sussex in the southeast; Norfolk in East Anglia; Devon in the southwest; Shropshire in the west and the borders of Wales, and York in the far north. The extensive display of royal power and status in Kent represented by touring royal entertainers makes much sense. Kent was a county lacking controls found in most other counties. The county lacked great magnates, and possessed a large number of chartered towns and other semi-independent liberties. Much of the county almost was independent of the royal sheriffs. In fact, the office of Lord Warden of the Cinque Ports was created after the Kentish Cinque Ports confederation sided with Simon de Montfort in the Second Barons’ War against Henry III (1264-70). It was from County Kent came Wat Tyler’s rebellion in 1381, Jack Cade’s rebellion in 1450, the last gasp of resistance to the restoration of Edward IV in 1471, the beginnings of Buckingham’s rebellion against Richard III in 1483, the threat of revolt against Edward VI in 1549-1550, and Sir Thomas Wyatt’s rebellion against Mary in 1554.¹³ Even though Kent

¹² Citing only the first and last appearances by county. Kent: REED Kent, 28, 530; Middlesex: REED Lincolnshire, 355; REED Kent, 32; Devon: REED Devon, 69, 71; Oxford: REED Oxford, 15, 580; Sussex: REED Sussex, 151, 162; Shropshire: REED Shropshire, 128, 320; REED York, 65, 615; Norfolk: REED Norwich, 226; Malone Kent, 44.

was “quiet” after Mary’s reign, no doubt England’s royals realized they needed more eyes and ears, and their presences well-advertised in such a turbulent and independent-minded county.

As mentioned earlier, touring by entertainers of certain patrons seems to have coincided with times in which questions of authority and status became more important. The entertainers of King Edward III appear in provincial records shortly after he assumed personal rule, and during his expeditions to France after the beginning of the Hundred Years War. Those of his queen, Philippa of Hainault, appear in the records when she was accompanying Edward in France and serving as regent in England. The minstrels and other entertainers of King Henry VI appear far more frequently after the boy-king assumed his majority in 1437. Out of a total of 95 appearances in provincial dramatic records, 87 date from when he began personal rule. For instance, between 1442 and 1451 royal entertainers appeared in York 12 times—when Henry’s government (unsuccessfully) tried to assert authority in Yorkshire and intervene in the feud between the Percy and Neville families.

During Henry’s minority, tours by entertainers of his guardian-uncles (and putative heirs), John duke of Bedford and Humphrey duke of Gloucester, were fairly extensive. At that time Humphrey was seeking to be recognized as regent in England for the boy-king. The activity of his entertainers in the provinces increased after Henry assumed personal rule—a time when the young king and other members of the Privy Council were curtailing Humphrey’s influence.

In the reign of Edward IV the majority of provincial records concerning his entertainers appear after 1471, the year he regained his throne after being deposed by the Earl of Warwick the year before. Also now we “see” fairly extensive touring by entertainers of his queen, Elizabeth Woodville, his Prince of Wales, Edward, his


After Henry VII defeated Richard III at Bosworth Field in 1485, his entertainers appear on tour within the same year, and they show up in provincial dramatic records frequently throughout his reign. The entertainers of his queen, Elizabeth of York, also appear numerous times in dramatic records until her death in 1503. Always seeking to secure the Tudor claim to the throne, like Edward IV, Henry also seems to have sent entertainers of his heirs, Arthur, Prince of Wales and Henry, Duke of York (later Henry VIII) on tour shortly after their births.

Henry VIII not only sent his own entertainers throughout the kingdom (550 appearances), but also seems to have used entertainers of four of his six wives (Catherine of Aragon, Anne Boleyn, Jane Seymour, Catherine Parr) and his putative heirs (Princess Mary, Henry Fitzroy, and the future Edward VI) to advertise their respective status. Queen Mary’s entertainers seem to have identified themselves as the “kinge and quenes Maiesties Players” after her marriage to Philip of Spain. Queen Elizabeth, who refused to name a successor, made sure her presence was represented plentifully about the realm. Records published to date list well over 700 performances in the provinces by her entertainers—more than the combined total for her grandfather (Henry VII) and father (Henry VIII). Indeed, from 1583 until her death in 1603, instead of entertaining the Queen, her acting company spent 96% of their time performing in the provinces. Both Elizabeth and her father had to deal with rebellions from the North, and it is no wonder that their entertainers appear more frequently in the counties of Cheshire, Lancashire, Northumberland, Westmorland, Staffordshire, Lincolnshire, Leicestershire, and Yorkshire than most other royal troupes.

17 Forse, “Getting Your Name,” 115-17.
18 See Appendix, Reigning Monarchs.
Within the year of his succession, King James I took the three major acting companies in London into royal service: the Chamberlain’s Men became the King’s Men, the Admiral’s Men became Prince Henry’s Men, and Worcester’s Men became the Queen’s Men. Though touring by the King’s Men was far less frequent than Elizabeth’s entertainers, often the company’s touring coincided with King James’ progresses. For instance, they were summoned to Carlisle, Cumberland, in 1620, probably to attend King James returning from his visit to Scotland in 1619-1620. And King James certainly kept his eye on his players more than Elizabeth had done. Between 1603 and 1625 the King’s Men performed at Court 133 times, an average of 6 times per year. He also sent them to attend as servants to the Spanish ambassador in 1604. In 1608 entertainers attached to his second son the future Charles I (aged 8) first appear in the dramatic records, followed in 1611 by those of his daughter, Lady Elizabeth (aged 15, and now being courted by several suitors including the crown-prince of Sweden, the prince of Nassau, and successfully by Frederick, Elector Palatine of the Rhine). Both troupes of entertainers predate the death of Prince of Wales Henry Frederick (6 November 1612). As an aside, for some reason performances in the provinces by royal trumpeters show a vast increase during the reigns of James and Charles I, particularly at colleges in Oxford and Cambridge. But to sum up, it seems when royal families were seeking to establish or reassert their status and authority their entertainers are performing more frequently in England’s strategic counties.

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20 REED Cumber/Westmo/Glouc, 91.; Astington, Court Theatre, 237-56; Greenblatt, Will, 324, 329, 365-66; Speight, Shakespeare, 243; Chambers, Stage 2:218.
21 Prince Charles: REED Devon, 49; Lady Elizabeth: REED Somerset, 21; Murray, Dramatic Companies, 2: 294. At the age of 15 the king and queen already were looking for a suitable marriage for Lady Elizabeth. She would marry the Count-Palatine Frederick V, Elector Palatine of the Rhine in 1613. Shakespeare’s The Tempest was performed at Court as part of her marriage celebrations. Riverside Shakespeare, 1606. Her daughter Sophia, Electress of Hannover, was the mother of George I. See Hatton, George I, 75-76.
Appendix (sources)

Reigning Monarchs

Edward I: REED Kent, 28, 31; Extracts Durham, 503.

Edward II: REED Kent, 34.

Edward III: REED Kent, 39-42, 48-50, 58, 75-78, 80-83, 310-11; REED Sussex. 162-64; Online REED Staffordshire.

Richard II: REED Kent, 59; REED Cambridge, 11, 15; REED Cumberland/Westmo/Gloucs, 391; REEDSussex, 183; REED York, 9; Online REED Staffordshire.

Henry IV: REED Devon, 86; Malone Norfolk/Suffolk, 44.

Edward VI: REED Cambridge, 149, 154, 163-66; REED Devon, 41, 63, 78, 84, 233; REED Dorset/Cornwall, 212, 241, 505; REED Hereford/Worc, 121; REED Kent, 166-68, 170-71, 447, 450-52, 454, 545, 693-94, 776, 77; REED Lincolnshire, 81; REED Norwich, 24-26; REED Shropshire, 79, 128, 190, 200-03; REED Somerset, 46; REED Sussex, 33, 112, 114; Lancashire, Dramatic Texts, 156, 381-83; Murray, Dramatic Companies 2: 396; Harbage and Schoenbaum, 32-33.

Mary I: REED Bristol, 61; REED Cambridge, 184; REED Cumber/Westmo/Gloucs, 297; REED Devon, 42, 147-48; REED Kent, 174-75, 181, 456-57, 545, 645, 782; REED Lincolnshire, 239; REED Norwich, 37, REED Oxford, 97, 99; REED Shropshire, 81, 90; REED Sussex, 116; Hannam-Clark, 41; Harbage and Schoenbaum, 32-37; Lancashire, Dramatic Texts, 392; Malone Kent, 12; Malone Norfolk/Suffolk, 210; Murray, Dramatic Companies 2: 205, 298, 327.


Princes of Wales

Edward of Woodstock (the Black Prince): REED Devon, 70-72; REED Kent, 41, 47-50, 54, 57-58, 907; REED Lincolnshire, 577; REED Sussex, 182.

Henry V (as prince of Wales): REED Devon, 80; REED Shropshire, 128; Hannam-Clark, 19.


Arthur Tudor: REED Cambridge, 71, 74-75; REED Kent, 89, 92, 94, 97, 375, 377, 384, 751, 753-54, 756, 830-31; REED Lincolnshire, 79; REED Oxford, 38; REED Shropshire, 162; REED Somerset, 252, REED Sussex, 61-62, 64, 68, 86; REED York, 181, Malone Kent, 31, Lancashire, Dramatic Texts, 374; Dymond, Theford, 102, 137; Wickham, Stage, 334.

Henry VIII (prince of Wales after Arthur’s death): REED Cambridge, 78, 79; REED Kent, 99, 102, 103, 107, 390, 833; REED Somerset, 253; REED Sussex, 71-72, 77; Dymond, Theford, 180, 190, 221.

Mary Tudor (de facto princess 1525-33): REED Bristol, 42; REED Hereford/Worc, 487, 489-90, 512, 516; REED Kent, 429-30, REED Lincolnshire, 142, REED Oxford, 72; REED Shropshire, 75, 182, 185; Lancashire, Dramatic Texts, 266, 397; Murray, Dramatic Companies 2: 297.


Queens-consort (husbands in parentheses)

Philippa of Hainault (Edward III): REED Kent, 43-44, 47, 50-53; REED Hereford/Worc, 182; REED Sussex, 182.

Margaret of Anjou (Henry VI); REED Cambridge, 30; REED Kent, 43.

Elizabeth Woodville (Edward IV): REED Devon, 32, 35; REED Hereford/Worc, 401, 405; REED Kent, 79-83, 355, 357, 360-61, 618, 668-71, 740-44, 829; REED Sussex, 50-54; REED Shropshire, 149-52.


Catherine of Aragon (Henry VIII): REED Bristol, 30; REED Hereford/Worc, 417; REED Kent, 838; REED Oxford, 73; Murray, Dramatic Companies 2: 205; Dymond, Thetford, 576.

Anne Boleyn (Henry VIII): REED Cambridge, 106; REED Devon, 132; REED Hereford/Worc, 523, 526-30; REED Kent, 127.

Jane Seymour (Henry VIII): REED Shropshire, 194-95; Lancashire, Dramatic Texts, 395.

Catherine Parr (Henry VIII): REED Bristol, 57; REED Cambridge, 131; REED Kent, 158, 445, 447; REED Norwich, 14; Lancashire, Dramatic Texts, 379.

Henrietta Maria (Charles I): REED Coventry, 439; REED Inns of Court, 217, 234, 346-47, 354; REED Lincolnshire, 355; REED Norwich, 10; REED Oxford, 479.

Spare Heirs (fathers in parentheses)


Lionel Duke of Clarence (Edward III): REED Cambridge, 7; REED Kent, 46; Malone Kent, 117; Malone Norfolk/Suffolk, 44.


Thomas duke of Gloucester (Edward III): REED Cumber/Westmo/Gloucs, 291, REED Sussex, 183; Online REED Staffordshire.

John Duke of Bedford (Henry IV): REED Cambridge, 23; REED Devon, 81, 94-95; REED Kent, 321, 324, 326, 374.


Richard Duke of York (Edward IV): REED Devon, 36; REED Hereford/Worc, 405; REED Kent, 82, 363; REED Shropshire, 152; REED Sussex, 53.


Henry Fitzroy Duke of Richmond (Henry VIII): REED Bristol, 41-42, 45-46; REED Cumber/Westmo/Gloucs, 106, 144; REED Devon, 128, 133; REED Kent, 849; REED Lincolnshire, 343-44; REED Shropshire, 189; REED Somerset, 43; REED Sussex, 98-99, 103; Wickham, Stage, 336.

Charles I (James I, as Duke of York): REED Kent, 505; REED Norwich, 142, REED York, 533, 536; Chambers, Stage 2: 244; Murray, Dramatic Companies 2: 205, 310.

Lady Elizabeth (James I): REED Bristol, 173; REED Coventry, 383, 386; REED Hereford/Worc, 148; REED Kent, 260, 502, 504, 568, 724; REED Norwich, 138, 140-41; REED Shropshire, 303; REED Somerset, 21; REED York, 538. I do not list appearances by Lady Elizabeth’s Men after 1613, the year she married the Elector of the Palatinate and moved to the Continent.

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**The Fiscal Policy of Richard III of England**

*Alex Brayson*

*Independent Scholar*

Influenced by the “new” fiscal historiographical agenda of the 1990s, this article pioneers a radical reconstruction of the Yorkist-era royal budget. This demonstrates that the increased role of demesne revenues managed by the royal chamber in financing total expenditures under Edward IV, which was famously applauded by B. P. Wolffe, signally failed to provide for long-term fiscal stability. The removal of Edward’s French pension in 1483 led to a substantial deficit which compelled Richard III to contravene his brother’s pledge to “live of his own”. Richard’s sustained attempts, during 1483-4, to resurrect and revise controversial late Lancastrian attempts to secure permanent lay taxation failed, in a general climate of hostility to Ricardian rule. This resulted in a series of desperate royal attempts, in 1484-5, to levy loans, and to reform the administration of the chamber and the exchequer, prior to the early Tudor restoration of a “tax state” capable of funding an explosion in expenditures.*

1. Introduction

It is fair to say that Richard III’s fiscal policy is not a subject that has attracted much scholarly attention. Almost all historians of late Yorkist government who touch upon this subject have done so peripherally; that is to say, they draw upon the important research of B. P. Wolffe on late fifteenth-century chamber finance as a means of substantiating either their praise, or their criticism, of Richard’s character.¹ Wolffe drew attention to a lone surviving royal

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¹ The writer would like to record his substantial debt to the foundational research of the “new” fiscal historians of the 1990s; in particular their quantitatively-informed conceptualisation of pre-modern “domain” and “tax” states, which he has tried to build-upon, in an English context, in the current article and a number of other works. He is grateful for having shared a series of stimulating conversations with Prof. W. M. Ormrod on the Yorkist “land revenue experiment” and the late fifteenth century transition to a “domain state”, at King’s Manor, York, during the period 2012-13. This article of course constitutes the writer’s own take on Yorkist royal finance, but it ought perhaps to be read alongside Prof. Ormrod’s views offered in “The west European monarchies,” 149-5.

¹ Wolffe began his career with an influential doctoral thesis, supervised by McFarlane, entitled “The crown lands.” He subsequently published a number of works which derived in large part from his thesis including “The management of English royal estates,” *Royal Demesne; Crown Lands.*
chamber docket book, British Library Harleian manuscript 433, which demonstrates the final Yorkist monarch’s vigorous adoption of Edward IV’s policy of augmenting revenues from the crown patrimony and accounting for these through the chamber. 

Scholars broadly sympathetic to Richard take this information as evidence of his commitment to adopting and improving the economical experiment in chamber finance that many historians believe was successfully instigated by his elder brother. 

Commentators critical of Richard, however, point to the docket book as evidence of the usurper’s deployment of newly-augmented demesne revenues in the material interest of a narrow, partisan clique of Northern supporters; thus depicting a financially foolish, as well as a quasi-“tyrannical”, rule.

The present contribution takes a very different approach to royal finance during Richard III’s reign. Influenced by the “new” fiscal historiography of R. J. Bonney and W. M. Ormrod, it attempts

2 Wolfe printed a number of documents from this docket book in Crown Lands, 120-39. It ought to be pointed out that the crown patrimony is synonymous with the royal demesne; that is to say, ancient lands belonging the crown, including those acquired at a later date by forfeiture or gift.

3 See, for example, Kendall, Richard III, 312; Carson, Richard III, 72-3; 263-4. A more nuanced and scholarly presentation of this argument is found in Horrox, “The government of Richard III”, 69-70.

4 Long before Wolfe wrote, Gardiner had already drawn attention to Richard’s alleged largesse to his Northern supporters, linking this to the supposed spoliation of crown demesne resources: Letters and Papers: Vol. 1, 159. Gardiner, tellingly, had based his observation largely on the Tudor writer Sir Thomas More’s criticism that “with large giftes hee get him unsteadfast friendeshippe” after Buckingham’s rebellion. This set the tone of much later scholarship. Ross believed that Richard felt “compelled to alienate the larger part” of his demesne resources, in 1483-4, to Northern supporters (Richard III, 178), and that this policy “offend(ed) against deeply-held beliefs about what constituted the ‘community of the shire.’” Richard III, 122. This opinion has been echoed by many of Ross’ former students, including Dockray, Richard III, 106; and Pollard, “The tyranny of Richard III.” 47-65.

5 Bonney and Ormrod, “Introduction,” 1-23. The “new” fiscal historiography was conceived of as an attempt to make the case for fiscal history as a discipline worthy of study in its own right, distinct from both political and economic history. Drawing upon, and revising, the “fiscal sociology” of J. A. Schumpeter, Bonney and Ormrod set out from two foundational premises. Firstly, that the relative stage of development of contemporary and historic fiscal regimes is shaped by prevalent ideological, political and economic conditions which determine, in particular, whether they are demesne-based “domain states” or tax-based “tax states.” Secondly, and following on from this, that discerning states’ relative stage of fiscal development must involve a record-based, quantitative examination of trends in their public income, expenditure and credit. This article constitutes a detailed case study of the English fiscal state during the Yorkist and Ricardian eras, and ought to be viewed in the context of Ormrod’s scholarship on the earlier growth of the medieval English “tax state,” as discussed in the conclusion, below.
to place the chamber’s augmentation of revenue from the crown lands in the context of quantitative trends in the total estimated royal budget during both the Yorkist period as a whole and, more specifically, the reign of Richard III. This allows us to build upon C. D. Ross’ suggestion that, although Edward IV’s efforts to increase revenue from the crown patrimony were noteworthy; they did not revolutionise the crown’s overall financial position at a time when regular lay taxation was, as we shall see, off the political agenda. It is, in fact, shown that structural fiscal problems developed during the course of the Yorkist era, characterised by a decline in total revenues following on from the withdrawal of Edward’s French pension, and an upsurge in total expenditure commitments. This led Richard III, in 1483-4, to resurrect and revise the controversial Lancastrian strategy of seeking lay taxation in an attempt to equitably fund the general costs of government and to avoid the development of a worsening structural deficit. Political opposition to Richard’s fiscal policy led him, however, to change tack and try to levy large-scale credit and to more efficiently administer the crown lands. On the one hand, these fiscal expedients spectacularly failed to yield the cash required to provide for the Ricardian regime’s financial needs. On the other hand, though, the regime’s serious cash flow difficulties encouraged it to begin to structurally revise the role of both the chamber and the exchequer in national finance; administrative developments which are commonly associated solely with early Tudor rather than late Yorkist government.

2. Edward IV’s “land revenue experiment”: Yorkist government finance

Writing of Edward IV’s achievements on his death in 1483, the Crowland chronicle proclaimed that the late king had built up

6 For the difficulties of undertaking such an analysis for the Yorkist period and a methodological attempt to overcome these as best as possible which owes much to Ross’ work on Yorkist finance, see below, note 14.

7 Ross, “The reign of Edward IV”, 58-60; Ross, Edward IV, 371-87. “These new methods (i.e. the reforms centred on the chamber)”, Ross insightfully noted in Edward IV, 375-6, “have an obvious importance as a major step towards economical reform and good business management, but their importance should not be overestimated in the context of improving the king’s revenues” (my own italics).
a fortune in his chamber; that is to say, in his private quarters. Edward’s financial strength allegedly lay in his political commitment to effectively managing previously alienated royal lands, which had been “resumed” by his government; thus, the Yorkist chamber instigated what Wolffé memorably called a “land revenue experiment”. Historically, the exchequer, a bureaucratic government department centred in Westminster, had managed all royal income; including demesne revenue, much of which was lost to the crown through its assignment at source to royal supplicants. Under Edward IV, however, the chamber bypassed the cumbersome exchequer; consequently, the chamber oversaw a dynamic new regime of estate administration predicated on the appointment of informed local surveyors, sub-receivers and auditors who personally supervised royal lordships, farms and manors. These administrative changes allegedly maximised the financial worth of the resumed royal demesne; directly resulting in the crown’s net landed revenues rising dramatically, from under £5,000 during the late Lancastrian period, to over £20,000 at the close of Edward IV’s reign.

Wolffé believed that the Edwardian “land revenue experiment” near-revolutionised the crown’s financial position. Other historians have, however, counselled against drawing this conclusion. Ross noted that Edward’s net annual average landed revenues actually stood, at the very least, at around half of Wolffé’s original estimate, owing to the king’s need to financially provide for a large family. If we place c. £10,000 worth of annual average landed revenues available for public use alongside c. £30,000 worth of annual average income from the other more or less permanent source of public income,
indirect taxation, which by and large continued to be administered by the exchequer,\textsuperscript{12} we are left with c. £40,000 worth of annual average “ordinary” revenues.\textsuperscript{13} This sum falls short of total annual average expenditure on “ordinary”; that is to say, permanent, charges.\textsuperscript{14} The

\textsuperscript{12} This figure is an average of the £25,000 per annum of revenue from the customs and subsidies on overseas trade brought in during the early years of the reign; the roughly £30,000 per annum of indirect tax revenue brought in during the middle years of the reign; and the roughly £35,000 per annum of indirect tax revenue brought in towards the close of the reign. For tabular information regarding the volume of overseas trade during the mid-to-late fifteenth century, see Power and Postan, “Appendix B,” 403-4.

\textsuperscript{13} It is necessary to point out that the methodological approach adopted in this article of differentiating between “ordinary” and “extraordinary” revenues and expenditures, which was pioneered by Harriss (in his seminal \textit{King, Parliament}, has been subject to sustained, though misplaced, scholarly criticism. Wolffe (\textit{Crown Lands}, 1-28) and Lander (\textit{Government and Community}, 67) argue that, whilst contemporaries thought in terms of “certain” and “irregular” revenues and charges, beyond this there was no identifiable ideological framework regarding public revenue and expenditure of the kind which the “ordinary”/“extraordinary” dichotomy suggests. I follow Harriss (“Thomas Cromwell’s ‘new principle’ of taxation:” 723, note 1) in strongly disputing these points. The later medieval parliamentary record clearly, unambiguously demonstrates that both royal officials – in their pleading of the government’s wartime “necessity” – and parliamentarians – in their tax concessions – recognised that public taxation ought to be reserved for specific and temporary special expeditionary expenditures; an ideological maxim rooted in scholastic economic thought. Historically, it was expected that the vast bulk of public expenditures which related to permanent or “ordinary” costs, including the payment of the royal household as well as of royal officials and of standing defence costs, would be funded from the proceeds of the crown lands. Costly additions to permanent standing charges from the late fourteenth century, however, led MPs to relax their association of indirect taxation with specific royal “necessities”; parliament coming to believe that demesne revenues \textit{alongside} indirect taxation would suffice in funding permanent or “ordinary” expenditures (see note 64, below).

\textsuperscript{14} The remainder of this paragraph and, more generally, this article, builds extensively upon Ross' approach to Yorkist royal income and expenditure. In his chapter on “The king’s finances” in \textit{Edward IV}, 372-3, Ross took exchequer expenditure statistics from the early 1430s, which were originally published by Kirby (“The issues of the Lancastrian exchequer:” 143-5) and applied these to the Yorkist era whose records do not themselves allow for such an analysis. This is because, as discussed above in the text, the Edwardian exchequer ceased to account for a large proportion of income and expenditure which was processed instead by the royal chamber; the heart of Edward IV’s “land revenue experiment” for which accounts do not survive. Recent research (e.g. Brayson, “The fiscal constitution,” esp. 132-4; 168-70) has shown that a marked increase in the volume of exchequer re-assignments of previously abortive assignments to the permanent costs of state during Henry VI’s troubled reign – a result of a protracted crisis in the state’s revenues – inflated “ordinary” charges during the 1440s. Nevertheless, this did not change the fact that annual “ordinary” expenditures on current charges remained more or less static, as inferred by Ross (excluding diplomatic charges, which seem to have increased and became part of the crown’s regular operations during the 1460s and 1470s, and annuities against demesne revenues to finance patronage, which largely ceased to be an administrative consideration following on from the chamber’s superseding of the exchequer in the receipt of revenue from the crown patrimony, for which see below, note 15).
crown was faced with annual average payments of c. £45,000 on the royal household and permanent defence costs.\textsuperscript{15} An additional c. £5-10,000 at the very least would, moreover, have been required to fund miscellaneous charges, including increased diplomatic costs, and the regime’s debts.\textsuperscript{16}

A £10-15,000 annual average deficit between “ordinary” revenues and expenditures would have been a problem for any fifteenth-century English regime, but Edward was fortunate enough to have a fiscal solution in the form of a French pension, secured in 1475 in return for the Yorkists accepting peace, which totalled £10,000 per annum.\textsuperscript{17} As Figure 1, below,\textsuperscript{18} demonstrates, the French pension

\textsuperscript{15} This sum total consisted of c. £12,000 worth of household expenditure (Myers, Household, 45 – Myers’ total must be increased by c. £2,000 as he excludes the cost of the Great Wardrobe); c. £10,000 expended on the Calais garrison (Power, “The wool trade,” 44-5); £4,500 expended on the East March (Storey, “The wardens of the marches:” 615); £1,875 expended on Queen Elizabeth Woodville’s household (Myers, “Queen Elizabeth Woodville,” 253); and c. £12,000 worth of general administrative charges, including the payment of royal officials and itinerant diplomatic charges. Royal patronage which was historically administered via exchequer annuities on demesne revenues is, of course, excluded from this list of expenditures. A key feature of the Yorkist “land revenue experiment” was that the efficient, chamber-based royal administration of augmented cash income from the crown lands would eradicate the antiquated exchequer procedure of unprofitably (from the crown’s perspective) “farming out” key offices and estates via lifetime assignments; thus “freeing up” more net, cash demesne revenue. It is seldom acknowledged, however, that Edward IV’s institutional move to end the exchequer-based annuity-patronage system by taking these charges “out” of the exchequer’s global financial machinations and bringing in resumed demesne income through the chamber did not end the political pressure on monarchs to apportion large sums in financing family members, as in the case of Edward IV (see above, esp. note 11) or supporters, as in the case of Richard III (see below, section 3). Hence, net revenue from the royal demesne remained substantially lower than gross revenue; a key point which is factored into all of the royal budgetary estimates provided in this article.

\textsuperscript{16} It must be stressed that this is something of a conservative estimate, since the cumulative debts of the late Lancastrian regime, which had built up to an unprecedented £372,000 by 1450 when Henry VI’s government pleaded its insolvency in parliament, would have placed a very significant annual debt repayment burden on Edward IV’s early regime; possibly well above that suggested by the figure cited above: Lander, “Council, administration and councillors,” 192-4. Nevertheless, by the final years of his reign, Edward was said to have paid down most of the debts racked up by his Lancastrian predecessor: Ross, Edward IV, 380. This suggests that the annual cost of paying down dated debts would have declined cumulatively, and probably markedly, as the Yorkist period wore on.

\textsuperscript{17} Ross, Edward IV, 233.

\textsuperscript{18} Figure 1 is based on the statistical information given in notes 11, 12, 15 and 16. Figures 2-5, in sections 3 and 5, are also constructed on the basis of detailed preceding discussions of estimated income and expenditure.
went a large way towards eradicating the substantial structural imbalance in the regime’s “ordinary” finances:

**Figure 1: The estimated royal "ordinary" budget during the latter years of the reign of Edward IV**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Available Demesne Revenue</th>
<th>Available Indirect Tax Revenue</th>
<th>French Pension</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>£60,000</td>
<td>£50,000</td>
<td>£10,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>£40,000</td>
<td>£30,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>£20,000</td>
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<td>£10,000</td>
<td>£10,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>£0</td>
<td>£0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Available income per annum (£) | Total "ordinary"/permanent expenditures per annum (£)

Figure 1 is constructed on the premise that miscellaneous and diplomatic costs stood at the upper end of the range cited above (£10,000), which puts total “ordinary”, or permanent, charges at c. £55,000. Consequently, it hypothesises a minimal deficit of c. £5,000, which would surely have been funded either by the benevolences intermittently contracted by the king or, more likely, by leftover proceeds of clerical taxes occasionally secured in convocation.

19 In the Middle Ages a benevolence was a financial gift offered by subjects to the crown in lieu of military service; leviable by royal prerogative for the defence of the realm: Harriss, “Aids:” 8-13. During the Yorkist period, however, benevolences became a means by which the crown, which sought to avoid where possible seeking lay taxation, could tax subjects in all but name; a development which underlay the lay community’s dissatisfaction with this fiscal strategy. It has been pointed out that political as well as economic dissatisfaction can be seen in the returns of Edward IV’s two benevolences of 1474 and 1481: Gray, “The first benevolence,” 90-113; Virgoe, “The benevolence of 1481:” 25-45. Nevertheless, the timing of these two levies at times of defensive emergency, against the French and the Scots respectively, suggests that most of their yield would have been expended legitimately on war; a point which was probably grudgingly appreciated by contemporaries.

20 Clerical taxes, conceded and administered separately by the Northern and the Southern clergy on behalf of the crown, generally ran at either a tenth of clerical income, or a moiety (a half tenth). The northern convocation at York conceded 7 clerical tenths during Edward’s reign, whilst the southern convocation at Canterbury conceded 10 clerical tenths throughout the period 1461-83; a total of seventeen tenths with an overall anticipated yield of £50,500 (given that, by the Yorkist period, the yield of a southern tenth had fallen to c.
Significantly, the only parliamentary lay taxes secured by Edward were in the mid-to-late 1460s and mid-1470s; periods when Edward IV was threatened by Lancastrian insurrection and foreign war, respectively. The income being sought from these lay taxes was therefore aimed at funding (and from what we can tell, did fund) special expeditionary, “extraordinary”, expenditures, a subject which requires some elaboration.

£14,000, and that of a northern tenth had fallen to c. £1,500. Important research on the politics of clerical taxation demonstrates that, although historically clerical tenths were firmly “extraordinary” subsidies, by the fifteenth century convocations were habitually conceding these impositions almost as a matter of course; a point discussed in greater detail and with references below, in note 67.

21 Parliament conceded 6 ¾ fifteenths and tenths during the course of Edward IV’s reign; a 25% tax on crown tenants and annuitants, to be levied on all royal subjects holding lands, annuities, fees or offices worth 10 marks or more, in 1464; and a 10% income tax on the profits of all temporal lands, tenements, rents, fees, annuities, offices and pensions of all temporal possessions, in 1472: Jurkowski, Smith and Crook, Lay Taxes, 109-20. For an explanation of the operative later medieval lay tax system of fifteenths and tenths, and of alternative income-based lay taxes in development during Edward IV’s reign, see below, notes 23 and 24, respectively.

22 Ross (Edward IV, 348-9) makes much of the fact that, during 1463-5 and 1467-8, Edward IV’s military plans to lead an army against the Scots and to lead an expedition to France, respectively, were not successfully executed and resulted in embarrassing climb-downs. He infers that, in fiscal terms, Edward’s levying of lay supply was un-constitutional, given that public funds did not finance any actual campaign, yet this is to ignore the very strong likelihood that lay tax revenue was still expended on military preparations. The fact that administrative complications or a lack of political will prevented actual campaigns from coming to pass undoubtedly caused a degree of ill-will amongst MPs and the broader lay community, but there is no reason to believe that Edward stood accused of un-constitutional behaviour. A similar series of events occurred in 1472-5, as has been shown by Lander, who has reconstructed Edward’s military preparations for the abortive campaign of the mid-1470s in as much detail as possible from the surviving documentation: “The hundred years' war,” 234-8.
It has become fashionable to talk of the heavy burden of Edward IV’s fifteenths and tenths and his experimental income taxes.

Fifteenths and tenths, the standard lay tax on individuals’ moveable property in later medieval England, grew out of the late thirteenth and early fourteenth-century parliamentary tendency to tax individuals in rural areas at a lower proportion of the value of their goods and chattels (e.g. agricultural equipment, animals etc.) than their urban equivalents. Early “fractional taxes” tended to assess rural dwellers at a fifteenth, whilst urban dwellers, prior to 1332, were assessed at anything between a sixth and a twentieth. Each new parliamentary concession required a country-wide attempt to assess and tax national moveable wealth: Willard, *Parliamentary Taxes*, esp. 138-47. Institutionalised under-assessment by officials and evasion on the part of the powerful were endemic and compromised the efficacy of the central fiscal administration: Hadwin, “The medieval lay subsidies”: 207; Ormrod, “The crown and the English economy,” 155. This led Edward III’s regime, in 1334, to freeze both the national yield of a fifteenth and tenth, and the constituent sums due from individual counties, at that brought in for the fifteenth and tenth of 1332. From this point on, every time that MPs conceded a fifteenth and tenth officials were mandated to bring in the vill and borough totals yielded back in 1332; either by assessing individuals at the sums their ancestors had owed in 1332, or by redistributing the burden of frozen local quotas however they saw fit within communities: Willard, *Parliamentary Taxes*, 123-4; Hadwin, “The medieval lay subsidies.” 201-2. The so-called “quota system” ensured a broadly stable national assessment, of c. £38,000 during the first phase of the Hundred Years’ War (Ormrod, “The crown and the English economy”, 153; Ormrod, “The English government and the Black Death,” 182-5), although this had fallen to £37,339 by Henry IV’s reign, of which only £36,398 was administrable: Abbott, “Taxation of personal property:” 474-77. 1433 saw MPs force a national quota reduction of £4,000, which was increased to £6,000 in 1446: Bridbury, *Economic Growth*, 96-7. These developments contributed to the national quota assessment falling to £30,803 on the eve of the Wars of the Roses, in 1449-50; of which only £27,947 was administrable: Brayson, “The fiscal constitution,” 210. By Edward IV’s reign, the state administered a national fifteenth and tenth quota which was valued, at most, at c. £30,000.

The long-term decline in the yield of a fifteenth and tenth across the late Middle Ages, explained in note 23, above, in no small part explains the interest of Edward IV’s government in negotiating alternative lay taxes administered outside of the “quota system”. Contemporary socio-economic realities would also have driven the Edwardian regime to seek new means of taxing lay wealth, since by the mid-fifteenth century few barons paid into local lay tax quotas, owing to them having leased their demesnes, which meant that they no longer owned moveable goods used in agriculture. The state therefore had an obvious interest in devising new taxes which assessed wealth directly, not via moveable goods and chattels, but by assessing income derived from lands, rents etc., in order to ensure that the wealthiest landed subjects made at least some fiscal contribution. The lay taxes of 1464; 1472; and 1474 described in notes 21, above, and 25, below, ought to be viewed in this context. Questions remain, however, regarding the conservative nature of these subsidies. The Lancastrian regimes of Henry IV and of Henry VI had, decades earlier and in response to similar fiscal and socio-economic considerations, also made several attempts to assess income from lands and rents: Soos, “Direct taxation:” 157-76. Yet interestingly, as the Lancastrian period wore on, royal efforts at reforming the lay tax system were characterised by an increasing effort to graduate payment according to ability to pay; that is to say, the wealthiest taxpayers were charged a higher rate than the lowest, particularly in 1435 and 1450; Ross and Pugh, “The English baronage:” 1-28; Virgoe, “The parliamentary subsidy of 1450:” 125-38. It is possible that Edward IV’s inability, or unwillingness, to emulate this less regressive, Lancastrian approach owed to his fear, as a usurper, of alienating the most powerful landowners, but more research is needed on this issue.
certainly, subsidy bills such as the two and three quarters fifteenths and tenths conceded during the long parliament of 1472-5 \(25\) were resented in the country, by gentlemen and yeoman; many of whom will have paid significant proportions of local lay tax quotas. \(26\) This is understandable, given that the feudal and commercial elites were just emerging out of a quarter century of protracted socio-economic crisis, characterised by an intense squeeze on landed incomes and difficult market conditions for entrepreneurs in pastoral agriculture. Notwithstanding short-bouts of unpopular lay taxation required to fund spikes in emergency military expenditures, however, the political community knew that Edward had broadly honoured his early pledge to “live of his own”, i.e. to fund his permanent, “ordinary”, expenditures primarily from the proceeds of a well-administered royal demesne supplemented by the customs and subsidies on overseas trade. \(27\) This marked a crucial contrast to Edward’s widely resented Lancastrian predecessor, Henry VI, whose regime had doggedly attempted to secure regular lay tax grants as a

\(25\) These were the fifteenth and tenth of 1473; and the complex subsidy of 1474, which was intended as a hybrid between the earlier income tax of 1472 and a traditional fifteenth and tenth, and which was to be paid primarily by individuals with little/no land who therefore did not contribute towards the 1472 income tax, and by those whose goods/chattels were “litell or not charged” by fifteenths and tenths: Rot. Parl., 6, 113-21. The terms of the 1474 special tax back up the argument, in note 24 above, that Edward IV was particularly reluctant to tax his wealthiest subjects and, in 1474, seemed keen on shifting as much of the fiscal burden onto the backs of the poor as possible. When this subsidy proved to be impossible to administer, however, it was converted to one and three quarter fifteenths and tenths in 1475: Jurkowski, Smith and Crook, Lay Taxes, 117. These subsidies ought to be viewed in the context of the 10% income tax on profits detailed above, in note 21, which had been conceded at the outset of the parliament of 1472-5 and yielded just over £31,000; roughly the same as a fifteenth and tenth minus the conventional reductions for impoverished communities: Jurkowski, Smith and Crook, Lay Taxes, 113. As Lander (“The hundred years’ war,” 233) has thus stated, we should increase the royal tax take during 1472-5 to three-and-three-quarter fifteenths and tenths.

\(26\) For a more detailed, referenced discussion of the social demographics of Yorkist lay taxation, see the fifth section below, esp. note 124. For the opinion that Edward IV’s reign, in general, witnessed a heavy lay tax burden, see Jurkowski, “Parliamentary and prerogative taxation”: 271-90. Jurkowski’s argument glosses over Edward IV’s placating of the anti-lay tax fiscal prejudices of the political community drawn attention to in this section, as well as the historically low incidence of the Yorkist lay taxes, which is discussed below, esp. note 129.

\(27\) Edward IV personally vowed to “live of his own” before MPs at the parliament of 1467-8: Wolfe, Royal Demesne, 146-7. In “Edward IV’s speech” (98-99), the king stated that he would “not charge…subjects but in great and urgent causes.”
means of funding permanent, “ordinary” expenditures and addressing a growing deficit in the crown’s “ordinary” budget.28

Herein lay the political impetus behind Edward’s heavy reliance on income from the crown lands. Edward was a usurper who could not rely on unanimous or near unanimous political support from the national and county elite.29 He therefore had to win support, outside of the narrow clique already loyal to the Yorkist dynasty through ties of service and patronage. One important way of doing this was by conforming to the populist, anti-lay tax fiscal strategy, based on the efficient royal administration of the proceeds of recently resumed crown lands, which Edward’s deceased father, Richard, Duke of York, had formulated with the support of parliament and the county elite in opposition to the late Lancastrian court.30 Edward himself must have been acutely aware of the financial “straitjacket” which this political strategy imposed on his government.31 We see this in his creation of the chamber-based fiscal system outlined above, which was capable of maximising net revenue from the royal demesne. Edward’s drive to increase revenues is also evident in the exchequer’s hard work

28 This issue is discussed in detail in the fourth section, below, since late Lancastrian fiscal politics served as a crucial background against which Richard III and his ministers formulated royal fiscal policy, particularly ahead of the 1484 parliament. See, also section five, below, esp. note 131, which considers the socio-economic context of late Lancastrian parliamentary and popular opposition to the fiscal burden of the 1430s and 1440s.

29 Edward IV’s early rule, in particular, was characterised by what Ross called a “general desire for reconciliation”, which involved the king’s bringing of former Lancastrians into his service and his affording the fruits of strong, but accessible, kingship to all who were willing to accept Yorkist rule: Ross, *Edward IV*, 64-83 (quotation at 66).

30 For the most detailed account to date of popular and parliamentary-supported Yorkist “opposition” calls during the 1450s for fiscal reform centred on the crown’s efficient management of resumed revenues; and of the Yorkist state’s promotion of the fiscal politics of resumption during the 1460s, see Wolfe, *Royal Demesne*, 112-42; 143-79.

31 Lander memorably and far-sightedly wrote of Edward IV’s politically astute, yet in the long term financially harmful, self-imposition of “an antiquated straitjacket of endowed monarchy”: *Conflict and Stability*, 113. Lander has been accused of exaggerating the constraints of late fifteenth-century chamber finance by some scholars such as Ross (*Edward IV*, 387) – perhaps ironically in Ross’ case given that it was he who initially drew attention to the structural weaknesses of Edward’s financial position. Yet, as Lander subsequently pointed out in defence of his initial claim, “a considerable body of evidence…exists to confirm it”: “Introduction,” 42.
to root out corruption in the indirect tax system; and to increase indirect tax revenues.³²

Nevertheless, as demonstrated by our quantitative overview of trends in the Yorkist budget, the Edwardian fiscal reforms failed to afford the government much breathing space in the event that royal expenditures rose; or in the event that the French pension was withdrawn. Luckily for Edward, he never had to seriously address either of these dilemmas, which would have forced his government to face up to financial realities in such a way which would have risked seriously tarnishing the king’s standing; but it was inevitable that just such a reckoning would be necessary at some point. Unfortunately for the Yorkist state, however, two decades of the “land revenue experiment” had created a dangerously powerful false impression amongst the political elite that this was not simply a transitory phase in crown finance, but rather the new norm. This notion was heavily promoted, not only by Edward himself in his fiscal practice; but by contemporary chroniclers and political philosophers such as C. J. John Fortescue.³³ It was therefore incredibly difficult, when serious financial problems did emerge after Edward IV’s death, for his successor to secure political support for a new fiscal policy which superseded the crown lands. It is to this subject which we must now turn.

³² Commissions were undertaken into the administration of the ports as early as the mid-1460s, and the following decade witnessed the appointment of individual surveyors of the customs and a vigorous campaign against piracy: Lander, “The administration of the Yorkist kings”, upon which Lander based his subsequent comments in “Introduction,” 42-4.

³³ See the comments of the chroniclers discussed above, in notes 8 and 9. Fortescue famously set out his ideas in De Laudibus; and Governance. As Lander has, once again, insightfully noted, too many modern commentators have “parroted each other” as far as Fortescue’s insistence that princes “live of their own” is concerned: Lander, Limitations, 12. A return to the two texts referenced above demonstrates that, whilst it is true that Fortescue repeated scholastic maxims long in usage (Kantorowicz, “Inalienability,” 488-502), he also combined an unusually visceral hatred of lay taxation with a unique and unusual theological exposition of the importance of the crown lands within English government. The English kings, he stated, were like pious founders and their kingdom the greatest of perpetual chantries; institutions with fixed and permanent endowments for the singing of masses for their founders’ souls: De Laudibus, ch. 35; Governance, 113-15; 154-5; Lander, Limitations, 12-13. Such sentiment, which seems to have been formed during the crisis of the 1440s when Fortescue served in Lancastrian government and which he later articulated in writing, provides clear evidence of the ideological and political pressure Edward and his ministers were under to make the Edwardian “land revenue experiment” work.
3. The fiscal crisis of 1483-4

The year 1483, the so-called “year of three kings” which saw Edward IV’s death, the minority of his infant son Edward V and the subsequent usurpation of the infant’s guardian and protector, Richard, Duke of Gloucester, witnessed the development of serious fiscal problems which demonstrate the structural weakness of the Edwardian “land revenue experiment”. Edward IV’s ailing health and the impression this gave, in the courts of Europe, that the Yorkist regime was no longer a powerful force with which to be reckoned played a key role in the French cessation, during the final months of Edward’s reign, of the annual £10,000 French pension. On top of this, revenue from the customs and subsidies on overseas trade nosedived. For much of the late Middle Ages, the two indirect subsidies, the maltolt and tonnage and poundage, were continuously re-granted by parliament when they ran out. As was custom, however, the death of the monarch to whom these subsidies were last conceded meant that the state had to temporarily cease their administration. This meant that, for much of the exchequer year 1483-4, the regime relied solely on very light historic customary impositions on wool and cloth. Consequently, the regime anticipated

34 This catchy phrase is the title of the fourth chapter of Breverton, Henry VII.

35 For an account of Edward’s final three years which emphasises the foreign policy context, and foreign princes’ low opinion of the king’s diplomacy and tact, particularly in the final months of his reign, see Ross, Edward IV, 278-95. It is worth pointing out that even Scofield, who had a generally rosy view of Edward, was damning of his later foreign policy, stressing the manifest weakness of the English in the view of foreign courts by 1483: Edward IV: Vol. 2.

36 Ormrod, “England in the middle ages.” 32. For an explanation of these two crucial indirect subsidies and their historic development, see below, notes 62, 63 and 64.

37 Mercers’ Company, 149, 152-4. This source demonstrates that the Ricardian regime initially attempted to levy the trade subsidies, but that the London mercantile community successfully lobbied against this. This contrasts with Edward IV’s success (prior to MPs’ indirect tax concessions of 1463, discussed below in note 65) in continuing to levy the maltolt and tonnage and poundage on seizing the throne in 1461, despite these subsidies last being conceded to Henry VI: CFR, 1461-71, 4, 6. In the politically volatile circumstances of 1483-4, the Ricardian regime clearly sought to avoid a constitutional crisis over historic indirect subsidies universally accepted (even by Edward IV from 1463 onwards) as dependent on MPs’ consent (for more on Richard’s efforts to avoid conflict, particularly in parliament, at a time of unprecedented royal weakness, see the fourth and fifth sections, below).
total annual indirect tax revenue would fall as low as £12,000; a decrease of just under a third. In a sign of the Ricardian regime’s concern about these stagnating revenue sources, it breached custom in enforcing the administration of the alien poll tax which MPs had granted Edward IV in 1483. This, however, would have provided the government with less than £1,000 in compensation for the steep decline in revenues discussed above.

It was not just that the crown’s total prospective revenue base dramatically contracted; its expenditures also rose. When he died in April 1483, Edward IV was planning renewed conflict with France and was at war with Scotland. The political flux and instability caused by the factionalism of the minority of Edward V and by baronial opposition to Richard, Duke of Gloucester’s coup d’état of June encouraged French military activities in the channel. We know of c. £6,500 worth of government expenditures on fleets led by the Marquis of Dorset and Sir Edward Woodville dating from May/June

38 This was based on an exchequer estimate of £12,000 provided by Longleat Miscellaneous MS book 2, a collection of royal financial memoranda edited and published by Horrox: “Financial memoranda”: 221. These memoranda tend to be overlooked in accounts of the politics of Richard, Duke of Gloucester’s protectorate and subsequent reign (though for a notable exception, see Hicks, Edward V, 149-50; 152-4). What follows looks into the financial context in which the memoranda were produced, whilst the following section examines the broader fiscal political context, particularly the Ricardian regime’s preparations, in 1483, to ask parliament for supply.

39 This subsidy had not been administered during Edward IV’s lifetime; MPs conceded the alien subsidy on 18 February, 1483 and Edward died on 9 April of that year, over a month before the tax was due to be assessed and collected, on 18 May, 1483. On 1 August, 1483, Richard III issued letters patent for this subsidy to be levied by 6 June, 1484, as is made clear by T. N. A. E 179/108/130; Jurkowski, Smith and Crook, Lay Taxes, 120.

40 No enrolled account survives for the alien subsidy of 1483, so it is impossible to say what it yielded, however somewhere in the region of £500–£1,000 must be considered a “ceiling” in terms of the potential revenue derived from this source. Schofield (Taxation, 73-4) has shown that the final alien tax of 1487-8, which imposed identical terms of payment to that of 1483, yielded some £774. Bearing in mind that that this later subsidy was imposed in more stable political conditions, at a time when the Tudor dynasty was consolidating its hold on power, it seems likely that the alien subsidy of 1483 would, if anything, have yielded less than the c. £800 brought in 3 years later, but in the spirit of trying to demonstrate a fiscal “best case scenario” for Richard III’s reign, the following calculations, and graphical data (in Figures 2 and 3) assume that this subsidy also yielded c. £800.

41 The following two sentences are based on Ross, Richard III, 191-2.
Additionally, Richard, whose background during his elder brother’s reign was that of a Northern military commander; was committed to continued, ongoing hostilities in the far North. A year earlier, Richard, Duke of Gloucester had taken control of Berwick from the Scots, which increased permanent defence expenditures by around £5,000 per annum. It also fell to the government to fund the reconstruction of Berwick, which appears to have been ruined by warfare; this cost £2,500. As significant as these verifiable charges are, however, it is scarcely believable that total expenditures during Richard’s protectorship, and subsequently during the first financial year of his reign, stood at only c. £14,000.

After he usurped the throne, Richard was compelled to raise an armed force to suppress the Duke of Buckingham’s rebellion; to reward the relatively narrow circle of close Northern associates whose support in the ongoing dynastic and political conflict he could rely on; and to fund continued conflict in the far North. Unfortunately, it is very difficult to assign even rough figures to these costs since Richard, like his elder brother before him, funded important military expenditures and patronage through his chamber.

This had significant implications, from the 1460s onwards, on the exchequer’s management of expenditures; by the turn of the 1480s, Richard III’s regime found it necessary to raise large loans from the citizenry.

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42 Horrox, “Financial memoranda:” 220.

43 For this and the following sentence, see Horrox, “Financial memoranda:” 210; 225; 229.

44 It would be quite wrong, however, to infer (as Kendall (in Richard III, 312) appears to) that because later in his reign Richard relied heavily on chamber-based fiscal administrative expedients, more of the crown’s financial operations fall outside of the view of the historian across the entire period 1483-5 than was the case during Edward IV’s reign. As we shall see, Richard’s heavy reliance, from the autumn of 1484 onwards, on the chamber occurred in particular fiscal political circumstances after the parliament of 1484. Even during this later period, however, a general assessment of the royal finances is not impossible, as section 5, below, demonstrates. And it cannot be emphasised strongly enough that, for Richard’s reign as a whole, the government’s financial operations are in no way less visible under Richard than under Edward. If anything, the Ricardian regime’s finances are more transparent than Edward IV’s, owing to Richard’s attempts to formalise both the chamber and the exchequer’s role in government finance and the survival of record evidence regarding the loan commissions of 1485; both of which are analysed in detail in the penultimate section below.
the issue rolls had been discontinued.\textsuperscript{45} This means that, whilst the Yorkist exchequer certainly retained an overall sense of total outlays befitting a central organ of government which historically prepared financial statements to assist governments in budgeting;\textsuperscript{46} it no longer kept a record of termly expenditures which the historian can use in reconstructing, however roughly, the royal budget. Nevertheless, a general sense of the cost of Richard’s various emergency expenditures of autumn 1483 to spring/summer 1484 can be derived through a brief examination of historical precedent.

In the late Middle Ages, military conflicts with foreign powers could cost anything between a few thousand pounds for a short-term naval expedition or for a smallish land army to field against the Scots; to tens of thousands of pounds for a large expeditionary force to lead overseas to France. We know this principally from royal documentation from the period prior to Edward IV’s reign, when the exchequer accounted for all of the crown’s public revenues and its records can be used as a reasonably reliable barometer of expenditures. Thus, annual expenditure on some of the biggest campaigns of the Lancastrian era, such as Agincourt or Henry VI’s Coronation Expedition, stood in the region of £50-£100,000.\textsuperscript{47} The cost of Edward IV’s famous abortive French war of the mid-1470s was likely to have been similar to that of these earlier grand expeditions.\textsuperscript{48} These campaigns were, however, the exception not the norm in later medieval England. Across the late Lancastrian period, annual average special expeditionary expenditure stood at some £20,000, but this related mainly to overseas special expeditions to

\textsuperscript{45} The disappearance of the issue rolls, from 1479, was drawn attention to by Lander, “The administration of the Yorkist kings,” 227; 257, and has subsequently been re-iterated by Ross, \textit{Edward IV}, 375.

\textsuperscript{46} This is evidenced by the Longleat miscellaneous MS book 2, which contains royal estimates of total royal income and demonstrates attempts, by the exchequer and the council, to match revenues to specific expenditures. For a full examination of the financial estimates provided by the Longleat MS book 2, which is placed in the fiscal political context of 1483-4, see section 4, below, esp. note 99.

\textsuperscript{47} Harriss, “Financial policy,” 159-80; Brayson, “The fiscal constitution,” 76-7.

\textsuperscript{48} Lander (“The hundred years’ war,” 234-8) stresses the extremely heavy prospective cost of this expedition, which he likens to Henry V’s Agincourt campaign in scale.
France at a time of military crisis.\textsuperscript{49} A small force despatched to the Northern border or a relatively minor channel fleet could, as discussed above, cost less than £5,000.

On balance, it is likely that Richard’s expenditures against the Scots would have been at the cheaper end of the payment scale outlined above, although it is unlikely that he would have been able, during the fiscal year 1483-4, to keep special expeditionary expenditures beneath around £5,000. In this context, we know from contemporary sources that Richard viewed the Scottish war as a priority;\textsuperscript{50} given his prior record as Warden of the North, anything other than full commitment to border war would have risked courting accusations of military and political weakness by his many enemies. What of Richard’s expenditures relating to domestic rebellion and the rewarding of his allies during his first year as king? At the time of Henry IV’s seizure of Richard II’s throne in 1399, Henry’s initial invasion and subsequent campaigns against opponents and loyalists of the old regime cost him only a few thousand pounds.\textsuperscript{51} Yet the first Lancastrian king’s subsequent drive for loyalty apparently led him to expend over £35,000 on his supporters. Viewed in this context, it seems unlikely that Richard III would have been able to keep his expenditures on suppressing rebellion and, much more importantly, on rewarding his supporters and building up a political support-base,

\textsuperscript{49} Brayson, “The fiscal constitution,” 120.

\textsuperscript{50} Richard apparently threatened a “most serious war…with the very cruel and fierce people of the Scots.” In February 1484 he planned to attack “our enemies and rebels of Scotland:” Jones, “Richard III as a soldier,” 113-32.

\textsuperscript{51} For this and the following statement, see Given-Wilson, Henry IV, 174-89 (esp. 177). The £35,000 figure seems to relate in no small part to the stranglehold afforded to the Percy family, and their allies, over lucrative annuities and regional office-holding; fiscal developments which appear to have led the household to take up a dangerously large proportion of the exchequer’s budget and seriously threaten the solvency of the state. It must be stressed, however, that, by Given-Wilson’s own admission, actual expenditures, including those funded via hand-to-mouth expedients outside of the conventional remit (at that time) of the exchequer, were probably well in excess of £35,000, and may even have been as high as £50,000.
that far below the levels sustained by Henry IV, a point which seems to be backed up by chronicle comments regarding the heavy cost incurred by Richard in securing his throne.

If, in order to discern the “best possible” fiscal scenario for the Ricardian regime, we suggest that Richard did manage to keep the cost of securing his throne from internal rivals and foreign enemies beneath levels sketched above, his regime would still have sustained “extraordinary” expenditures during 1483-4 of somewhere in the region of (at the very least) £30-40,000. And this was on top of

52 Given the absence of much of the chamber’s records and the fact that, as noted above, the exchequer had long since ceased to manage large chunks of the royal budget, we cannot go far beyond historically informed estimates here. It is certain that most of Richard’s land grants to supporters totalled around £13,000; a fact derived from the surviving B. L. Harleian M. S. 433 analysed by Wolfe, *Royal Demesne*, 192. When this is added on to our conservative estimate of £5,000 worth of special expeditionary expenditure, the resultant c. £18,000 worth of “extraordinary” expenditure definitely constitutes a vastly lower figure than Richard’s total “extraordinary” expenditure for 1483-4, for a couple of interrelated reasons. Firstly, as Ross (*Richard III*, 156) infers, it is not believable that a later medieval usurper would only pay allies and associates £13,000 to buy and maintain their support. This is around one third, at most, of the sum noted above which had been expended by Henry IV in his quest to win and sustain the throne, in less dramatic circumstances than those of 1483 which did not alienate the first Lancastrian monarch from mainstream political society in quite so striking a manner as Richard’s behaviour did the elite of southern and midland England. Secondly, and following on from these observations, Horrox (*Richard III*, 310-13) points out that the abovementioned £13,000 exclusively constitutes grants from lands seized after Buckingham’s rebellion; it excludes both grants from existing crown lands and, crucially, from crown annuities administered within the chamber system. It would be an impossible task, given the paucity of surviving chamber documentation, to tally up the total cost of these latter charges, although – by way of comparison – Henry IV expended £24,000 per annum on annuities (albeit via the old exchequer-based fiscal system) during the early 1400s: Pugh, “The magnates,” 101. It seems highly likely, then, that in practice the Ricardian regime would have employed a large proportion of its demesne revenues and possibly some of its broader “ordinary”/customary revenues discussed below in rewarding allies and associates. This requires us to hypothesise that, at the very least, emergency patronage expenditures were at least double the c. £13,000 figure cited below – I have settled with c. £25-35,000, although the conservative nature of this estimate should be stressed.

53 Following on from the points raised in the previous note, contemporaries stressed the prodigious liberality of Richard during this period: *Crowland*, 1459-86, 160-1. According to the Great Chronicle of London, Richard personally went before prominent London citizens to emphasise his serious cash flow problems in the wake of Buckingham’s rebellion; the king’s aim being to secure loans on the security of the crown jewels: *Great Chronicle*, 235-6. The Great Chronicle’s entry is undated, though the reference to Buckingham clearly places this in late 1483 or possibly early 1484. On a similar, related, note, the heavy cost of royal military efforts in early 1484, in Scotland as well as at sea (the king made repeated visits to Scarborough, from whence a fleet departed in the spring) is opaquely mentioned by *Rerum: Vol. 1*, 571.

54 This figure derives from a basic combination of our estimation of the cost of usurping the throne and defending the throne against rebels in late 1483 (£25-35,000) and our estimation of the cost of fighting external enemies (£5,000).
expanded annual permanent, or “ordinary”, expenditures of c. £55-60,000. This constituted a minimum total annual expenditure bill of around £85-100,000; and again, it is necessary to stress that the actual cost of government in 1483-4 may very well have exceeded this sum. In order to fund this level of royal expenditure, Richard III’s regime had, on the basis of the calculations provided above, access to some £28,000 less annual “ordinary” revenue, including the customs (though not, as we have seen, the subsidies) on overseas trade, than had Edward IV’s government, as a result of the contraction in indirect tax revenues and the removal of the French pension. This would have left Richard’s regime, during the fiscal year 1483-4, with an “ordinary” income of as little as £22,000; a sum which constituted around a fifth of the expenditure bill outlined above.

It seems, then, that at the outset of his reign Richard III was faced with possibly the worst cash flow crisis of any later medieval English monarch, yet it is necessary to point out a few important caveats. A very significant proportion of Richard’s emergency patronage outlays, the principal item in the “extraordinary” expenditure side of our estimated royal budget for 1483-4, would have been funded by a re-distribution of the lands and offices of disgraced rebels which came into the king’s possession as a result of Buckingham’s failed rebellion. If we follow Wolffe and stress that around £13,000 worth of Richard’s “extraordinary” expenditures were financed in this way, we ought to revise our projected total expenditure bill downwards;
to around c. £72-87,000. Additionally, as Ross has pointed out, the net worth of the crown lands to the royal chamber increased during Richard III’s reign, since Richard did not have to provide for an extended royal family as had Edward IV, meaning that he ought to have had access to a good c. £12-15,000 more than his elder brother from the crown lands. This means that net annual demesne receipts increased from the c. £10,000 settled upon above for Edward IV’s reign to c. £22-5,000, pushing total crown revenue up from c. £22,800 to c. £34,800-37,800.

Taking into consideration all of the possible minimum and maximum royal revenue and expenditure estimates discussed above, Richard III would have been faced with a projected fiscal deficit of somewhere in between c. £34,200-£49,200 and c. £37,200-£52,200. Based on these sums, Figure 2, below, postulates an average prospective deficit of £43,200:

57 Ross, Richard III, 155.
58 Wolfe, Royal Demesne, 190-1.
59 Since, however, Richard’s emergency patronage expenditures would have been so high, it was inevitable that (excluding the £10,000 assigned to the royal household) much – indeed probably all – of this increased revenue and income from the crown patrimony more specifically would be needed to pay for the king’s Northern support base. Regarding payments from the crown patrimony, Richard can be shown to have alienated the lands of the De Vere, Hungerford, Rivers, Dorset (Grey), Devon (Courtney) and the Brian and Bute estates, all of which had been in royal hands prior to Buckingham’s rebellion. These lands were probably collectively worth no more than a few thousand pounds: Wolfe, Royal Demesne, 192, 193. When placed alongside the very large number of grants commented upon by Horrox and others, however – some of which can be seen from sources such as *The Calendar of Patent Rolls* but which cannot be quantified as a sum total given the absence of Yorkist chamber records – the total value of alienations from the crown’s demesne revenues is very likely to have been astronomical. For more detail on this final point, see above, notes 52 and 53.
Although a £43,200 deficit was indicative of a serious cash flow crisis, there was a potential fiscal solution for the Ricardian government. If Richard’s regime could secure clerical taxation as well as lay taxation, the royal government would gain access to an income, during 1483-4, of around £7,000 and £30,000 from these respective sources. These additional income sources, plus

60 This estimate of the annual yield of a clerical tax from the Southern convocation is predicated upon such a subsidy being administered in two instalments over a two-year period, as was common practice in the fifteenth century. Since a Canterbury tenth historically brought in c. £15,000, but by the late fifteenth century had a net yield closer to £14,000 owing to a culture of reasonably large-scale royal-mandated exemptions, it figures that the first of two equal national instalments of a Southern tenth would yield in the region of £7,000; Abbott, “Taxation of personal property”; 471-98; McHardy, “Clerical taxation in fifteenth-century England,” 170. MPs, however, mandated lay fifteenths and tenths to be administered within 1 year by the close of Edward IV’s reign; a practice which one would assume Richard III would have sought to continue in the event that his government sought supply. Since, as discussed above in note 23, late Lancastrian fifteenths and tenths were valued, nationally, at around £30,000, it is reasonable to suggest that any fifteenth and tenth sought by the Ricardian regime would also have been valued at this sum.
parliament’s expected renewal of the subsidies on overseas trade for the new reign which the regime would have hoped would result in indirect tax receipts more than doubling from c. £12,000 to, say, c. £25-30,000, would provide Richard’s government with around £53,000. This figure is considerably higher than our prospective deficit postulated above and would have allowed the regime to run a healthy surplus.

4. Fiscal politics in 1483-4: the case for lay taxation

The foregoing attempt to reconstruct the royal budget for 1483-4 begs the question: how politically viable was it for Richard III to move to a tax-centric fiscal policy? The king and his associates would have been confident of securing parliament’s concession of the maltolt and tonnage and poundage.

Recent total indirect tax yields, in the early 1480s, had fluctuated between just over £20,000 in 1482-3 (a year which witnessed a slump in overseas trade) and over £40,000 the previous year. The regime would have surely hoped to at least secure a yield of somewhere between £25,000 and £30,000, since this was at the lower end of annual indirect tax income in the late 1470s. For estimated total indirect tax yields during the Yorkist period and the late Middle Ages more generally, see Ormrod’s dataset, derived from multiplying the value of subsidies set by parliament with published statistics regarding the volume of trade: “Revenues to the English crown.”

The maltolt, so-named because of popular opposition to this supposedly “bad tax” when it had first been levied by Edward I in 1294, was a subsidy on wool exports, over and above the customary 6s. 8d. imposed on wool exports from 1275, which had first been conceded by a merchant assembly in 1294 in response to royal mandated “necessities” of the realm, specifically defensive war against the French and Scots: Harriss, “War,” 330. Opposition to the original maltolt concessions of the 1290s owed to the lay community’s dislike of an extra-parliamentary body conceding any secular, non-clerical tax, particularly at a time of economic crisis: Harriss, King, Parliament, 57; 66; 69. By 1340, MPs were seeking to concede the maltolt themselves, and the 5 remaining maltolt concessions of the first phase of the Hundred Years’ War were made by parliament: Harriss, “War,” 331. Prior to 1338, the maltolt charged wool exporters 20s. per sack, whilst from that date through the 1340s and 1350s the charge was set at 40s. For the remainder of the fourteenth century, the maltolt rate stood at £2 3s. 4d. for denizen exporters and £2 10s. for alien traders, although during the Lancastrian era denizen and alien rates began to diverge, with denizen rates settling around 33s. 6d. for most of Henry VI’s reign, whilst alien rates fluctuated between 43s. 6d. and 53s. 6d. for most of the late Lancastrian era; in the early 1450s being raised as high as 100s: Ormrod, “Finance and trade,” 166; Carus-Wilson and Coleman, Export Trade, 194; 196; Brayson, “The fiscal constitution,” 108; 153.

Tonnage and poundage emerged, during the 1340s and 1350s, as a subsidy of 1s. per tun on imported wine and of around 6d. per pound on imports and exports of general merchandise, which was conceded by merchant assemblies in response to royal maritime emergencies, and was specifically aimed at financing naval warfare during the first phase of the Hundred Years’ War: Harriss, King, Parliament, 459-65. During Richard II’s reign, tonnage and poundage came to be granted by parliament, alongside MPs’ maltolt concessions. The range of goods subject to this subsidy was increased; during the 1380s, poundage came to be imposed, crucially, on imports of cloth by denizen merchants as well as alien traders (including, initially, Hanseatic traders). This went a little way to broaden the indirect
M. Ormrod have shown how Edward III and Richard II had, in the 1360s and 1380s respectively, persuaded MPs to continuously re-grant these subsidies in order to fund expansive “ordinary” expenditures which owed principally to the costly addition of Calais to the crown’s permanent budget.⁶⁴ These important developments broke the umbilical cord between the maltolt and tonnage and poundage, on the one hand, and specific “necessities” of the realm; that is to say, defensive emergencies and the special expeditionary, “extraordinary” expenditures to which they gave rise, on the other. Consequently, Lancastrian parliaments had continuously re-granted the subsidies on overseas trade on their expiry, and by Edward IV’s time it had become customary for MPs to grant the maltolt and tonnage and poundage for the life of the reigning monarch; the surest sign yet that these impositions were unanimously viewed as permanent sources of state income alongside the crown lands.⁶⁵

tax base, which was disproportionately based on exports of wool: Ormrod, “Finance and trade,” 175. Rates settled, during the fifteenth century, at 3s per imported ton for denizens and aliens; and 12d. per pound of denizen and alien exports of general merchandise: Ormrod, “The origins of tonnage and poundage:” 226-7. During the reign of Henry VI, in the early 1430s, a surcharge of 3s. was imposed on alien imports of sweet wine, over and above the conventional tonnage subsidy, whilst a surcharge of 2s per pound of tin exports for aliens was imposed, above and beyond the conventional poundage rate, in 1453: Brayson, “The fiscal constitution,” 90; P.R.O.M.E., parliament of 1453, item 8. The potential fiscal benefits of these initiatives were, however, offset by the late Lancastrian regime’s decision, in the late 1430s, to bow to special interest groups in the domestic and alien community and exempt denizen merchants from poundage payments on their cloth imports and Hanseatic merchants from all poundage payments: Brayson, “The fiscal constitution,” 108, note 20; 109, note 23.

⁶⁴ Harriss (in King, Parliament, 471-508) shows how, after the peace of 1360, Edward III’s regime brought financial statistics before parliament to demonstrate the need for politically regularised maltolt concessions. Ormrod, meanwhile (in “Finance and trade,” 155-86; “The origins of tonnage and poundage:” 209-27) demonstrates how the long-term decline in wool exports from the late fourteenth century, which appears to have owed to a combination of factors including English protectionist monetary policy; the high rate of the maltolt; and the competition of foreign wools in the North-Western European market, resulted in a marked decline in maltolt revenue. This prompted the crown to increase the range of goods subject to the new subsidy of tonnage and poundage (see above, note 63), whilst for their part MPs began to concede tonnage and poundage when it ran out, irrelevant of whether there existed a state of defensive war or not.

⁶⁵ Gras, The Early English Customs System, 84. In 1463, MPs’ life grant of the maltolt to Edward IV set the rate at 33s. 4d. per denizen wool sack exported; and 66s. 8d. per alien wool sack exported: P.R.O.M.E., parliament of 1463, item 25. In their lifetime grant of tonnage and poundage in 1463, MPs mandated the by-now conventional rates of 3s per imported ton for denizens and aliens; and 12d. per pound of denizen and alien exports of general merchandise; also mandating the by-now expected surcharges of 3s. per ton of alien imports of sweet wine and 2s per pound of alien tin exports; P.R.O.M.E., parliament of 1463, item 4. During the Yorkist period, parliament seems to have been intent on reversing the fiscal privileges accorded, since the late Lancastrian era, to denizens and Hanseatic merchants. Thus, in their tonnage and poundage grant of 1463, MPs stipulated that all aliens, including Hanseatic merchants, were to pay poundage; whilst no denizen exemption was mentioned, as had been customary during Henry VI’s majority; P.R.O.M.E., parliament of 1463, item 4. Edward refused, however, to accept that Hansards be deprived of their fiscal exemption (Rot. Parl., 5, 508-9; Ross, Edward IV, 360), and it seems that both groups continued to enjoy their fiscal privileges for the remainder of the fifteenth century.
Clerical taxation posed slightly more problems for the Ricardian regime. Convocation’s concession of tenths on clerical incomes remained associated, into the fifteenth century, with specific royal-mandated “necessities” during periods of war. Nevertheless, as with indirect subsidies, the correlation between clerical taxation and short-term “extraordinary” expenditures had been strained by a growing deficit in the crown’s “ordinary” finances. This was brought about, from the final decade of the fourteenth century, by a marked decline in the overseas trade in wool, which was to continue for the remainder of the Lancastrian period and beyond. Scholars have shown how the regime of Henry IV sought – and was granted – regular clerical taxes aimed, in large part, at compensating for the fall in indirect taxation and funding permanent charges. As a result, subsequent regimes seem to have secured clerical taxation almost as a matter of course; and to a large extent dropped the ritual of pleading their “necessity” in convocation. Given his politically-expedient fiscal strategy of “living of his own”, Edward IV was in truth probably slightly warier, yet he did secure multiple clerical tenths and it is very likely that he expended at least some of their proceeds on the general costs of state. In 1483-4 Richard III had good reason to be hopeful, then, that he could secure a clerical subsidy.

The king’s financial hopes were vindicated, with respect both to 

66 McHardy, “Clerical taxation in fifteenth-century England,” 173-4; Rogers, “Clerical taxation under Henry IV,” 123-44. See also Harris’ discussion (in “Budgeting,” 179-96) of the early Lancastrian regime’s employment of clerical and lay tax revenues to fund expansive “ordinary” expenditures and ensure a balanced budget. The crown’s deployment of lay taxation in funding enhanced permanent costs and attempting to reduce a sizeable deficit resulted in conflict in the House, particularly in 1406, but its similar use of clerical tax receipts does not appear to have caused any analogous upset.

67 This certainly appears to have been the case during Henry VI’s reign, during which convocations became less liberal with their concessions, though never entirely ceased to grant clerical tenths in the way that parliament had with lay taxes during the 1420s: Griffiths, Henry VI, 110-11; Hayes, “‘For the state and necessity of the realm,’” 105-7. For the exchequer’s deployment of clerical supply in funding “ordinary” expenditures during the late Lancastrian era, see Brayson, “The fiscal constitution,” 93, 121, 156, 171-2.

68 For convocation’s relative fiscal liberality (in comparison with the more conservative fiscal attitude of the Commons) during Edward IV’s reign, see Keen, England in the Later Middle Ages, 160. Keen interestingly believes that contemporaries of the 1460s and 1470s viewed the king’s “living of his own” as being entirely consonant with securing relatively regular clerical tenths alongside the subsidies on trade.
indirect taxation and clerical taxation, in early 1484. Prospective revenue from these subsidies, however, went nowhere near far enough to fulfil the crown’s financial needs. It was, of course, impossible for the crown to predict how much additional indirect tax revenue parliament’s customary re-imposition of the trade subsidies halfway through the exchequer year 1483-4 would yield. Yet even if we hypothesise, very generously, that the total net yield of indirect tax revenue brought in by the regime stood at more or less £28,000, the same sum as the gross yield, and add this on to an estimated £7,000 worth of clerical tax revenue, this only goes just over half way to plugging the prospective deficit of £43,200 arrived at above. The regime may perhaps have thought of seeking loans as a means of bridging this deficit, but it is instructional that, during periods of heavy government borrowing in the late Middle Ages, the state contracted a large proportion of its credit base against the proceeds of lay taxation. During Edward IV’s early years on the throne, that monarch’s contraction of an estimated £19,000 worth of annual credit was dependent on the defence subsidies conceded by parliament in response to the Lancastrian threat. Without a fifteenth and tenth or

69 The rates set by the parliament of 1463, in its life grants of both the maltolt and tonnage and poundage (see above, note 65) were re-affirmed by MPs in 1484: P. R. O. E., parliament of 1484, item 4. For the clerical tenth of 1484, see CFR, 1471-1485, 278-281.

70 This gross yield is derived by adding the present writer’s analysis of trends in Yorkist poundage revenue derived from the enrolled accounts (T. N. A. E 356/22 and T. N. A. E 356/23) on to Ormrod’s total for the customs and subsidies on overseas trade as a whole which excludes poundage: “Revenues to the English crown”. As far as the possibility that the regime would have brought in this entire yield over one financial year (1483-4) is concerned, although this does seem far-fetched, it should be noted that during the worsening long-term fiscal crisis spanning the 1430s and 1440s the exchequer did bring in close to the total gross indirect tax yield on a number of occasions in an attempt to maximise public income and efficiently fund expenditures: Brayson, “The fiscal constitution,” 167-8. Unfortunately, the inadequacies of the late Yorkist receipt rolls (no receipt roll for Michaelmas 1483-4 even exists); plus the possibility that Richard, like Edward IV, accounted for a proportion of his indirect tax receipts directly through the chamber, prevent us from saying any more on this matter.

71 The Corporations of London and the Staple, as well as the Italian merchant banker Ger-
an equivalent subsidy, Richard’s regime would remain in deficit.

The politics of late fifteenth-century lay taxation were infinitely more complex than the politics either of indirect or of clerical supply. As discussed above, Edward IV had called for numerous lay tax grants, though crucially, the late king had confined his fiscal demands to periods of military crisis; either against internal enemies in the early years of his reign or, later on in particular, against the French. Even on these occasions, King Edward, if the parliament roll – the regime’s official recording of parliamentary proceedings – is to be believed, had refrained from publicly seeking supply; or perhaps he had expounded his “necessity”, but did not want this recorded for posterity, since it suited his purposes for lay taxation to be seen to be off the political agenda. Such timidity was not an option for Richard III. The Yorkist regime’s financial position had declined to such an extent by 1483 that the usurper’s “ordinary”, or permanent, outlays could not be funded by a combination of revenues from “ordinary” and historically “extraordinary”, though politically normalised, sources, including the crown lands, the alien subsidy of 1483, indirect subsidies and clerical taxation; particularly since, as we have seen, it looks as though Richard III was compelled to deploy all but £10,000 worth of his demesne revenues (reserved for the royal household) in funding his heavy emergency patronage expenditures; which of course fell within the “extraordinary” ard de Caniziani, lent very substantial sums to Edward. Overall, these three sources alone provided the Yorkist regime, up to 1483, with somewhere in the region of £100,000. If one considers that Edward, unlike his late Lancastrian predecessor, did not contract credit as a matter of course every year, but only to fund special expeditionary, “extraordinary”, expenditures, then it becomes clear that the first Yorkist king could expect well over £10,000 from larger creditors alone when he sought loans: Ross, Edward IV, 378-9. Edward’s evident creditworthiness reflects contemporaries’ faith in his ability to repay loans from the proceeds of lay taxation, as discussed in the text. In contrast, as we shall see in section 5, below, the comparatively limited parliamentary-controlled revenues available to Richard III prevented him from raising more than a couple of thousands of pounds’ worth of loans in the first fiscal year of his reign, after parliament had sat in 1484.

72 See, for example, Lander’s detailed discussion (in “The hundred years’ war,” 228-30) of the fiscal politics surrounding Edward IV’s attempts to remobilise the political community for war with France. Lander makes the point that even on this occasion, Edward’s chancellor did not plead the regime’s “necessity” although, significantly, he appears to have done so in a more detailed speech at St Paul’s Cathedral.
As a matter of fact, the Ricardian regime, in 1483-4, only had access to some £45,800 worth of more or less customary revenues for the funding of its “ordinary” expenditures. This constituted the sum total of £10,000 worth of demesne income formally earmarked for the household; c. £800 worth of estimated alien tax revenue; c. £28,000 worth of indirect taxation, including the renewed subsidies on overseas trade from January 1484; and £7,000 worth of clerical supply. £45,800 stands some £10-15,000 less than our proposed total “ordinary” expenditure bill of c. £55-60,000 for 1483-4. Now, it will be recalled that the expenditure projections discussed in the previous section err on the lower side of potential fiscal eventualities. Nevertheless, if they are anything to go by, then over one third of royal expenditure commitments for 1483-4 which remained un-funded after the sources of revenue elaborated upon in this paragraph are factored into our hypothesised royal budget relate to “ordinary” charges. Lay taxation was therefore required to fund substantial “ordinary”, as well as emergency “extraordinary”, expenditures. The serious problem faced by the king was that “permanent”, or “peacetime”, lay taxation, were historic points of tension and conflict between the crown and the lay elite. This subject has already been touched upon in the context of Edward IV’s “land revenue experiment”; though the broader backstory of later medieval fiscal politics now needs to be discussed.

Parliamentary disputations regarding the role of lay taxation in the royal budget dated back to at least the 1390s, when Richard II, faced with the onset of a structural long-term decline in indirect tax revenues, had claimed that lay taxation was necessary to fund the

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73 The role played by emergency patronage expenditures in the royal “extraordinary” budget at a time of earlier dynastic and political crisis, during the early years of Henry IV’s reign, has been approached statistically by Given-Wilson: *The Royal Household*, 268-73. See also Harriss, “Budgeting,” 185.

74 These terms were coined by Harriss in “Theory and practice in royal taxation:” 811-12.
permanent royal military establishment and “maintain the peace”. This argument caused political consternation since, as we have seen, the elite believed that the enlarged permanent, or “ordinary”, budget including the standing costs of defence, ought to be funded by “ordinary” revenues supplemented by indirect tax receipts. Nevertheless, placed under significant royal pressure, MPs had conceded lay taxation. The situation came to a head when Richard II, in 1397, misappropriated a plea of “necessity” – where no defensive emergency existed – as a means of browbeating MPs to concede further fifteenths and tenths. When MPs did not, initially, co-operate, the regime threatened to withdraw pardons granted to former political opponents; this effectively constituted fiscal blackmail. Unsurprisingly, Richard’s attitude towards lay taxation played a large role in bringing about his downfall at the hands of Henry IV who promised to better manage the royal finances and not ask parliament for regular lay taxation.

The underlying structural issues regarding the crown’s financing of enlarged permanent, or “ordinary”, expenditures did not, however, go away. As discussed above, the early Lancastrian regime won some respite by securing more regular clerical tenths and employing clerical tax receipts as part of its budgeting strategy to make up for the disparity in its “ordinary” budget. Nevertheless, serious problems

75 The following points derive principally from Harriss, “Theory and practice in royal taxation:” 811-19.
76 P. R. O. M. E., parliament of September 1397, item 44.
77 P. R. O. M. E., parliament of September 1397, item 78.
78 McFarlane, “Henry IV’s government”, 78-101; Wright, “Henry IV,” 65-82. For a useful and more recent discussion, see Harriss, Shaping the Nation, 64-6.
79 Henry V’s ability to confidently seek supply against the backdrop of a clear and evident “necessity” following on from the renewal of full-scale hostilities with France in the 1410s provided his regime with a degree of financial relief after the serious problems in the public finances which had characterised his father’s reign. The incidence of lay taxation rose to levels not witnessed since the mid-to-late fourteenth century (over one fifteenth and tenth per annum, as discussed and placed in a broader socio-economic context by Ormrod, “Henry V and the English taxpayer,” 207-9). Significantly, Henry V’s regime almost certainly deployed buoyant lay tax receipts to shore up its general financial position; particularly since extremely heavy loans contracted on the back of lay tax receipts to shore up its general financial position; particularly since extremely heavy loans contracted on the back of lay tax receipts, rather than lay tax revenue itself, appears to have funded most of the special expeditionary expenditure of the late 1410s: Harriss, “Financial policy,” 159-80, esp. 161. It is interesting that there was no political outcry, at least not until after Henry V’s war of conquest had ended, over the second Lancastrian monarch’s heavy and seemingly general reliance on lay taxation. This likely owes to the political community’s relative willingness to concede heavy lay taxation to a successful military leader who, at least in theory if not in practice, sought supply solely for constitutionally legitimate special expeditionary expenditures; a suggestion backed up by parliament’s immediate insistence, after the Treaty of Troyes, that lay taxation cease and the Lancastrians’ French subjects fund any continuation of the French conflict: P. R. O. M. E., parliament of 1421, item 25.
had re-emerged by the reign of Henry VI. In the 1420s, Henry VI’s early minority regime was just about able to fund its permanent expenses from the crown patrimony and the customs and subsidies on overseas trade, supplemented where necessary by clerical taxation.  

By the 1430s, however, a marked decline in indirect tax revenue, which almost halved following on from parliament’s imposition of the disastrous protectionist bullion ordinances of 1429-30, led to a growing deficit between available “ordinary” revenue, including indirect and also clerical taxation, and “ordinary” expenditure, which steadily rose during Henry VI’s majority and resulted in a total debt burden of £372,000 by 1450.

In response to this growing financial crisis, successive regimes had alternated between alluding, in parliament, to the need for permanent

80 The 1420s could hardly, however, be described as a decade of stability in the public finances; quite the opposite was in fact the case. As Brayson (“The English parishes and knights’ fees tax of 1428.” 653-6) has shown, a slight deficit and creeping increases in total public debt during this decade increased the need for a new political dispensation regarding lay taxation, even before the collapse in indirect tax revenue from 1429-30. This was the financial context in which a novel parliamentary fiscal debate developed during 1427-8. The crown’s negotiations with MPs were centred on royal-parliamentary efforts to construct a “new” lay tax which was less financially burdensome for the country, but which was nevertheless capable of funding the regime’s financial outlays without requiring a conventional fifteenth and tenth subsidy bill. In 1428, MPs opted for a subsidy on knights’ fees, which was repeated at a higher rate in 1431; both of these subsidies encountered significant administrative problems, and the latter levy appears to have led to substantial under-assessment and evasion on the part of elite taxpayers. These subsidies are significant, however, as they demonstrate a long-term move towards what, by 1435, emerged as an income tax not specifically on feudal incomes, but rather on an array of incomes from land, rents, etc.

81 For the financial problems of Henry VI’s majority government, see Harriss, Beaufort, 188; 277-91; Harriss, “Marmaduke Lumley,” 143-78; Griffiths, Henry VI, 107-27; 376-41; and now Brayson, “Deficit finance.” There has been some disagreement amongst historians regarding the relative severity of the £372,000 debt of 1449-50. Smith (“Royal finance,” esp. ch. 1) has argued that the operative administrative procedure by which the later medieval exchequer managed debt (discussed below, in note 148) meant that even as heavy a debt burden as that of 1449-50 could be managed over many years, and therefore constituted less of an immediate financial danger than historians once thought. Other historians (see, in particular, the articles by Harriss and Brayson cited in this note, above) have stressed that an uncontrollable cash-flow problem during the 1440s meant that a growing fiscal deficit and a ballooning royal debt became highly politicised. This is because creditors became increasingly concerned at the regime’s likely inability to repay them any time soon, if at all, particularly given the historically low parliamentary tax revenues characteristic of the late Lancastrian era. Viewed in this political – rather than solely administrative – context, the £372,000 debt burden appears very serious indeed.
supply for the wellbeing of the state; talking up the majesty of the
king and subjects’ quasi-feudal obligations to him; and finally (in
desperation) following Richard II in misappropriating a plea of
“necessity”. These fiscal tactics served to turn MPs and, more
broadly, the lay community against Henry VI’s regime at a time of
general political unrest and socio-economic crisis and contributed
decisively to the collapse of the Lancastrian state and to Edward
IV’s politically expedient adoption of a demesne-centric fiscal
policy which, as we have seen, was unable to provide for long-term
financial stability. Surveying historical precedents for so-called
permanent lay taxation in 1483-4 would not therefore have been
a pleasant exercise for the Ricardian regime. Not only was there
no historic ideological basis on which his government could seek
regular fifteenths and tenths to meet recurrent state charges, but the

82 To an extent, the late Lancastrian regime’s indecision regarding how to seek lay supply
to meet permanent, or “ordinary”, costs owes to the absence of a post-scholastic ideological
argument to achieve this end prior to the late fifteenth century. Equally, however, trends
in the politics of Henry VI’s reign also played a key role; the king’s commencement of his
majority rule in the late 1430s encouraged those around the king to emphasise the pro-
spective benefits of active royal rule in the hope that this would persuade MPs to open the
purse strings; particularly owing to the king’s apparent involvement for a brief time in the
parliamentary debating of household finance. The misappropriation of a plea of “necessity”
by the late majority regime led by William De La Pole, Marquis of Suffolk was the result
of Henry VI’s confidants’ desperation at the severity of the financial crisis which engulfed
their regime and their associated inability to fruitfully exploit earlier fiscal political tactics,
endencying Henry VI’s active kingship, in light of the king’s almost complete absence
from the politics of his own government: Brayson, “Deficit finance.”

83 It is not generally recognised that the early steps towards creating a chamber-based
fiscal system centred on the crown’s augmentation of landed revenues lay in parliamentary
fiscal debates regarding the role of the crown lands in the royal budget during the 1450s,
and in the broader fiscal administrative context of the inter-party factionalism which char-
acterised this decade. Harriss always intended to, but never did, write on this subject (see
the comments of Griffiths, Henry VI, 835, note 92). Had he done so, it is possible that his
study would have been based around 3 inter-linked key themes examined by Brayson:
“The fiscal constitution,” 171-82. Firstly, the increased politicisation of the exchequer in
line with the policy aims, respectively, of the Lancastrian regimes of the Duke of Somerset
and Queen Margaret, and of the Yorkist administrations of Duke of York and his Neville
supporters; both of which centred on shoring up their power base. Secondly, and follow-
ing on from this, the increasing difficulties encountered by exchequer officials in fulfilling
their historic, non-partisan role of maximising and efficiently administering key revenue
streams; a point which is particularly evident on analysis of the final lay subsidy of Henry
VI’s reign, that of 1453. Thirdly, attendant on both these developments, the likely deploy-
ment, by both the Lancastrian and the Yorkist regimes of the 1450s, of the chamber to
directly receive and process various revenues in line with their weak political position.
Cumulatively, these developments rendered the exchequer increasingly impotent; hence its
records are less complete from this point on.
two previous monarchs who had made permanent supply a defining political issue had gone on to lose their throne! Moreover, the prospects of a regime which sought regular lay taxation had arguably worsened in the third quarter of the fifteenth century as the propitious but atypical circumstances which we have seen allowed Edward IV to make a short-term success of his “land revenue experiment” only served to strengthen contemporaries’ conservative attitude towards lay taxation.

What, then, was the Ricardian strategy to overcome the substantial fiscal political obstacles outlined above? This is not a question which has ever really been asked by previous writers, since historians do not generally believe that Richard III sought lay taxation; some going so far as to unequivocally state that Richard consciously strove not to tax his lay subjects. Scholars such as R. E. Horrox who make this latter argument do so on the basis that the usurper-king remitted the final fifteenth and tenth of his elder brother’s reign in the summer of 1483, which MPs had granted in February 1483. They proceed to point out that Richard went on, early the following year, to outlaw benevolences, which we have seen Edward IV had imposed with some impunity as a means of avoiding enforcing lay subsidies. The problem with this analysis is that it isolates these two developments from a proper understanding of the severity of the regime’s financial

84 Ross (Richard III, 178) followed previous scholars such as Kendall (Richard III, 282) in opining that the Ricardian regime was “unable to ask parliament for direct (lay) taxation”. This suggests that some historians (at least implicitly) appreciate the financial reality that Richard required additional supply to fund general expenditures and bring down the deficit; even though they ought not to have assumed that, because seeking lay supply in such conditions contravened accepted fiscal political practice, Richard chose not to do so. The most articulate exposition of the belief that Richard III consciously strove not to tax his lay subjects is found in Horrox, “The government of Richard III,” 70. In this essay, Horrox concluded that “it was a measure of his (Richard’s) success (in exploiting landed revenues) that he “went without parliamentary (lay) taxation,” which she describes as a “good public relations move.” It seems somewhat strange that Horrox, who edited the Longleat manuscript which clearly demonstrates the serious financial problems faced by the Ricardian regime on its inception (“Financial memoranda”) in 1987, would 6 years later explicitly endorse Wolfe’s ideas regarding the supposed financial sustainability of the “land revenue experiment.”


86 P. R. O. M. E., parliament of 1484, item 18; Statutes of the Realm: Vol. 2, 477-98.
difficulties in 1483-4, and more particularly from a series of specific royal actions which are indicative of the Ricardian regime’s efforts to secure lay taxation, to which we must now turn. It is significant that the regime’s remittance of Edward IV’s final fifteenth and tenth occurred on 24 June, just prior to Richard III’s usurpation on 26 June. Before his seizure of the throne Richard had been engaged, as Lord Protector and leader of Edward V’s minority regime, in two months’ worth of crucial fiscal planning, which has survived as Longleat miscellaneous MS book 2.87

If taken at face value, the Longleat miscellaneous MS book 2 constitutes isolated attempts by royal officials to keep the state solvent at a difficult time. Much of the volume outlines the regime’s efforts to keep up payments to key charges at different points during May and June 1483.88 Various entries are copied on multiple folios and as a result we see rare glimpses of how the regime prioritised certain expenditures over others. Fol. 20v. thus tells us that payments were made to the protector’s closest ally the Duke of Buckingham (prior to autumn 1483); which were given priority over the garrison of Berwick.89 This provides a revealing insight into how Ricardian

87 Horrox, “Financial memoranda:” 214-44. As Horrox points out at 214-15, antiquarian scholars mistakenly assumed that this volume constituted nothing more than a cluster of annotated customs returns.

88 The regime appears to have been particularly concerned to find a funding solution for Berwick; an issue which a number of the folios (e.g. fol. 18v.) focus on. The funding of Ireland (fol. 19) and the royal household (fol. 18) also appear as issues of concern. The administration’s efforts to earmark indirect supply, clerical tax revenues and other sources for these charges, and the political difficulties attendant upon this in terms of competition at the exchequer (see note 89, below) serve as a microcosm of the broader financial difficulties faced by the late Yorkist government.

89 Horrox, “Financial memoranda:” 231. For the exchequer warrant mandating the swift payment of Buckingham, dated 23 May 1483, see T. N. A. E 404/78/1/4. In drawing attention to a late Yorkist warrant for payment of a key charge issued and administered through the exchequer such as this, we can dispel lingering scholarly suggestions that the exchequer’s historic role in warranting payments alongside receiving income, disbursing expenditure and auditing accounts had completely broken down by this point in time. It is true, however, that the exchequer warrants’ series for this period, as with other key classes of exchequer record, is very patchy; the current writer’s ongoing researches on the late fifteenth-century exchequer suggest that the early 1480s witnessed a low point in its general administrative capabilities; a result, perhaps, of Edward IV’s failure to formally codify the respective roles of the chamber and exchequer and the resultant lack of financial administrative coordination which followed on from his death. As demonstrated in the following section, the Ricardian regime responded to these problems by beginning to restructure the administrative machinery of government finance.
priorities (however necessary these may be judged to have been) exacerbated the financial crisis which the protector inherited, since already seriously eroded government revenues were being redirected from the state’s expansive permanent military charges towards the shoring up of Richard’s position as he (presumably) prepared to usurp the throne. The most important point here, however, is not that we can glimpse significant political dimensions to the Ricardian regime’s running of the royal finances; but rather that this whole exercise appears to have been part of a royal budgeting strategy ahead of Richard’s first parliament.

This is the obvious conclusion to draw from the fact that, amongst the financial notations discussed above, there is an estimation of annual total royal revenues (fol. 7v.). The existence of fol. 7v. is very significant because it demonstrates that officials planning (and struggling) to match revenue streams with expenditure commitments did so within the context of a general assessment of the crown’s financial position which emphasised the serious insufficiency of the crown’s total annual income. A couple of important points need to be made at this juncture. Firstly, the Longleat book was almost certainly a product of the exchequer and the council. A number of the key notations, for example fol. 18v., are concerned with attempts to fund charges such as Berwick and the keeping of the royal ships with which we know the exchequer was concerned in the period immediately after Edward IV’s death. Conciliar oversight, however, is strongly inferred by fol. 19v., which states that (exchequer) officials can provide a full overview of the crown’s finances whenever this is required. Moreover, the text is annotated with details of events, such as when convocation was due to sit,

90 Horrox, “Financial memoranda:” 220.
92 T. N. A. E 404/78/1/6.
93 Horrox, “Financial memoranda:” 230-1. It seems reasonable to suggest that this preceded the production of fol. 7v, since the latter document is a full statement of customary royal revenues, including the crown lands, which a royal council wishing to demonstrate its financial weakness would have surely sought.
demonstrating broader fiscal political planning from outside of the exchequer.94 Detailed and coordinated financial planning by the council with exchequer support, which has rightly been dubbed early state budgeting, was historically undertaken ahead of specially-prepared royal parliamentary statements aimed at impressing upon the Commons dire problems in the royal finances and encouraging MPs to concede the requisite additional supply.95

A fiscal political strategy along the lines sketched above had underlain the mid-to-late fourteenth-century state’s successful demonstration of the need for regular parliamentary re-grants of the maltolt and, later, tonnage and poundage.96 Admittedly, royal statements of this kind had worked less well, historically, in persuading MPs of the need for regular lay taxation. This surely owed at least in part, however, to the fact that such statements had less frequently been used for this purpose. The infamous statements of 1433 and 1450 are rare exceptions, but these had provided an estimated government balance sheet, which emphasised very heavy public debts.97 At a time when MPs were already intensely dissatisfied with the vacillating, often heavy-handed political attempts of Henry VI’s regime to secure permanent lay taxation, this focus on public indebtedness had served, counterproductively, to focus contemporaries’ minds on Henry VI’s supposedly poor financial management and his wastage of the royal demesne.98 There is therefore good reason to believe

94 See, for example, fol. 6: Horrox, “Financial memoranda:” 218. This anticipates the proceeds of a clerical tax before this subsidy had been conceded, as a means of funding Berwick and the payment of loans from the final years of Edward IV’s reign. This provides clear empirical evidence of the extent to which clerical taxation had become politically normalised by the Yorkist period, as discussed more generally in note 68, above.

95 See Harriss, “Budgeting:” 194-96, which summarises that writer’s earlier research on pre-prepared royal-exchequer financial statements aimed at encouraging parliamentary tax concessions during the fourteenth century and extends this into Lancastrian era. For a discussion of the broader fiscal administrative context of early budgeting exercises, see Ormrod, “Fiscality, archives:” 204.

96 See the works referenced above, in note 64.

97 For the statement of 1433, see Kirby, “The issues of the Lancastrian exchequer:” 121-51. For the 1450 statement and its broader financial context, see Wolfe, Royal Demesne, 112-17, and the works cited in note 81, above.

98 The classic account is Wolfe, Royal Demesne, 97-123.
that the Ricardian regime, in mid-summer 1483, planned to deploy statistics to make MPs aware of the crown’s financial difficulties, particularly the very low total income which it anticipated for the coming year; without alienating the lay elite with politically unwise talk of a prospective deficit or total debt.99

It follows on naturally from the points raised above that Richard III’s regime sought to secure a fifteenth and tenth in as politically prudent a manner as possible; the last thing the king and those around him would have wanted was to be seen to be either mismanaging the royal finances with talk of deficits or debts or to be misappropriating a fifteenth and tenth granted to another monarch on the premise that the proceeds would be expended on Edward IV’s “extraordinary”,

99 The only other potential purpose of fol. 7v., which Horrox (“Financial memoranda:” 207) favours, is that it constituted an institutionalised exchequer audit of revenue akin to the Tudor “state of the treasury” (which was basically an annual budget produced internally within the exchequer from the first decade of the sixteenth century onwards); an administrative practice which Horrox implies the Ricardian regime may have inherited from Edward IV. Horrox’s interpretation is questionable on three important, inter-related counts, which we must consider in turn. Firstly, there was not really any later medieval tradition of such statements being produced internally by the exchequer, without a fiscal political motive for doing so which was inevitably driven by the monarch, the council, or usually some combination of both, at times of acute financial pressure. Take, for example, the late Lancastrian statements examined by Brayson (“Deficit finance”) and Harriss (“Marmaduke Lumley,” esp. 167-8); these were products, respectively, of the Beaufort-led early majority council and the De La Pole circle, which by the mid-1440s had taken on the characteristics of a “kitchen-cabinet” in the king’s court. These case studies show that successive regimes of the 1430s and 1440s, like their predecessors discussed in the works cited in note 95 above, deployed the exchequer to draw upon its detailed record of public income and/or expenditure in order to politically argue the case for a new fiscal settlement, which by the fifteenth century equated to a demonstration of the need for lay taxation to service the general expenditures of the crown. Secondly, and on a related note, it is counterintuitive to suggest that, at the same time when the institutional remit of the exchequer contracted dramatically in scale and it ceased to administer a chunky part of the royal budget, the exchequer developed institutionalised internal budgeting procedures. Viewed in this context, it seems reasonable to propose that, at most, the Yorkist exchequer retained at least the basics of its earlier capability to provide financial overviews at the behest of king and council, in the later medieval manner discussed above, for parliamentary fiscal purposes. Such a conclusion appears, in fact, to be consonant with the early research of Lander (“The administration of the Yorkist kings”), who presented evidence to suggest that the early-to-mid Yorkist exchequer continued to be able to provide an overview of its own revenues for the council during periods when Edward IV was attempting to raise revenues for his prospective French venture. These points lead on to a third, and final, criticism of Horrox. Ironically, her suggestion that Longleat fol. 7v. was the product of a newly-developed internal exchequer audit is seriously undermined by her own (clearly correct, as we have seen) recognition (on page 205 of the same work) that, taken as a whole, the Longleat manuscript was conceived of, and produced on behalf of, the royal council (albeit with exchequer input); not on the impetus of the exchequer acting alone.
special expeditionary expenditures. The interpretation put forward here would seem to be supported by the record of parliament, viewed in the context of supplementary evidence. The Ricardian regime’s political preparations for the parliament which sat in January 1484 can be reconstructed in greater detail than those undertaken ahead of other later medieval parliaments because of the survival of three draft sermons penned by Richard’s chancellor, Bishop John Russell. The first two constituted his opening address to parliaments summoned for late June and autumn 1483 but which never actually sat; whilst Russell’s final sermon offers a more detailed examination of the themes he discussed in his address to the January 1484 assembly, which is enrolled in an abbreviated format on the parliament roll.

A strong fiscal theme ran throughout Russell’s sermons, which has not generally been picked up on by historians. In the first statement,

Russell’s sermons have been the focus of a particularly interesting contribution by Watts, “‘The policie in christen remes,’” 33-60. In this essay, Watts placed Bishop Russell’s focus on the need for obedience, firstly to the minority regime of Edward V and, in his later sermons, to Richard III, in the ideological context of the Ricardian regime tapping into re-emergent classical political thought. Thus, Watts detects in Russell’s addresses quasi-Cicerone notions of popular subjection to an efficient kingship guided by aristocratic technocratic experts; a central theme in that writer’s belief in an emergent “Renaissance” monarchy in the late fifteenth century. The present writer finds Watts’ analysis of Russell’s political language, in the context of the fast-moving narrative of 1483-4, broadly compelling and indicative of a new conceptual approach to what scholars used to call the “new monarchy”. As far as Russell’s fiscal rhetoric is concerned, however, Watts’ suggestions seem rather less helpful: like his late Lancastrian predecessors, Russell would have been relatively less concerned with emphasising an enlightened/well-counselled “Renaissance” technocracy (which in the 1480s would surely have served to justify continued efforts to strengthen Edward IV’s “land revenue experiment” rather than facilitate a return to the “tax state”); instead, he would have been more interested in seeking fiscal-conceptual arguments to overcome the constraints of scholastic economic theory which, as discussed below, required a rather different public argument.

These three sermons are printed, with a brief introduction, by Chrimes, English Constitutional Ideas, 167-92.

P. R. O. M. E., parliament of 1482, item 1.

A notable exception is Horrox who, in her “Introduction” to the parliament roll of 1484, contradicted her own previous work (referenced in note 84, above) by correctly suggesting that an examination of Russell’s fiscal rhetoric – both on the roll itself and in the related preparatory sermons – demonstrates that the Ricardian regime sought supply. Horrox is surely wrong, however, to suggest that the extent of the regime’s financial aspirations was MPs’ concession of the maltolt and tonnage and poundage. Firstly, as we have seen, simply adding £16,000 or so onto indirect tax revenue, although welcome, went only around a third of the way towards plugging the c. £43,200 fiscal deficit which we have estimated the regime was confronted with in 1483-4. Clearly, this would have been a financially unsatisfactory outcome for the government. Secondly – and just as importantly – after Richard II’s government had succeeded in politically normalising the indirect subsidies, as discussed above in note 64, above, these had come to be re-granted as a matter of course.
Russell suggested that MPs must provide for the “maintenance of his (i.e. the king’s) high estate as any of their predecessors have done to any of the kings of England afore”. This was a deliberate mistruth since, as demonstrated above, earlier parliaments had never willingly accepted the need for permanent lay taxation. It seems, however, that in arguing this case Russell sought to play upon the young Edward V’s “tender age” and the exigencies of a royal protectorate, which he subsequently elaborated upon, in order to butter up the Commons for a new fiscal settlement regarding lay taxation. Nevertheless, the obvious shakiness of Russell’s...
case, combined with the radically changed political environment following on from Richard’s usurpation of the throne, ensured that this explicit and specific focus on providing for the king’s estate was not repeated. By the time he penned his third address, Russell instead sought to focus on and revise traditional thought regarding the political community’s financial obligation to the state during periods of defensive war; to the permanent financial advantage of the crown.

A focus on the reciprocal obligations of ruler and ruled had historically underlain medieval English parliamentary discourse, particularly as far as wartime fiscal negotiations regarding lay taxation were concerned. The crown’s representatives in parliament were accustomed to formulaically stressing the king’s obligation to defend his subjects from external aggressors. MPs, acting on behalf of their constituents and the broader lay community, were meanwhile obligated to respond to particular incidences of royal “necessity” by providing lay taxation which catered for the “defence of the realm”. In January 1484, as was customary, Russell outlined the king’s crucial role of guaranteeing justice and providing defence. His insistence, however, that subjects were obligated, in response, to meet “necessary and royal” charges, was significant.

Russell did not refer, as had many of his predecessors, to specific and transitory special expeditionary exigencies or expenditures (although he unsurprisingly believed, on principle, that “extraordinary” expenditures also required funding, as evidenced by his elaboration of the requirements of defending the realm). The chancellor’s much more general reference to “royal” outlays rather suggests that he was talking about expenditures which were not tied

107 The following two sentences are based on Harriss, King, Parliament.

108 Chrimes, English Constitutional Ideas, 187.

109 Chrimes, English Constitutional Ideas, 187.

110 Thus, Russell discusses the prince’s need to “defend his land from outward hostility:” Chrimes, English Constitutional Ideas, 187.
solely to special expeditionary or short-term defensive exigencies; but rather to heavy permanent charges which it was “necessary” for subjects to finance.\textsuperscript{111}

What Russell therefore appears to have attempted, in his third address, was to provide the crown with conceptual grounds for seeking permanent, or near permanent, lay taxation which were centred on the general financial needs of the state.\textsuperscript{112} As we have seen, Henry VI’s government had made tentative moves in this direction, but the royal fiscal overtures of the 1440s, in particular, had demonstrated a lack of sensitivity when it came to negotiations with the elite in parliament. Thus, the regime dominated by the Marquis of Suffolk, William De La Pole, had proven itself all too willing not only to fabricate a defensive “necessity” after the Truce of Tours, but also to refuse to close parliament prior to MPs’ lay

\textsuperscript{111} This point is strengthened by placing Russell’s language in the historic context of earlier fifteenth-century royal pleas of “necessity”. The pleas levied by the late Lancastrian government of the 1420s and 1430s still made it clear that a defensive emergency threatened the English state and thus required MPs to concede supply, but on a number of occasions (e.g. 1423; 1427; 1435) no specific “necessity” was expounded upon, in terms of a detailed exposition of the nature of the military threat, as had been customary in the past. This appears to have constituted a long-term royal effort to politically normalise a state of “necessity;” to view this not as a transitory state brought about by, say, the Crecy or Agincourt campaigns, or Henry VI’s Coronation Expedition, but rather as a much more generalised state of urgent need which, in time, could perhaps begin to be viewed as including a range of permanent expenditures alongside special expeditionary costs. The constitutional context of the Treaty of Troyes had prevented this fiscal strategy from being worked out during the late Lancastrian era, since the parliamentary and broader political tensions attendant on any plea of “necessity” were too substantial; hence the vacillating royal fiscal political overtures of the 1430s and 1440s, which ultimately ended in Suffolk’s blatant misappropriation of the doctrine of “necessity” during the truce of the mid-to-late 1440s, as discussed in the following paragraph of the text, below. Edward IV’s “land revenue experiment,” meanwhile, put paid to any such fiscal political strategy being resurrected during the 1460s and 1470s, as we have seen. It looks, however, as though Bishop Russell attempted not only to bring back this strategy, but to build upon it in a quite significant way in 1484; by viewing “royal outlays,” expressed in the broadest possible sense, as constituting a “necessity” in their own right which required subjects’ concession of supply.

\textsuperscript{112} This ought to be viewed in the context of Russell’s subsequent strange elaboration of a passage from Luke (15: 8) regarding a woman who had lost a tenth of her money-coins and as such her wealth and overall well-being declined immeasurably. The point, the chancellor would have his listeners believe, was that in England the \textit{res publica} – the state – was similarly lacking a tenth, and consequently had gone into a sustained decline which required addressing by the political community: Chrimes, \textit{English Constitutional Ideas}, 182-3. It is distinctly possible that this strange discourse did not constitute an allusion to the need for fresh lay supply; but rather signified a call for the final lay tax of Edward IV’s reign, that of 1483 which we have seen had been revoked by Richard III, to be re-conceded by MPs. This is what happened in 1487, when Henry VII requested MPs to mandate his administration of the 1483 grant: Cavill, \textit{Parliaments of Henry VII}, 60.
tax concessions and to deploy public debt statistics; tactics which coerced fifteenths and tenths but which made Suffolk susceptible to mounting popular outcry regarding his supposed siphoning off of public funds for private gain. These impolitic fiscal stances had fed into a broader failure of royal management on the part of Henry VI’s majority regime.\footnote{The now classic work on this subject is Watts, \textit{Politics of Kingship}.} By contrast, Richard III appears, despite the state of open war in 1483-4,\footnote{The Ricardian regime could, of course, have disingenuously sought lay supply solely, and very specifically, in the context of the threat posed by Scotland and France, after which it could have proceeded to deploy the proceeds on its “ordinary” and well as its “extraordinary” expenditures. The fact that it did not do so, and that Russell opted for fiscal political transparency, is consonant with the broader collegiality with which the government approached handling the Commons, as discussed below.} to have eschewed seeking lay taxation on false pretences\footnote{For more detail on Richard’s government’s unwillingness to resort to heavy-handed techniques of parliamentary fiscal management and the underlying political dynamics of this, see the following section, below.} and/or declaring a prospective deficit or debt as part of a heavy-handed parliamentary fiscal management strategy.\footnote{We will never know whether the Ricardian regime, after the protracted political crisis and civil strife of the autumn period, followed through with the plan hypothesised above and brought before the House the figures contained in Longleat fol. 7v., or some updated version of this, and possibly details from other memoranda which are now lost to us, such as the heavy costs of particular charges like Berwick. Nothing is enrolled to this effect on the parliament roll, but this does not mean that the government did not bring fol. 7v. before MPs. After the Treaty of Troyes in 1421, Henry V’s council had discussed, with statistics, a recent decline in public revenues prior to a notable royal attempt to secure lay taxation on the back of that king’s strong reputation, yet this statement did not find its way onto the parliament roll. Additionally, so little found its way on to the parliament roll by the 1480s that it is indeed possible that the roll was no longer considered an appropriate place to record the regime’s adumbration of financial data.} Instead, the Ricardian regime preferred to consensually level with the lay elite regarding the late Yorkist state’s need for permanent supply.

Bishop Russell’s fiscal political preparations need to be placed in the broader context of the Ricardian regime’s management of the parliament of 1484. It is well known that the 1484 parliament was marked by a strikingly conciliatory royal approach to county society which, up to a point, probably reflected Richard and his associates’ desire to heal the terrible rifts which had opened up between the
king and his Northern supporters, on the one hand, and mainstream southern and midland political society, on the other, as a result of the dramatic events of mid-to-late 1483. Nevertheless, in light of the ongoing and grave royal financial problems, the king’s liberal outlook ought also to be read as an attempt to butter up MPs to open their pockets. As noted above, on specifically fiscal issues the king sought to address the political community’s concern with Edward IV’s imposition of benevolences by banning these forced gifts, which were disliked by the lay elite. This needs to be viewed in the context of Richard’s earlier annulment of Edward IV’s final lay subsidy, also discussed above. More generally, Richard re-affirmed his elder brother’s popular anti-immigrant sentiment in his advocacy of a protectionist commercial policy; the king’s motive no doubt being to bring his supporters and enemies together against a common, alien, economic foe. Moreover, Richard III demonstrated his proactive desire to address juridical issues of concern to the landed elite.

5. The failure of a “Renaissance” fiscal policy in Ricardian England: deficit finance and innovation in financial administration, 1484-5

Clearly, given the absence of a lay tax grant in 1484, the novel and collegial fiscal political strategy planned by the Ricardian regime since summer 1483 and adopted during Richard’s only parliament failed to yield the desired result. MPs were ultimately unwilling to acquiesce to what E. Isenmann has dubbed a “Renaissance” fiscal policy; that is to say, a policy articulated by contemporary European thinkers such as Diomede Carafa which was characterised by princes

117 What follows is based largely on the classic account by Ross, Richard III, 187-90.

118 For this sentence, and for that which follows it, see notes 85 and 86, respectively.

119 P. R. O. M. E., parliament of 1484, item 27.

120 P. R. O. M. E., parliament of 1484, item 20. Hanbury (“Legislation:” 95-115) eulogistically viewed King Richard’s attempt to reform the ancient enfeoffment of use as evidence of the final Yorkist monarch’s “good intentions”, both as a man and a ruler. Ross (Richard III, 187-9), however, has rightly corrected this Ricardian bias, viewing Richard III’s legal reformism in terms of his need to curry political favour and appeal to a broader support base. For the legal background, see Baker, Laws of England: Vol. VI, 654-9.
successfully superseding the scholastic link between property taxes and public “necessities”, or at the very least the specific “necessity” of defensive war.\textsuperscript{121} A “Renaissance” fiscal policy instead sought to convince the lay elite that either the majesty of the prince or, as in Ricardian England an explosion in permanent state costs and debts, necessitated regular direct property taxes. A key theme in continental scholarship is that, by the third quarter of the fifteenth century at the latest, regimes in France, Castile and Italy had successfully deployed such arguments to instigate permanent lay taxes.\textsuperscript{122} This enabled these tax-centric fiscal regimes to begin to contract large-scale credit and fund an explosion in bureaucratic and military expenditures; in stark contrast with the serious royal financial problems which we shall see were encountered by Richard III’s regime during 1484-5.

Why, then, did the Ricardian regime, unlike its continental equivalents, fail to persuade MPs to consent to its desired lay tax and why, as a result, did a “Renaissance” fiscal policy not succeed in late Yorkist England? King Richard’s fiscal political difficulties need, firstly, to be viewed in terms of the relationship between later medieval English lay tax structures, on the one hand, and socio-economic developments, on the other, which had played a key role in shaping the difficulties encountered by successive regimes noted in the previous section in their efforts to politically normalise lay taxation. In later medieval England – unlike on the continent, where the elite were formally exempt from property taxes in all of the Western European states discussed in the previous paragraph and elsewhere – the agrarian and mercantile elite was historically subject

\textsuperscript{121} Thus, Carafa (\textit{De Regis}) stated that “the resources of subjects should be regarded as the foundation of royal power;” the exact opposite of what we have seen Fortescue argued in England. For a more detailed analysis of Carafa and Renaissance fiscal theory, see, Isenmann, “Medieval and renaissance theories,” 21-52.

\textsuperscript{122} See, for example, the English-language papers by Henneman (“France,” 101-22); Ladero-Quesada (“Castile”, 177-200); and Capra (“City states,” 417-442). These essays, which were written as part of Bonney and Ormrod’s “European State Finance” project, summarise a substantial amount of French, Spanish and Italian empirical research. For an empirically informed analysis of the European-wide political normalisation of the role played by property taxes within princely budgets, see Bonney, “Introduction,” 1-18, and Bonney, “Revenues,” 423-505.
to lay taxation. Although, as the post-plague crisis in seigniorial incomes worsened during the recession of the late Lancastrian era, there was a growing trend towards the baronage and greater gentry securing exemptions from lay tax quota contributions, lesser gentry and land-acquisitive yeomen played a substantial role as taxpayers, particularly given that the poorest taxpayers were generally exempt from payment towards local quotas.

Recent research has shown that the lesser gentry and yeomanry shouldered as much as three quarters of local lay tax quotas in some regions. This needs to be viewed in the context of the dominant role played by an expansive county elite – which increasingly included not only gentry but commercially-oriented figures from the upper reaches of a differentiated peasantry who held scores of acres’ worth of land, married into local gentry dynasties and served as tax collectors and jurors – in both electing, and serving as, MPs.

123 Ormrod, “The west European monarchies,” 123-60. The subjection, to varying degrees across the country, of all social classes to lay taxation in later medieval England is rightly emphasised in Ormrod’s article, since several prominent historians (e.g. Hilton, “Introduction,” 23-4; Given-Wilson, “The problem of labour,” 96-7) wrongly assumed that, because the provincial elite oversaw the manner in which local fifteenth and tenth quotas were distributed after the state’s freezing of local quotas in 1334, county notables must have given themselves a blanket fiscal exemption. As Ormrod points out, the exchequer evidence examined by Willard (Parliamentary Taxes), supplemented by more recent research by Ormrod (“Poverty and privilege,” 637-56), Dyer (“Taxation and communities”, 168-90) and others, demonstrates beyond any doubt that the nobility continued to pay lay taxation, to varying degrees throughout the country, into the fifteenth century and in some cases well beyond.

124 Regarding the historic fiscal exemption afforded to the poor; during the fourteenth century this was formally accorded to those in the countryside who held goods/chattels valued at less than 10s.; and to those in urban areas who held goods/chattels worth less than 6s.: Willard, Parliamentary Taxes, 87-92. For the “informal” continuation of poverty-based fiscal exemptions into the fifteenth century, see Ormrod, “Poverty and privilege,” 638-47. The point made above regarding the increasing fiscal privilege accorded to barons, and more generally the discussion in the following paragraph, largely derives from an unpublished article by the present writer, which builds upon the conclusions of Dyer and others such as Forrest (“The distribution of medieval taxation,” 27-47) who have worked on rare detailed surviving lay tax assessments compiled by local officials prior to the central administration’s enrolment of the formulaic royal assessments kept by the exchequer and catalogued in the T. N. A. E 179 series.


126 McKisack, Parliamentary Representation, 106-10; Horrox, “The urban gentry,” 22-44.
Clearly, these demographics were not going to be easily persuaded – whatever the ideological basis of the crown’s fiscal rhetoric – to consent to regular lay taxes which they, to a significant extent, contributed towards; a point made all the more relevant when we consider the improving material position of a growing number of mid-to-late fifteenth-century gentlemen and yeomen. It is well known that, from the mid-fifteenth century onwards, entrepreneurs from these demographics had begun to enclose land; to exploit a growing landless proletariat; and to profit from competitively vended market produce.\(^1\)

So-called agrarian commercialisation has been viewed by R. H. Britnell, C. C. Dyer, E. B. Fryde and R. H. Hilton, amongst others, in the context of an upturn in prices, and wages beginning to drop from their mid-century high point; market conditions favourable to commercially-minded farmers’ investment in fixed and variable capital.\(^2\) It seems likely, however, that the relatively low lay tax burden, by historical standards at least, of the reign of Edward IV\(^3\) also helped to encourage the commercial activities of an emergent

\(^1\) For a summary and analysis of the prodigious literature on these structural socio-economic changes from different historiographical perspectives, see Dimmock, Origin, and Bailey, Decline. Ongoing scholarly disagreement centres not on whether agrarian commercialisation, sometimes dubbed “proto-capitalism” by those writing in – or influenced by – the Marxian tradition, occurred from the late fifteenth century, since almost all modern historians of the later medieval and early modern eras accept the weight of empirical evidence which demonstrates structural changes in agrarian production and social relations during this period. Rather, historians disagree on whether the aristocratic elite was the key actor in the commercialisation of agriculture, in its political decision to lease demesne land, as Brenner famously argued was the case (in “Agrarian class structure,” 10-63). Similarly, historians remain divided on the scale of socio-economic change by the close of the fifteenth century, although in more recent years a consensus seems to have emerged which suggests that southern and midland England witnessed a fairly advanced degree of “capitalisation,” at least in comparison with the highland North.


\(^3\) The fifteenths and tenths conceded by parliament throughout Edward IV’s reign, discussed above in note 21, ran at an annual average of 0.3 during the 1460s, 1470s and early 1480s. Since 1 fifteenth and tenth has been shown to tap into just over 1% of estimated GDP in later medieval England (Ormrod, “Fiscality, archives,” 218), the fractional lay taxes of Edward IV’s reign would have brought in just over a quarter of 1% of domestic product; a lower tax-take figure than for any of the earlier later medieval English monarchs.
agrarian bourgeoisie.\footnote{This point has been made in a couple of important regional studies (Allen, \textit{Enclosure}; Whittle, \textit{Development}, esp. ch. 4), but it has yet to be extended to national studies of socio-economic change (see, however, the noteworthy comments of Parker, \textit{Ideology}, 51-2).} Not having to worry too much about funding “non-productive” fifteenth and tenth outlays, as their antecedents of the 1430s and 1440s had during the long recession,\footnote{The fiscal burden had been a pressing economic problem during the second quarter of the fifteenth century, when lay taxation ran at an annual average half a fifteenth and tenth; 0.5\% of GDP. When viewed in the context of the record high wages and low market prices which had characterised this era, this slightly higher lay tax take, in comparison with that cited above, in note 129 for the Yorkist period, played a decisive role in stalling economic and commercial growth, as merchants were unconvinced of the relative ability of agrarian businessmen to yield enough profit from competitive trade to pay down debts levied to fund “productive” capital improvements as well as “unproductive” fiscal outlays. Many agrarian enterprises consequently stalled, as credit dried out; yeoman profits fell; and yeomen were consequently unable to fund competitive rents, which took on a renewed customary character: Dimmock, \textit{Origin}, 93; Dyer, \textit{Transition?}, 201-2. These developments to a large extent underpinned the growing anti-lay tax fiscal politics of the late Lancastrian era traced above, in section 4.} meant that pastoral farming enterprises could viably look to burgeoning credit markets to fund “productive”, market-oriented, capital investment which underlay qualitative economic growth. Up to a point, then, it mattered little who sat on the throne during 1483-5: any king would have struggled to reverse the political consensus in favour of the Yorkist “land revenue experiment”.

Nevertheless, there are strong reasons to believe Richard III’s dangerously low standing with what Ross calls the traditional “community of the shire” in the south and midlands of the country\footnote{Ross, \textit{Richard III}, 122; see also Pollard, “The tyranny of Richard III.” 47-65.} negatively impacted on the fiscal political prospects of his government in such a way that would not have been the case had another monarch sat on the throne. Many in these areas already resented Richard for his ongoing importation of a small clique of Northern supporters into key local lands and offices, which a strong trend in revisionist scholarship exemplified by the work of Horrox views in terms of Richard’s need to bypass a traditional local Establishment which was overwhelmingly hostile to his rule and could not be trusted.\footnote{Horrox, \textit{Richard III}.} Given that the gentry and yeomanry of
southern-central England, which constituted a sizeable proportion of the Commons, contributed heavily towards both local fifteenth and tenth quotas as discussed above and towards the national fifteenth and tenth quota owing to the proportionately lower sums contributed by the Northern counties;¹³⁴ these demographics would have further resented Richard for his efforts to impose a lay tax.

The key point here is that, had Richard III commanded the confidence of the southern and midland elite, as K. B. McFarlane taught us all later medieval English monarchs other than the mentally unable (e.g. Henry VI during his late majority) and usurpers such as Richard himself did,¹³⁵ there is at least a chance that he could have successfully overcome economically-conditioned parliamentary fiscal opposition, by persuading MPs that more regular lay taxes were a worthwhile trade-off for increased socio-political stability. This is more or less what occurred under the early Tudors. Henry VII and Henry VIII took advantage of the increased political stability after the Wars of the Roses to negotiate more regular fifteenths and tenths and income taxes, which were increasingly dissociated from, or only loosely related to, defensive “necessities”;¹³⁶ fiscal policy outcomes


¹³⁵ See, for example, McFarlane, “Bastard feudalism:” 161-80. Usurpers inevitably faced political opposition owing to the fact that they were not universally accepted as legitimate monarchs, as Henry IV’s problems with the Percy family, Edward IV’s problems with the De Veres and other supporters of Henry VI and his queen Margaret of Anjou, not to mention the Tudors’ later problems with the De La Pole dynasty, all demonstrate. Strong royal direction of political society was, however, generally enough to isolate these rebels and ensure the failure of their seditious activities, particularly by the late fifteenth century, when the “new monarchy” had begun to refashion county networks around its relationship with royal appointed “new men” and more conventional magnates and gentry had, in any case, tired of civil strife, irrelevant of their prior dynastic loyalties. The scale and potency of opposition to Richard III was, of course, far greater, owing to that monarch’s widely suspected commitment of regicide.

¹³⁶ Henry VII was granted 8 fifteenths and tenths (including the subsidy of March 1497, which was administered as 2 fifteenths and tenths and served to double the 2 fifteenths and tenths already conceded by that parliament; and the subsidy of 1504 which was conceded in lieu of 2 feudal aids, and was also administered as a fifteenth and tenth); as well as an income tax of 10% in 1489 on both the commons and the lords. A number of these subsidies were formally conceded in response to the early Tudor regime’s allusion to the demands of defence, which was framed in the context of a more general royal need; thus obviously drawing on Bishop Russell’s address of 1483-4 (see, for example, P. R. O. M. E., parliament of 1489, item 1, where the chancellor, Bishop Morton, alluded to subjects’ need to protect their king and also to render obedience to the state). Underlying early Tudor fiscal politics, it is therefore possible to detect a growing consensus around the state’s need for lay taxation which could no longer viably be restricted to particular incidences of short-term defensive warfare (as pointed out by Grummitt who insightfully stated that during Henry VII’s reign “the allusion that late medieval (fiscal) practice was being followed stopped”,
which both Henry VI and Richard III had earlier, unsuccessfully, sought. Meanwhile, the exchequer’s likely acceptance of increased levels of fiscal exemption for local elites from the 1490s onwards helped to facilitate a parliamentary consensus in favour of a higher incidence of fifteenths and tenths.\(^{137}\) The yield of the early Tudor lay taxes, viewed in the context of increased indirect tax revenues and strong management of demesne lands, meant that a financially stable regime could fund expenditures in excess of £1 million.\(^{138}\)

It was not politically possible, however, for Richard III to anticipate Tudor fiscal successes. Beyond effectively implanting Ricardian ally William Catesby as Speaker of the House, there is no direct evidence to suggest that the regime packed the Commons with its own supporters.\(^{139}\) This is consonant with the royal concessions, drawn attention to above, to MPs in 1484; it seems that the king sought to be seen, by those who were naturally hostile to his rule, as far as the regime’s handling of different categories of revenue was concerned: “Henry VII:” 234). These developments preceded Henry VIII’s largely successful attempts, drawn attention to by Elton (in “Taxation for war and peace,” 33-48), to secure lay taxation to fund standing defence costs relating to the keeping of the seas and Calais during the 1530s. Harriss (in “Thomas Cromwell’s ‘new principle’ of taxation:” 721-38) disputed Elton’s argument regarding more regular or peacetime/permanent supply during the Henrician period on the basis that Cromwell’s overtures for lay taxation from the Reformation Parliament onwards continued to be couched in terms of the doctrine of “necessity”; however this is to miss the crucial point, made by Elton and subsequently Alsop (in “The theory and practice:” 1-30), that the scope of a plea of “necessity” had been extended so far beyond the scholastic understanding of a short-term defensive threat to a prince or principality so as to render it effectively meaningless. In other words, by the early Tudor period scholastic theory was being successfully misappropriated (as Richard III had unsuccessfully sought during 1483-4) to sustain a “Renaissance” fiscal policy centred on more or less permanent lay taxation within an expansive royal budget.

\(^{137}\) This conclusion has been reached by those working on rare surviving local material from the late fifteenth century, admittedly emanating mainly from an urban context: Britnell, “Tax-collecting in Colchester:” 477-487. For more general comments, which stress the paucity of central exchequer memoranda detailing the lay tax contributions of notable county figures and which therefore suggest that by the close of the fifteenth century, the upper echelons of county society had extricated themselves from lay tax payment to a large extent, see Schofield, Taxation, 27-71.

\(^{138}\) For these points, see Hoyle, “War and public finance,” 75-99.

\(^{139}\) For Catesby’s appointment owing to his closeness to King Richard, see Wedgwood, History of Parliament, 473. As Horrox (“Introduction”) states: “it is surprising that none of the other county members was thought to combine experience and closeness to the regime.” MPs’ willingness to endorse Catesby’s election thus appears as a by-product, at least to an extent, of parliamentary gratitude towards an otherwise unpopular monarch.
to govern collegially and not to browbeat his subjects. Such a stance meant, however, that a significant proportion of MPs will have represented the views and material interests of the southern and midland elite which was at odds with the king. Clearly, in these circumstances, any attempt on the part of the Ricardian regime to extend an unwelcome parliamentary debate regarding lay taxation by proroguing parliament, let alone to politically enforce lay taxation against the wishes of parliament by threatening the Commons, would have risked further alienating mainstream political society.¹⁴⁰

Not only would this have negated the point of the fiscal, economic and juridical “populism” to which Richard clearly aspired; it would also have risked drawing the attention of contemporaries outside of the House, many of whom already had a dim view of Richard’s rule, to what was clearly an unpopular royal fiscal stance.¹⁴¹

Indeed, a potential parliamentary conflict or crisis over supply which risked exacerbating contemporaries’ growing fears (whether justified or not) of an emergent royal “tyranny” could even, at a push, have threatened the king’s ability to have his Titulus Regius ratified in the House. This was, admittedly, unlikely: as others have pointed out, most subjects would have recognised their need to officially mandate Richard’s rule as a prerequisite for the resumption of relatively stable governance, irrelevant of their low opinions of Richard’s

¹⁴⁰ This is exactly what had occurred during the so-called “Long Parliament” of 1444-7, when Henry VI’s Chief Minister, William De La Pole, had refused to close parliament until his desired lay taxes had been conceded; a fiscal stance which directly contributed to the parliamentary and political crisis of 1449-50 which preceded the Wars of the Roses: Brayson, “The fiscal constitution,” 143-54.

¹⁴¹ Reading the chronicles of the period around the time of the 1484 parliament, it is abundantly clear that literate elite contemporaries were aware of Richard’s desperate fiscal position, although they seem unclear as to the measures taken by the regime to address this. Attempts to improve the administration of the crown lands, discussed below, are mentioned, though The Crowland Chronicle Continuations (at 172-3) also talks ambiguously of the king’s experimentation with alternative methods of raising revenue. This may have been an allusion to the regime’s seeking of lay supply, which some outside of Westminster may have heard rumours of, or it may be a reference to royal planning ahead of subsequent attempts, discussed below, to raise large-scale loans as an alternative to the lay subsidy which parliament was unwilling to concede.
recent political behaviour. The king would nevertheless have been unwilling to countenance any actions regarding lay taxation, or any other policy, which may have risked parliament’s legally-required rubber-stamping of his rule. In pandering, however, to MPs’ fiscal conservatism the Ricardian regime ensured a continuation of the financial problems discussed in the third and fourth sections of this article. For since, by our estimation, balancing the regime’s books was predicated on bringing in a fifteenth and tenth alongside the maltolt, tonnage and poundage and clerical supply, the regime would have been left – after the political community had conceded indirect and clerical, but not lay, supply, and after a very small number of loans had been contracted towards the end of the fiscal year 1483-4 – with a deficit of around £18,048, as evidenced by Figure 3, below:

142 Ross, Richard III, 185-6 sums up the prodigious literature on this subject. A dated tradition of scholarship had played up the “democratic” connotations of political rhetoric, in late 1483-4, regarding MPs’ ratification of Richard III’s royal title: Wilkinson, Fifteenth Century, esp. 755-9; Dunham Jnr. and Wood, “The right to rule:” 755-9. As Ross points out, such Whig-Liberal thinking prevented earlier scholars from appreciating the political realities confronted by parliamentarians in 1484, irrelevant of their feelings towards Richard’s suspected actions in late 1483.

143 This owes to the fact that the regime’s receipt of the indirect tax increment provided by parliament’s concession of the maltolt and tonnage and poundage, and its bringing in of the tenth conceded by the southern convocation, would only have added £23,000 to the public coffers. This sum needs to be added on to an apparent £2,152 worth of credit levied towards the close of the fiscal year 1483-4, discussed in the text, below. When the resultant £25,152 is placed in the context of the estimated deficit for 1483-4 in Figure 2, £43,200, we are left with a deficit of £18,048. Apologies for the formatting irregularity in Figure 3; the arrow and annotation denoting the fiscal deficit ought to appear in the gap between the available income and total expenditure commitments.
As it became increasingly clear that MPs would under no circumstances concede a lay tax to the Ricardian regime during the course of the 1484 parliament, the king and his ministers would have begun to plan their management of the royal finances in the absence of lay taxation. The economic protectionism which characterised Richard’s parliament may well have been promulgated partly in an attempt to persuade MPs to concede lay taxation, as argued above; but also partly with an eye to buttering up the domestic mercantile community to provide generous loans, whether lay taxation was available to underwrite these or not. This latter suggestion seems to be borne out by the regime’s attempts, during the Easter term, 1484, to levy credit: the receipt rolls show that £2,152 worth of loans were contracted from 22 individuals, mainly clerics and figures associated with the Corporation of London and the Calais Staple, after the parliament was concluded. This sum was around

144 T. N. A. E 401/950. As Figure 3 demonstrates, this sum made a negligible budgetary impact.
five times smaller than the large amounts habitually contracted, on average per annum, by Edward IV.\textsuperscript{145} It could be argued that the Ricardian regime secured more loans that we do not know about by following the Edwardian precedent of by-passing the exchequer and accounting for some of its loans directly through the chamber.\textsuperscript{146} This, however, seems extremely unlikely, in light both of Richard’s low standing with a broad canvass of potential creditors and the historically very low revenue base against which potential creditors could be promised repayment.

In the absence, then, of massive loans which would have gone some way to plugging the deficit postulated above, the Ricardian regime, unlike its Edwardian predecessor, must have carried close to £20,000 worth of debt into the period following the Easter term, 1484; a very heavy debt to have built up in such a short period of time.\textsuperscript{147} Now, it needs to be pointed out that the crown would not have attempted to fund this entire debt over the fiscal year 1484-5. Historically, creditors who were owed money which initially proved un-recoverable by assignment against public revenues whose yield was insufficient to fund all the payments charged against them, had the outstanding sum/s which the state still owed recorded in the exchequer of receipt, as a “fictitious loan”.\textsuperscript{148} By recording unpaid

\textsuperscript{145} For an introduction to Edward IV’s credit activities, see Ross, \textit{Edward IV}, 378-9.

\textsuperscript{146} For this administrative practice during Edward IV’s reign, see Lander, “The hundred years’ war,” 233-4.

\textsuperscript{147} This is because, in the absence of the income required to fund the c. £18,048 deficit discussed above, the state would have been forced to register its unpaid debts to royal charges which had not been financed during 1483-4. For a discussion of the administrative procedure of recording royal debts for future repayment in later medieval England and likely developments in the royal management of debt during the Yorkist period, see the discussion below, particularly in notes 148 and 149.

\textsuperscript{148} For classic discussions of “fictitious loans”, see Steel, \textit{Receipt}, esp. xxi-xl; 407-417; Harriss, “Fictitious loans:” 187-99. Historiographical debate between Steel and Harriss centred on the extent to which the postponement of paying royal creditors by the administrative mechanism of a “fictitious loan” constituted a fiscal problem for later medieval governments. Harriss accepted Steel’s use of the volume of “fictitious loans” as a barometer of the fiscal deficit at any given time, since this constituted the imbalance between public revenue and expenditure and, when added to historic unpaid debts which, especially during the Lancastrian era, were significant, this gives us the total government debt. He disagreed, however, with Steel’s assertion that “fictitious loans” were, in and of themselves, a threat to government stability. This could be the case, if the proportion of “fictitious loans” to total assignments rose uncontrollably at a time of chronically low revenue such as occurred during the late Lancastrian era. Most of the time, however, the state coped perfectly well
debts fictitiously, as “loans”, the government was able to plan ahead and re-assign debts against future revenue sources most likely to yield the necessary cash.\(^{149}\) It was not uncommon, then, for as little as a quarter of the “fictitious loans” incurred in one fiscal year – essentially the royal debt accrued during that year – to be assigned against prospective revenues the following year, since governments sought to spread out the period over which repayment occurred in an attempt to make the funding of debt more manageable.

Even if, however, the Ricardian regime had sought to fund as little as £5,000 worth of the proposed 1483-4 deficit the following fiscal year, this would have placed the regime in a very difficult financial

whilst incurring a proportionally small number of “fictitious loans” say 5-10\% of total assignments, and whilst administering their reassignment well into the future.

\(^{149}\) The modern scholar ought to broadly accept Harriss’ corrections of Steel, which leads us to the conclusion that, whilst it would have been perfectly normal of Richard III’s regime to incur a deficit, one as large as that which we have hypothesised for 1483-4 at a time when lay taxation was not forthcoming constituted a very serious financial problem. It needs to be pointed out that the deficit discussed above, which obviously corresponds to the level of “fictitious loans” which we are envisaging was incurred, is a projection; it does not derive from contemporary documentation. This owes to the paucity of Yorkist financial documentation, which was detailed from the outset of this article, but which now requires elaboration in the context specifically of “fictitious loans”. Steel (Receipt, 322-58) rightly questioned the near disappearance of “fictitious loans” recorded on the receipt rolls by the final decade of the Yorkist era. Viewed in the broader context of the dramatic contraction in public revenue recorded by the exchequer during this time, he insightfully inferred the operation of an alternative fiscal machinery outside the remit of the exchequer which, as we have seen, Wolffe showed Edward IV to have brought into existence through his chamber-based “land revenue experiment”. Yet when Wolffe traced the operation of the Edwardian chamber system, primarily through an examination of the demesne revenues which were no longer managed through the exchequer during the third quarter of the fifteenth century, he failed to consider the likelihood that the chamber did not merely manage a large proportion of the royal budget; but that it also managed the fiscal deficit and government debt. Any such suggestion runs counter to the historiographical grain of studies (e.g. Lander, Government and Community, 65-104) which contrast the “modern efficiency” of the chamber and its methods with the supposedly cumbersome practices of the “medieval exchequer”. Yet quite aside from the questionable validity of this kind of non-empirical thinking; it also ignores the reality that, at a time of serious fiscal problems, the regime needed to find a means of managing debt over time; it could not simply “write-off” its debts. Since studies (e.g. Alsop, “The structure of early Tudor finance”, 135-62) have shown that the early Tudor chamber engaged in bookkeeping notations similar to “fictitious loans”, albeit on a smaller scale than the later medieval exchequer, it makes sense to suggest that during the Yorkist era, the chamber used this practice far more widely than was later the case under Henry VII and Henry VIII; after all, the exchequer’s use of “fictitious loans” was the only administrative model of debt management available to the Yorkists, so it follows that they would have applied this within the chamber, though the complete absence of the Yorkist chamber accounts means it is impossible to substantiate this logical suggestion.
position. Such a debt overhang would have increased the “ordinary” or permanent expenditure bill from £55-60,000 in 1483-4 to £60-65,000 in 1484-5. What of “extraordinary” expenditures in 1484-5? The cost of preparing for an invasion and subsequently deploying forces against Henry Tudor in 1485 was almost certainly higher than the c. £5,000 discussed for 1483-4, however it is equally possible that emergency expenditures on rewarding allies and supporters dropped from the high level discussed above for 1483-4. Substantial land grants had already been made, as we have seen, to Richard’s associates from confiscated lands in the aftermath of Buckingham’s rebellion, therefore we can perhaps surmise that the regime would have got away with holding emergency patronage expenditures down to the level of the previous year after the large-scale forfeitures had been taken into account: that is to say, an estimated expenditure of between c. £12,000 and £22,000. On the basis of these considerations, then, a conservative estimate of c. £30-40,000 for total “extraordinary” expenditure in 1484-5, the same as the previous year, seems to be in order.

We are left, then, with a conservative total royal expenditure projection of somewhere in the region of £90,000 to £105,000 for the final year of Richard III’s reign. Going into the fiscal year 1484-5, however, the regime would not have expected a discernible increase

150 For the £55-60,000 expenditure projection for 1483-4, see note 55, above.

151 Emergency diplomatic efforts increased in the financial year 1484-5, as did the crown’s attention to its sea defences and its apparently unprecedented investment in firearms as well as in bringing specialist weaponsmiths to England to construct firearms in London; all of which constituted failed attempts to prevent Henry VII from landing in England and to neutralise the Tudor threat: Kendall, Richard III, 295-8; Ross, Richard III, 205; Richmond, 'English Naval power,' 1-15, esp. 14. In the spring-summer of 1485, meanwhile, the government despatched commissions of array and attempted to raise forces on mass to repel the Tudor invasion. These were likely to have been the costliest special expeditionary outlays of Richard III’s short reign by some measure, but it is incredibly difficult to even very roughly estimate their total cost: Ross, Richard III, 207-9.

152 This owes to our earlier estimation of Richard III’s emergency patronage expenditures during 1483-4 that were funded directly through the confiscations of autumn to spring 1483-4 as having stood at £13,000. It will be recalled that total emergency patronage expenditures during 1483-4 were estimated to have stood at between £25,000 and £35,000 (see above, note 52).
in total royal revenue from the level discussed above for the previous year. Indirect taxation could be hoped to yield at least what it had in 1483-4: c. £28,000; although this was of course dependent on trade patterns.\textsuperscript{153} The crown could also expect the Canterbury convocation to concede a tenth which, as noted above, could be expected to yield £7,000.\textsuperscript{154} Cumulatively, these sources yielded £35,000. When these sums are added together with available demesne revenue, which we have suggested would have increased annually by £12-15,000 to c. £22-25,000 from 1483, we are left with a total income of c. £57-60,000. Extrapolating from this, demesne receipts reserved for the household, indirect taxation and clerical supply fell some £15-20,000 short of increased total “ordinary” or permanent expenditures postulated above for 1484-5. The c. £12-15,000 worth of demesne revenues available to fund emergency patronage expenditures to Richard’s supporters, meanwhile, fell well short of our c. £30-40,000 conservative estimate for total “extraordinary” expenditure. Drawing the above discussion together, it is clear that towards the end of 1484, the regime would have been faced with a total deficit of in the region of £33,000 to £45,000.\textsuperscript{155} On the basis of these sums, Figure 4, below, hypothesises an average prospective deficit of £39,000:

\textsuperscript{153} For the yields derived from the export trade, see Ormrod, “Revenues to the English crown.” For a classic discussion of changing patterns of trade in the late fifteenth century, which emphasises the relative stabilisation of the wool trade after the problems of the mid fifteenth century, see Power, “The wool trade,” 39–90.

\textsuperscript{154} See above, note 60. A clerical tenth was conceded by the Canterbury convocation between 10 February and 11 March, 1485: CF\textit{R}, \textit{1471-85}, 307-10.

\textsuperscript{155} This prospective deficit is slightly lower than that provided in the third section, above (which was calculated to demonstrate the parlous state of the crown’s finances prior to parliament and convocation sitting at the beginning of the fiscal year 1483-4) because, despite the increase in total expenditure commitments in 1484-5, the regime received, from January 1484, the subsidies on trade which increased total indirect tax revenue substantially on top of its securing of clerical supply.
Indeed, since we have operated throughout on the basis of conservative expenditure estimates and consequently prospective deficits which are at the lower end of possible fiscal outcomes for the regime, it is distinctly possible, if not likely, that the Ricardian government’s financial situation was worse than we have envisaged. A deficit above £40,000 would certainly be consonant with the weight of contemporary or near contemporary comment regarding the severity of Ricardian financial problems and, more importantly, with the regime’s fiscal actions in its final months; to which we must now turn. Firstly, it is very significant that the government continued to seek the equivalent yield of a lay tax; that is to say, c. £30,000. The B. L. Harleian M.S. 433 shows that this sum was sought via several loan commissions which were despatched into the shires in February and March 1485. Thus, the first commissions were issued on 21

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156 See, for example, the comments of The Crowland Chronicle Continuations, 172-3.

157 What follows derives from the material published in B. L. Harleian M. S. 433, Volume 3, 128-33. Ramsay, Lancaster and York: Volume 2, 532-3 was the first (and only other scholar, to my knowledge) to suggest that the yield of a lay subsidy was being sought by the crown (Steel, Receipt, 320-1 discounts this hypothesis out of hand, without any explanation). Ramsay did not, however, draw from this the logical conclusion that, having failed to secure an actual lay subsidy in early 1484, the Ricardian regime sought to bring in the equivalent cash through levying a benevolence in all but name.
February and contained between £9,000 and £10,000 worth of loan requests. On 9 March, John Fitzherbert, the king’s remembrancer, was tasked with approaching bishops and religious institutions for almost £4,500 across the country. Later that same month, meanwhile, pairs of commissioners were appointed per county, and were mandated to raise various sums from local individuals who were sometimes named, but oftentimes were not. The sum total being sought in these later commissions was over £15,000.

Secondly, the loan commissions occurred soon after the Ricardian regime attempted to improve the Edwardian system of chamber finance by instigating important reforms during the autumn of 1484. The B. L. Harleian M. S. 433 contains two financial memoranda from October 1484 which were aimed at improving the fiscal administration and consequently the yield of the crown lands.\(^{158}\) The first and lengthier of the memoranda is entitled “A remembrance made as well for the hasty levy of the king’s revenues growing of all his possessions and hereditaments as for the profitable estate and governance of the same possessions”. Its focus was on appointing stewards of the crown lands with legal training; the idea being that this would enhance “the king’s profit and the weal of his tenants”. Wardships and temporalities, meanwhile, were to be kept in royal hands rather than farmed. The second memoranda translates the general guidelines of the remembrance into a more detailed guide for local estate management. Thus, Sir Marmaduke Constable was ordered to stop the tradition of Tutbury bailiffs farming their office for a lump sum, and he was only permitted to sell suitable wood. The same concern for detail characterised other royal instructions to regional stewards: in November 1484 William Catesby was authorised to sell wood from royal lands in More End Park to raise money.\(^{159}\)

\(^{158}\) For what follows, see *B. L. Harleian M. S. 433, Volume 3*, 116-20.

\(^{159}\) *B. L. Harleian M. S. 433, Volume 2*, 175.
What of the regime’s hoped for yield from the crown lands following on from the reforms in their administration discussed above? Henry VII’s chamber accounts show the first Tudor monarch brought in a net yield of c. £35,000 from the crown lands by the turn of the sixteenth century; the result of a decade and a half of continuing deep-rooted administrative improvement and the associated exploitation of prerogative rights.  

We are therefore perhaps justified in suggesting that the regime sought at least £10,000 over and above the £22-25,000 worth of demesne revenues which we have seen the Ricardian regime brought in. Viewed together with the £30,000 sought in the regime’s credit operations, this substantiates our earlier suggestion that the Ricardian government planned to finance a deficit of at least £40,000 in the final year of Richard III’s reign. In the end, however, the government only secured around £10,000 worth of credit over the Michaelmas and Hilary terms, 1484-5; a mere third of its intended yield from loans.

This meant that, even if the regime did secure up to £10,000 worth of additional chamber revenues from landed and prerogative sources (which seems highly unlikely, since it is surely a long shot to suppose that Richard achieved in one year what his successor took over a decade to bring about), it would still have ended up running a fiscal deficit of just under £20,000 in Richard’s final year, as demonstrated by Figure 5, below (the brown bar at the top of “Available income” indicates loans):

160 Dietz, English Government Finance, 84-5. See also Newton, “The king’s chamber:” 348-72. Wolfe (in “Henry VII’s land revenues:” 225-54, repr. with corrections in Royal Demesne, 195-225) took Dietz and Newton to task for having wrongly interpreted the immediate increase in government revenues from Michaelmas 1485-6 as evidence of administrative innovation. Quite the opposite was, he showed, the case since the spike in income received by the exchequer from the early months of Henry VII’s reign related to demesne revenue received by the exchequer, and as such indicated to Wolfe the fossilisation of the Edwardian “land revenue experiment”. Wolfe’s argument is broadly correct, though it was less Edward IV’s fiscal methods which fell into abeyance; rather, what happened constituted a temporary demise of the Ricardian reforms which had formalised the Edwardian system of chamber finance, as discussed below. It would take years of reconstruction and reform to resurrect and improve the late Yorkist chamber system in the context of a new centrally coordinated system of exchequer and chamber finance. Notwithstanding these points, Dietz and Wolfe’s conclusions regarding the relative financial benefits of this resurrected system from the 1490s onwards stand.

It remains for us to question why the government’s creditworthiness was at such a low ebb, since to a large extent the failure of the regime’s credit commissions underlay the substantial deficit outlined above. The answer, as in our earlier discussion of the regime’s failure to secure a lay tax in its negotiations with MPs, ultimately lies in an understanding of the economic and, in particular, the political context of Richard’s fiscal plans. The prospective economic burden of the loans demanded by the commissions would likely have caused tensions. Given the large sums required to bring the total national yield up to the government’s desired c. £30,000, gentlemen such as John Wingfield and Sir Edmund Bedingfield in East Anglia alongside clerics such as the Archbishop of York and the Bishop of Worcester were called upon to foot significant amounts; sometimes
as high as several hundreds of pounds.\footnote{162} This marked a significant break from earlier loan commissions despatched into the counties; Henry VI’s regime, for example, had been able to content itself with seeking relatively small amounts of no more than a few thousand pounds from its loan commissions because a small group of very wealthy individuals and organisations politically committed to the late Lancastrian government could be relied upon to contribute tens of thousands of pounds.\footnote{163} In contrast, such was the scale of the 1484-5 commission that it took on the administrative character of a direct tax which was particularly burdensome on the county elite: none of the individuals named in the commissions belonged to socio-demographic groups beneath the ranks of the yeomanry or, more frequently, the local gentry such as the East Anglian knights mentioned above.\footnote{164}

On balance, however, the regime’s ideological justification for the loan commissions and the highly politicised manner in which the Ricardian government administered these constituted the key factor in ensuring Richard’s failure to secure sufficient loans to satisfy his financial needs in 1484-5. Historically, loan commissions were predicated on governments’ evocation of their wartime defensive “necessity” even when, as during Henry VI’s time, a significant proportion of the loans secured were expended on more permanent, “ordinary” expenditures.\footnote{165} In 1484-5, however, the Ricardian regime deployed the same ideological argument as it had in seeking supply at the parliament of 1484. Thus, the loan commissions stipulated...
that subjects were obligated to provide loans for the general needs of the state as well as simply for the crown’s “extraordinary” defensive needs.\footnote{166}{The loan commissions of 1485 were framed as an appeal to subjects’ goodwill before God to provide credit “for the defence and surety of the king”, as well as for the “weal of this his realm”: \textit{B. L. Harleian M. S. 433, Volume 3}, 128-33. This marked a linguistic break from earlier commissions which simply demanded subjects’ contribution of loans in response to the exigencies of “the defence of the realm” which, in ideological terms, underlay the scholastic link between credit, on the one hand, and defensive war and the special expeditionary costs associated with it, on the other. For a discussion of these issues, in their broader later medieval context, see Brayson, “The fiscal constitution”, 49-70.} This marked a clear extension of the crown’s traditional scholastic justification for loans which reflected the government’s controversial attempts, discussed above, to normalise lay taxation. As a result, contemporaries, many of whom we know already had grave reservations about Richard following his seizure of the throne and the political events of the summer and autumn of 1483, would have been sceptical, to say the least, regarding the legitimacy of his government’s call for credit, particularly on such a large scale.

The Ricardian regime’s politicised administration of the commissions compounded their negative reception in the shires. Richard to a large extent bypassed the traditional county gentry in selecting loan commissioners; opting instead to appoint Ricardian partisans or others who were largely outside the traditional upper echelons of county society. Thus, Worcestershire, Warwickshire and Leicestershire were committed to Walter Grant, a yeoman of the queen’s chamber who had profited from the bonfire of confiscated estates after Buckingham’s rebellion,\footnote{167}{\textit{CPR, 1476-85}, 417.} and to Thomas Otter, who as an ex-Neville retainer had close associations both with Richard III himself and his wife’s family.\footnote{168}{\textit{CPR, 1476-85}, 369; \textit{Ancient Deeds, Volume 6}, no. C4115.} Yorkshire, Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire, meanwhile, were the responsibility of the Ricardian loyalist Edmund Talbot of East Retford as well as a relatively obscure Yorkshire squire named Stephen Hatfield.\footnote{169}{Horrox, “Richard III and the east Riding,” 87; 94.}

These examples demonstrate that Richard thought that deploying his most trusted servants and “new men” wholly reliant on royal...
patronage would increase the commissions’ success.\textsuperscript{170} The exact opposite was, however, true since the king’s brazen contravention of established administrative norms centred on the appointment of recognised senior local figures to loan commissions merely served to exacerbate local anxiety and anger towards the king’s partisan appointments to regional estates and offices. This is evidenced by the long list of creditors who either extended lower levels of credit than the sums sought by the commissions or, rather more seriously from the regime’s perspective, who extended nothing at all.\textsuperscript{171} This explains the fact that the government secured, in 1484-5, a far lower sum total of loans than it sought.

Faced, in the credit debacle of 1484-5, with a fiscal political failure on a par with the previous year’s parliamentary climb-down on lay taxation, and a structural deficit of just under £20,000, Richard’s final months were, in financial as in broader political terms, an abysmal failure.\textsuperscript{172} Nothing sums this up more than some of his supporters likely having to fund their own military contribution in the ill-fated campaign against Henry Tudor;\textsuperscript{173} a striking example of how, quite simply, royal funds could not sustain the Ricardian government by this point in his reign. It does not follow, however,
that because Richard’s government’s fiscal strategy was politically unsuccessful and resulted, effectively, in royal insolvency; there were no administrative developments in the financial machinery of English government during the late Yorkist era. The exact opposite was in fact true, since it looks as though the Ricardian regime’s acute fiscal political difficulties during 1484-5 made it more determined to improve royal oversight over financial affairs in order to assist in its ongoing efforts to raise loans, increase revenue from the crown lands and, more generally, efficiently manage total revenues from these and other sources to fund expenditures which had grown in proportion with the debt carried over from the previous fiscal year.

In this context, we must return to the B. L. Harleian M. S. 433. The remembrance included in this manuscript shows the Ricardian government making plans to improve and formalise the chamber’s accounting procedures. The new estate officials who we have seen had been mandated to more efficiently administer the crown lands were instructed to make annual declarations to the chamber. The remembrance also insisted that exchequer auditors make a similar declaration at the same time as their colleagues reporting to the chamber, so that the king and his ministers were apprised of the total revenues at their disposal and “what thereof is paid and what is owing”. Viewed in tandem, these plans look like a blueprint for the early Tudor development, during the reign of Henry VII, of separate revenue courts in the chamber and the exchequer. These were predicated on specialised and initially separate administrations very

174 For what follows, see B. L. Harleian M. S. 433, Volume 3, 116-20.

175 Henry VII’s reform of central financial administration is covered by Chrimes, Henry VII, 119-134 (who provides a sensible overview); by Wolfe, Royal Demesne, 195-225 (who, as we have seen, stresses the early Tudor regime’s vigour in reforming the Yorkist system of chamber finance and its yield); by Grummitt, “Henry VII:” 229-43 (who revises upwards the chamber income brought in by Henry VII, on the basis of a reappraisal of the surviving documentation); and by Alisp, “The exchequer in late medieval government,” 179-212; Alsop, “The structure of early Tudor finance,” 135-62; Jack and Schofield, “Four early Tudor financial memoranda:” 189-206; Horowitz, “An early-Tudor teller’s book:” 103-16; Guy, “A conciliar court of audit at work:” 289-95 (all of which demonstrate the exchequer’s improved cash flow; its increasingly sophisticated internal auditing procedures and record-keeping; and its preparation of annual budgetary statements covering total royal incomes and expenditures from the end of Henry VII’s reign onwards).
similar to those detailed in the 1484 remembrance for dealing with the crown’s “private” and “public” revenues, respectively, under the auspices of a crown and council which planned national expenditures from a detailed knowledge of the intricately connected chamber and exchequer systems; which were eventually brought under reformed exchequer control.\textsuperscript{176}

It may in fact be that this “early modern” fiscal system was already being implemented, to a fairly advanced degree, by the close of Richard III’s reign. Thanks to Wolffé’s thorough discussion of the small number of so-called “foreign” or extra-exchequer audits surviving for Edward IV’s reign in T. N. A. Special Collections Ministers Accounts, we are aware of the yield of particular estates administered through the chamber for this earlier period, yet it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the first Yorkist monarch’s “land revenue experiment” was a rather informal endeavour.\textsuperscript{177} During Edward IV’s reign there was, for example, no centrally-recorded administrative guidelines for the running of the chamber system and its relationship with the exchequer, nor can we detect a paper trail of administrative changes within this system. In contrast to this, what we see in the financial year 1484-5 is not only a formalisation of the chamber’s financial role in the remembrance discussed above, but also organisational changes in the exchequer. Thus, the memoranda rolls record that one John Hayes, the receiver of the Warwick lands,

\textsuperscript{176} This followed on from the increasing speciality of the fiscal system developing out of the chamber, in particular as far as the court of augmentations was concerned, which developed to manage the massive increase in landed income which followed on from the Tudor regime’s seizure of the monastic lands. After Cromwell’s downfall, Sir William Paulet worked to bring the whole convoluted chamber apparatus back within the remit of a much more efficient, modernised exchequer: Elton, \textit{Tudor Revolution}, 223. The key point which is obfuscated by Elton’s focus on the Cromwell era, however, is that earlier reforms to the machinery of the exchequer and its management of cash and emergent budgetary function, which are described in brief with reference to important scholarship in note 175, above, permitted the exchequer to take on this overall directive role in national finance.

\textsuperscript{177} Wolffé, \textit{Royal Demesne}, 158-68, esp. at 163-4. Wolffé believed, without any empirical justification, that Richard III’s memorandum of 1484, discussed above, suggests the prior operation of similar fiscal administrative procedures, yet if this were the case, then surely more chamber financial documentation would have survived for this earlier period. More importantly, if such advanced financial planning was in place during the 1460s and 1470s, then why would the Ricardian regime have needed to affirm the “Remembrance”? 
had paid £400 to the king’s own person in the royal chamber; an
effective declaration, on the part of the upper exchequer, of its
institutional separation from the chamber.\textsuperscript{178}

Just as importantly, within months of the 1484 remembrance, the
lower exchequer began to use the tellers’ roll, which unlike the
ancient receipt and issue rolls listed receipts and expenditures on
one roll, in an important new way by totalling up termly incomes
and expenditures.\textsuperscript{179} Underlying this move we can detect structural
administrative change; it looks as though the receipt and issue rolls
(the latter of which we have seen had been recently discontinued),
which were increasingly unfit for purpose, had formally ceased to
be the dominant records of public revenues and expenditures; and
had been replaced instead by the one, simplified tellers’ roll which
provided officials with readier access to pertinent termly and annual
financial data.\textsuperscript{180} Following on from this, the increased importance
of the tellers’ role in the exchequer’s record keeping from 1485
demonstrates that it was from this point onwards that the exchequer
began to prepare termly totals of revenues and issues; the essential
precondition of the treasurer and under treasurer preparing an annual
“declaration of the state of the treasury”.\textsuperscript{181} This latter development


\textsuperscript{179} e.g. T. N. A. E 405/86 m. 11. This marked the origins of the so-called “pen and ink dots
system” indicative of marginal exchequer auditing calculations, which were the crucial
precondition of the exchequer’s move towards preparing an internal annual departmental
audit (see below, note 180).

\textsuperscript{180} These changes are drawn attention to, during the Easter term, 1485, by the treasurer
and under-treasurer obtaining over £400 to pay the expenses of various crown servants
from the tellers: T. N. A. E 405/74. There has been some speculation that these changes had
begun in earnest during the reign of Edward IV (Alsop, “The exchequer in late medieval
government”, 184-5), but again, the evidence does not bear this out. Alsop relies on evi-
dence from the post-reademption period when Edward IV filled the tellerships with figures
unusually close to his court, yet this was most likely an attempt to augment exchequer rev-
enues and consolidate the first Yorkist monarch’s political position (Steel, \textit{Receipt}, 297-8)
rather than an institutional reform of the exchequer’s operative procedures. Indeed, the
work of Edward IV’s new tellers was not recorded in Edward IV’s “Black Book” and most
of these figures quickly vacated their roles: T. N. A. E 36/266, f 50v.; T. N. A. E 405/58.

\textsuperscript{181} As discussed above, in notes 179 and 180, the tellers were clearly working towards
annual audits, or at the very least institutionalised budgetary statements, by 1485, yet the
first surviving audit detailing receipts, expenditures and left over cash by the tellers as such
comes from 1490: T. N. A. E 36/124.
was not, as F. C. Dietz showed, institutionally regularised until the early sixteenth century, but the point is that the Ricardian administrative reforms clearly envisaged institutionalised exchequer budgeting.

The points raised in the previous three paragraphs have implications for historians of early modern English financial administration. Firstly, they confirm that late Yorkist royal administrators, unlike Wolffe and historians influenced by his research, were very well aware of the serious financial limitations of the “land revenue experiment” and that, as a result, they set about planning and beginning to instigate deep-reaching administrative reforms centred on royal coordination of a national financial system which was predicated on both a reformed exchequer and chamber in an attempt to improve royal solvency. Secondly, an appreciation of the fiscal administrative vigour of the Ricardian regime calls into question a strong trend in early modern scholarship which argues that Henry VII’s financial administration marked a fundamental break with that of his Yorkist predecessor. This line of thought is predicated on the misguided belief, inherited from G. R. Elton, that Yorkist chamber finance constituted a return to “‘traditional” personal government after the exchequer’s bureaucratic “takeover” during the Lancastrian era, and that Henry VII’s structural reforms to both chamber finance and the exchequer therefore marked a decisive break with the Middle Ages.

182 Dietz, English Government Finance, 76-77, note 38. For the development of the system of auditing in the later years of Henry VII’s reign, see Guy, “A conciliar court of audit at work.” 289-95.

183 This was the argument of Elton, Tudor Revolution, 20-30. Influenced by Lander’s unpublished thesis, Elton believed that Henry VII’s reforms, which were built upon by Cromwell, established an institutionally developed chamber system which was more effectively coordinated, through the royal council, with the exchequer than its late fifteenth-century predecessor had been. Based largely on the research of Wolffe, late medievalists have tended instead to stress the continuity between Yorkist and early Tudor financial administration. As we have, however, seen, Wolffe’s thesis is based on an empirically unfounded focus on the institutional strength of Edward IV’s “land revenue experiment”, which appears not to have been formally coordinated on a central level in the manner mapped out by the financial administrative blueprint of Richard III’s reign.

184 These points echo those of Harriss, “A revolution in Tudor history?:” 8-39.
Medievalists have long known that the exchequer was the coordinating organ within national finance from at least the thirteenth century. Important research by M. C. Prestwich and Harriss demonstrated that even a king such as Edward I – whose military activities and expenditures in his final years seriously strained the exchequer’s logistical ability to keep track of and manage total income and expenditure – did not institutionally challenge the exchequer’s coordinating role within national financial administration.\(^{185}\) The Edwardian “land revenue experiment” was fundamentally different since, as we have seen, the exchequer from the 1460s onwards lost its institutional oversight over a significant proportion of the royal budget accounted for through the chamber (though, as the Longleat manuscript shows, the Ricardian regime at its inception was able to engage in financial planning through the council’s examination of chamber and exchequer records). Since Richard’s regime clearly played a formative role in improving and formalising royal oversight of the chamber and modernising the exchequer, it follows that there was no difference in intent between the financial administration of the Ricardian and early Tudor regimes. It was only the scale of the latter’s reforms which was greater; an achievement which owed simply to the Tudors’ political success in establishing a dynasty which survived.\(^{186}\)

\(^{185}\) Harriss, \textit{King, Parliament}, 208-28; Prestwich, “Exchequer:” 1-10. It is true that, following on from Edward I’s death his son’s alienation from key baronial figures made it expedient for the king’s wardrobe to directly receive cash not channelled through the exchequer. The works cited above, however, demonstrate how little such sums were; the wardrobe continued to rely on the exchequer for a majority of its revenues. Even in the particularly chaotic period 1307-11, the exchequer financed a considerable proportion of wardrobe funds and, crucially, maintained the bookkeeping fiction that an overwhelming proportion of wardrobe receipts and expenditures were directed through the exchequer. It is therefore necessary – \textit{contra} recent scholars such as Grummitt and Lassalmonie, “Public finance” 144-5 – to stress the fundamental structural difference between, on the one hand, the financial activities of the early fourteenth-century wardrobe within a strained system of exchequer finance reformed by the subsequent Walton Ordinances and, on the other, the Yorkist chamber’s “land revenue experiment” which was improved and formalised by Richard III and which, for a time, witnessed the chamber administer a large chunk of the royal budget.

\(^{186}\) This point is made more generally, with regard to the early Tudors’ restoration of political stability, by Horowitz, “Richard III and Henry VII,” 1-20.
6. Conclusions

Drawing the foregoing study to a close, five principal conclusions present themselves. The first relates to the long-term constraints of the Edwardian “land revenue experiment”. Yorkist royal finance, or more specifically Edward IV’s system of administering augmented demesne revenues through his chamber, was neither as stable nor as sustainable a fiscal system as Wolffe believed. Surprisingly for a student of McFarlane, himself a fiscal historian by training, Wolffe’s interpretation rested entirely on a massive, unquantified exaggeration of the role played by landed income managed through the chamber in the royal budget. A more detailed elaboration of Ross’ method of taking late Lancastrian exchequer revenue and expenditure data and, with necessary adjustments for changed financial circumstances, applying this to the Yorkist period, has shown just how shaky the foundations of Edward IV’s fiscal policy were; the first Yorkist monarch’s solvency rested mainly, not on the crown lands, but rather on his good fortune in receiving the French pension and bringing in buoyant indirect tax revenues. When, in 1483, the French pension ceased and, on Edward’s death, the subsidies on trade ran out, Richard III, first as protector and then as king, faced a fiscal crisis which shaped his adoption of a very different approach to running the government’s finances.

These observations lead directly on to a second conclusion; namely that the Ricardian regime on its inception had no choice, faced with an estimated deficit of c. £43,200, but to contravene the politically hegemonic contemporary fiscal maxim that maximised landed revenues administered through the chamber ought to broadly service the crown’s financial needs. Richard’s government instead, as we have seen, sought lay taxation to service the general needs of the state, since this, alongside the expected, dependable renewal of the

187 McFarlane’s early work, based on his postgraduate research, was on the loans of Cardinal Beaufort to the late Lancastrian government (see, in particular, his “Loans to Lancastrian kings”, 55-78); a fact often obscured by his later and much better known research on “bastard feudalism” and the Wars of the Roses. Wolffe dedicated his magnum opus, Royal Demesne, to the memory of McFarlane.
indirect subsidies and clerical supply by parliament and convocation, respectively, constituted the only viable solution to the serious financial predicament in which the regime found itself. Ricardian financial planning, as evidenced by the Longleat manuscript which emphasised chronically low anticipated revenues during the protectorship and Richard’s early days as king, goes some way to substantiate this claim. As does the broader fiscal political context in which the regime undertook its financial planning. Chancellor Russell’s preparations for, and his eventual delivery of, an opening parliamentary statement which explicitly stressed the regime’s general financial difficulties and subjects’ obligation to address these, viewed in the context of the clear effort made by Richard’s government to collegially deal with the Commons on a range of fiscal, economic and more general issues of concern to county society, provides evidence that the government sought lay supply.

The third conclusion relates to why the Ricardian fiscal plan of 1483-4 failed. We have seen that, on one level, Richard’s failure to secure lay taxation could be considered ideological; that is to say, his government’s call for what amounted to permanent or near permanent lay supply ran contrary not only to the anti-tax populism advocated by Fortescue and institutionalised by Edward IV’s “land revenue experiment”; but also to the central tenets of scholastic economic theory. Nevertheless, the political success of the subsequent early Tudor regime, in improved macroeconomic conditions, in beginning to expand the scope of the doctrine of “necessity” to include expansive public costs unrelated to short-term special expeditory exigencies demonstrates that the scholastic constraints of public finance were not unsurmountable; that a so-called “Renaissance” fiscal policy was viable. This tells us that the Ricardian regime’s fundamental fiscal weakness emanated from the circumstances in which Richard became king; specifically, the distrust felt by a large proportion of political society towards a usurper suspected of regicide who stood no chance of persuading MPs and their constituents to accept a new politico-constitutional dispensation on lay taxation. It is in this context that we must view MPs’ fiscal conservatism at the parliament of 1484.
The fourth conclusion relates to the impact of the Ricardian regime’s failure to secure lay taxation in 1484 on royal solvency, fiscal policy and financial administration during the final year of the reign. By our estimation, the absence of a single fifteenth and tenth in the royal budget after MPs’ customary concession of the subsidies of trade and convocation’s similarly customary concession of a clerical tenth would have resulted in the regime running an estimated deficit of around £18,048 in 1483-4. We have seen how this caused royal expenditures to increase in 1484-5, as the regime would have been customarily obligated to attempt to fund a proportion of this deficit, whilst royal income remained broadly the same; hence our estimated deficit of c. £40,000 going into the fiscal year 1484-5. This explains the desperate expedients of 1484-5; firstly, Richard’s attempts to instigate nationwide loan commissions capable of yielding c. £30,000 – a public tax in all but name; and secondly his modernisation of the crown lands’ administration. The failure of these measures to yield what the crown required explains our final estimated deficit, of c. £20,000; which takes into consideration income from the loans and a (generous) estimation of potential net income from the demesne reforms. Crucially, it was the regime’s fiscal political straitjacket which underlay its plans to reorganise national financial administration, specifically its rationalisation and formalisation of the roles of the exchequer and the chamber which, contrary to common belief, Richard’s regime began to implement.

The final, and perhaps the most important, conclusion concerns the broader implications of our study for historians’ understanding of long-term trends in the development of the early English fiscal state. At the outset, we strove to situate Richard III’s financial difficulties in the context of Ormrod and Bonney’s “new” fiscal scholarship. These writers argued that early “tax states” predicated on regular, profitable public taxation were able to sustain credit structures and an explosion in expenditures in a way which medieval “domain states” based on princely and prerogative incomes were not. For later
medieval England, Ormrod showed how the mid-fourteenth century regime of Edward III created a heavy-spending “tax state” on the back of a booming export trade which resulted in a record indirect tax take; and regular lay taxes which were sought and, relatively un-controversially, granted during the first phase of the Hundred Years’ War. Ormrod argued that the later medieval English “tax state” became a victim of its own early success; the domestic elite which held the purse strings proved itself to be very resistant, over time, to royal political efforts to restructure operative tax systems. Consequently, successive regimes struggled to bring in the requisite parliamentary tax revenues to fund heavy permanent and military financial commitments; fiscal crises characterised by deficits and heavy debts, rather than so-called “self-sustained growth”, became the norm, and a “tax state” came to be replaced during the Yorkist era by a low yield “domain state” managed by the monarch in his chamber in an attempt to maximise limited funds within the context of a fiscal state which had contracted dramatically in scope.

Viewing Ricardian fiscal policy and late Yorkist government finance, more generally, against a backdrop of later medieval developments makes it very difficult not to conclude that, although the “land revenue experiment” was an interesting and even a politically necessary phase in government finance, it ultimately constituted an aberration as far as longue-duree developments in pre-modern English public finance are concerned. There is no better way to exemplify this point than by viewing the fiscal deficits with which we have proposed the Ricardian regime grappled in the context of the comparatively huge public tax revenues brought in by Edward III’s government.

189 Ormrod, “England in the middle ages,” 30-2. See also the detailed focus on the fiscal burden during the first phase of the Hundred Years’ War in Ormrod, “The crown and the English economy,” 149-183.


191 For Henry IV’s struggle to secure the necessary public taxation to remain solvent, see the account by Given-Wilson, Henry IV, 280-301. For the situation under Henry VI, see the various works of Harriss and Brayson cited in this article.

192 For a general overview of these themes, see Ormrod, “England in the middle ages,” 33 and Ormrod, “The west European monarchies,” 149-51.
Had Richard’s government accessed as little as half of the parliamentary tax revenue available to Edward III, we would be discussing the final Yorkist’s striking political success in running a large fiscal surplus; instead of the abasement of the government’s finances under his rule. This observation chimes with P. K. O’Brien and P. A. Hunt’s suggestion that a key requirement of the English state at the dawn of the early modern era was that the Tudors succeed in politically normalising lay taxation, alongside a stable export trade and a continued focus on efficient financial administration.¹⁹³ These developments, combined, served as crucial preconditions for a piecemeal renewal of the English “tax state”. Viewed in this context, the Ricardian regime’s failure – despite its overseeing of key developments in financial administration – to secure lay taxation in 1484, should be seen as a final chapter in the troubled relationship between successive later medieval regimes and parliament over the vexed issue of permanent lay supply.¹⁹⁴

¹⁹³ O’Brien and Hunt, “The rise of a fiscal state in England:” 165-9. These authors played down the scale of the early Tudor fiscal achievement, believing it to have been largely negated by the great inflation of the sixteenth century. This is to gloss over the fact that the regime of Henry VII’s later years brought in well over double the royal funds raised by the late Yorkist regime with which we have been primarily concerned.

¹⁹⁴ This comment is premised on the well-evidenced observation discussed above (see, in particular, note 136) that, from the early Tudor period onwards, governments were able to secure permanent or near-permanent “peacetime” lay supply in such a way which rendered the scholastic doctrine of “necessity” redundant, since a necessitas regni was being extended well beyond its medieval meaning to include a whole range of diplomatic, standing defence and permanent charges on the basis that these were necessary for the utilitas regni or res publica. Harriss therefore missed the point when he argued (in “Medieval doctrines,” 73-103) that, because much of early seventeenth-century fiscal rhetoric continued to be couched in scholastic terms, politicians of the Civil War era continued to judge the crown’s case for supply in terms of whether or not there existed a genuine state of defensive emergency. By this point in time the doctrine of “necessity” had long since become a watchword for the regular and generalised financial needs of the commonwealth. It was not, therefore, primarily the ideological basis of the early Stuart state’s fiscal demands which provoked protracted opposition, but rather the political context in which James I and Charles I approached MPs and the elite; a different issue altogether.
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“We are perpetually moralists:” Samuel Johnson and Renaissance Epistemology

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This article discusses how new Renaissance epistemological views shaped the important eighteenth-century critic Samuel Johnson. I argue that Johnson emphasizes conversation as an important element of epistemology, pushing against what was an over-emphasize on book learning perpetuated by educators such as Peter Ramus. The rise in print-culture led to a shift in epistemology, in which knowledge could be seen as linear, codified, or fixed. While Johnson works both within and against these new epistemological trends, I argue that his criticism of John Milton’s poetry can be appreciated more fully if Johnson’s own reservations about print culture are kept in mind. Though far from seeing Milton as a bad poet, Johnson objects in part to what he sees in Milton as narrowed, or specialized learning and poetry that pleases the eye but not the ear. This creates for readers an inability to enter into works such as Paradise Lost, which they read not for pleasure but for mere instruction.

Much has been rightly made of Samuel Johnson’s treatment of John Milton’s poetry, and this essay attempts to situate those views beside his response to Renaissance epistemology more generally. While Johnson’s criticism of Milton’s poetry is complex, I argue that observing shifting epistemologies and Johnson’s particular interest in conversation as an element of epistemology offers a context for which to read his, sometimes troubling, criticism of Milton’s poetry. For Johnson Milton’s poetry in many ways mirrors his plan for a school, one founded on the changing seventeenth-century epistemologies propagated by the likes of educational reformers such as Peter Ramus. This essay will trace these Renaissance shifts before examining Johnson’s “Life of Milton.”

I

As many have noted, an epistemological shift occurred in the early modern period following the invention of the printing press and the rise of reading and literacy. For instance, by the late 1790s the author
William Jackson, polymath friend of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, could make a clear distinction between the roles of conversation and reading in regards to learning: the purpose of conversation is entertainment, that of reading instruction. Jackson is concerned that learning has devolved into the “shuttle cock of conversation,” and seeks to return it to its proper place in reading.¹ Jackson sees the rise of interest in conversation as a response to another movement that had sixteenth- and seventeenth-century origins, namely the overreliance on the new technology of the printed book to codify learning or fix knowledge between book covers.

Marshall McLuhan and Walter J. Ong both discuss how new print technologies fostered opinions in which epistemological questions could be answered primarily or even solely through books as physically bound objects that deliver concise, clear, linear resolutions or proof. Ong sees in this shift the beginnings of a radical dissociation between written and spoken language,² and McLuhan adds that the dissociation affects the literate person’s relationship to the information itself. While the literate person is detached from the object in view, non-literate people are “wholly with the object. They go empathically into it.”³ Because, McLuhan adds, “speech is an outering (utterance) of all our sense at once, writing abstracts from speech.”⁴ This abstraction, writes Ong, changes even our understanding of knowledge itself. Over time, typography reduced the fundamental orality of words. Instead of being experienced as sounds, words and information were received through sight, appearing exactly the same in printed editions, “giving a text a fixed home in space.” In this the “value of the visual imagination and the visual memory … made accessible a diagrammatic approach to knowledge …. Typography did more than ‘spread’ ideas. It gave

¹ Mee, Conversable Worlds: Literature, Contention, and Community, 1762–1830, 18.
urgency to the very metaphor that ideas were items which could be ‘spread.'”

Ong holds the sixteenth-century educator Peter Ramus responsible in part for these shifts. Ramus perceived proof as the end of discourse, an activity of codified arguments and syllogisms. Language, knowledge, and reality for some sixteenth-century intellectuals were understood not in terms of contemplation, inquiry, or mystery, but rather exchange, transfer, or an “intellectual commercialism.” Johnson, for example, argues that selling books to readers is more effective than giving them away, as readers will value the book more if they had paid for it than if it was free. In this schema in which knowledge is commodity, the educator no longer views learning in terms of practical wisdom, a living out of what one knows, and in contrast to classical and medieval epistemologies, the life of thinking is disconnected from the life of action. These pedagogical methods and print technologies had additional repercussions. As codified knowledge at least appears “fixed,” it becomes demystified, as what were once mysteries can now be dealt with in an orderly and precise fashion. Thus do certitude and proof become hallmarks, even the primary end of epistemological inquiry. The essayist Michel de Montaigne in “Of the art of discussion” (1585–88) criticizes this method, for it “often enough mends purses, rarely minds.” Books for Montaigne give some the false impression of being learned, and

5 Ong, “Ramist Method and the Commerical World,” 156. See also, McLuhan, The Gutenberg Galaxy, 94, 125.

6 Ong, “Ramist Method and the Commerical World,” 161.


9 Ong, “Ramist Method and the Commerical World,” 165. See also McLuhan, The Gutenberg Galaxy, 125.

10 Ong, “Ramist Method and the Commerical World,” 161.

these men would be much better suited for commercial trades, for “their mind has neither enough vigor nor enough skill to spread out and distribute that noble and powerful matter, to make use of it and derive help from it.”

McLuhan further points out that while the medieval intellectual took in all perspectives at once, what he calls a “simultaneous mosaic, a dealing with many aspects and levels of meaning in crisp simultaneity,” print culture introduced notions of repeatable unification and a lineation of perspective. The unified perspective parallels the over-emphasis and eventual isolation of the sense of sight. Thus can reformers like Martin Luther advise scholars, no matter the art,

   to read some sure and certain books over and over again; for to read many sorts of books produces rather confusion than any distinct result. As we use not daily the community of all our friends, but of a select few, even so we ought to accustom ourselves to the best books, and to make them familiar unto us, so as to have them, as we say, at our fingers’ end. A fine talented student fell into a frenzy; the cause of his disease was, that he laid himself out too much upon books, and was in love with a girl. Luther dealt very mildly and friendly with him, expecting amendment, and said: Love is the cause of his sickness; study brought upon him but little of his disorder.

Luther advises the young scholar not to read merely but to read “sure” and “certain” books, the “best books” over and over until he has taken in the information so to have it at recall. The advice suggests a one-way, linear epistemological approach that moreover diagnoses love as the primary cause for his “disorder,” the second being his straying from the “best books.” James S. Taylor sees in something like this the loss of what he calls “poetic knowledge.” Beginning with Socrates and continuing through Aristotle, Augustine, and Thomas Aquinas, Taylor traces this classical, holistic approach to knowledge

12 Montaigne, “Of the art of discussion,” 711.
13 McLuhan, The Gutenberg Galaxy, 111–12, 129. See also, 136.
15 Luther, Table Talk, 341–42.
that includes the senses, emotions, will, and intellect. As John Henry Newman put it in his nineteenth-century epistemological work *The Grammar of Assent*, “man is not a reasoning animal; he is a seeing, feeling, contemplating, acting animal. He is influenced by what is direct and precise.” The realm of emotions for Taylor and Newman thus includes such feelings as fear, hope, anger, courage, love, desire, and joy, the very things Luther seems antagonistic towards, at least as quoted above. This integrated approach may also be phrased as “the body-soul knowledge immersed in the life of the object before it,” as Taylor puts it, a characteristic of the non-literate person McLuhan observes above. As Alvin Kernan notes, in reading, not only is the author absent from the reader, but the reader does not go to the author but remains in silent isolation, distant from the information.

In *The Concept of Conversation: From Cicero’s Sermo to the Grand Siècle’s Conversation*, David Randall points to Petrarch as another major figure who shifted ideas of conversation, and consequently orality, from speech to writing. Petrarch’s major contribution was a “shift in emphasis from the spoken to the written, from *sermo* as actual conversation … to *sermo* as an epistolary exercise.” For Petrarch reading became, to an extent, a substitute for intimate friendship and conversation, for readers could enjoy that familiar conversation with writers from past ages. This “intimate reading and understanding was meant to be as expressive of one’s individual self as one’s writing.” Randall observes in Petrarch a break between

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16 Taylor, Poetic Knowledge: The Recovery of Education, 44.
19 Kernan, Print Technology, Letters, & Samuel Johnson, 221.
20 Randall, The Concept of Conversation: From Cicero’s Sermo to the Grand Siècle’s Conversation, 51.
21 Randall, The Concept of Conversation: From Cicero’s Sermo to the Grand Siècle’s Conversation, 50.
22 Randall, The Concept of Conversation: From Cicero’s Sermo to the Grand Siècle’s Conversation, 50.
medieval Christian ideas of conversation and the early modern period. Medieval conversation was directed “outward toward the universal friendship of mankind and inward toward each man’s soul,” whereas conversation in the early modern period became increasingly directed toward the world and public life.\textsuperscript{23} As with knowledge, so conversation grew to be viewed merely in terms of something fundamentally worldly, like an exchange of ideas or commercial commodity.

II

Late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century epistemologies and theories of language built upon Renaissance trends discussed above. Two important figures included John Locke and the French philosopher Étienne Bonnot de Condillac. Both Locke and Condillac, among others, believed that language was fundamentally arbitrary: words had no natural relation to things or ideas but were constructed for the purposes of such things as communication, imagination, memory, and contemplation.\textsuperscript{24} Epistemologists like Locke and Condillac were responding to the rise of other theorists of language who believed that by studying etymologies, one could trace all languages back to an original pre-Babel language spoken by Adam in the Garden of Eden. This Adamic language demonstrated a perfect harmony between words and things, and in the example of Adam’s naming of the animals, it was held that the names themselves, their sounds included, revealed the essence of the animals.\textsuperscript{25} In this conception of language, advanced by philosophers such as Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, language is something natural, and words are not arbitrarily chosen to represent things or ideas. Language is not merely, as Johnson puts it, “the dress of thought.”\textsuperscript{26}

\textsuperscript{23} Randall, \textit{The Concept of Conversation: From Cicero’s Sermo to the Grand Siècle’s Conversation}, 52.

\textsuperscript{24} Aarsleff, \textit{From Locke to Saussure: Essays on the Study of Language and Intellectual History}, 63-64, 286-87.

\textsuperscript{25} Aarsleff, \textit{From Locke to Saussure: Essays on the Study of Language and Intellectual History}, 281-83.

This close, observable study of language, which could ultimately reveal the very nature of things themselves, thus mixed a mystical understanding of language with the new empirical science based on observation.\textsuperscript{27}

For English writers in the eighteenth century, including Johnson, Locke’s theories of language and epistemology were especially influential. Johnson, states, near the end of his Preface to the Dictionary,

\begin{quote}
I am not yet so lost in lexicography, as to forget that \textit{words are the daughters of earth, and that things are the sons of heaven}. Language is only the instrument of science, and words are but the signs of ideas: I wish, however, that the instrument might be less apt to decay, and that signs might be permanent, like the things which they denote.\textsuperscript{28}
\end{quote}

Johnson agrees with Locke that words are merely instruments for things, but his wish for them to be permanent reveals a deeper longing that the accruing of knowledge (a combination of thing and sign) be less elusive. Language, moreover, has a tendency to decay: “tongues like governments,” says Johnson, “have a natural tendency to degeneration.”\textsuperscript{29} It thus becomes necessary for us to “make some struggles for our language,” as Johnson believes he is attempting in writing his Dictionary.\textsuperscript{30} Nevertheless, since in Lockean terms communicational knowledge by its nature is incomplete and inexact, conversation for many became a way of breaking away from the Renaissance epistemologies that viewed knowledge in systematic, exact terms.

Given the rise in this theory of language, I argue Johnson and others, while following the Lockean view, subtly indicate a longing for what had been lost in the rise of print technology. Namely, Johnson


\textsuperscript{28} Johnson, Preface to the Dictionary, 310.

\textsuperscript{29} Johnson, Preface to the Dictionary, 326–27.

\textsuperscript{30} Johnson, Preface to the Dictionary, 327.
views language, not merely as a conduit for the exchange of ideas between people, but for the purpose of immersing oneself into the very ideas and things themselves. Conversation, moreover, becomes a way of entering into the other person with whom one is speaking. The emphasis on conversation for many eighteenth-century writers is an attempt not to lose entirely the medieval oral culture but to incorporate it within the new learning fostered by books. Johnson does not reject book learning but rather lauds it as foundational for education. Nevertheless, conversation helps us move outward, away from our subjective selves and towards others.\textsuperscript{31} Examining the etymology of words such as \textit{conversation} helps clarify these ideas. Etymologically, the word is related to \textit{conversion} and \textit{to convert}, words associated with change or the act of turning from one thing to another. The verb \textit{converse}, for instance, has the same Latin root as \textit{conversation}, \textit{conversārī}, literally “to turn oneself about, to move to and fro, pass one’s life, dwell, abide, live somewhere, keep company with.”\textsuperscript{32} \textit{To converse} also shares the Latin root \textit{convertēre} with \textit{to convert} and \textit{conversion}. \textit{Convertēre} means “to turn about, turn in character or nature, transform, translate.”\textsuperscript{33} Johnson’s first definition of \textit{to converse} stresses the dwelling and abiding elements of its Latin root: “to \textit{cohabit}; to hold intercourse with; to be a companion to.”\textsuperscript{34} To converse thus requires familiarity and a reciprocal exchange of thoughts. It is a relatively informal act, familiar and personal, implying equality, companionship, friendship, even an intellectual in-dwelling or cohabitation with others. Like the convert, the conversationalist’s opinions or ideas transform or translate as he engages with other ideas, providing for the possibility of mutual understanding and genuine intellectual progression.

In the eighteenth century we observe both the Lockean view of language as a means of transferring ideas as well as the understanding


\textsuperscript{32} \textit{OED Online} “Converse,” v.

\textsuperscript{33} \textit{OED Online} “Convert,” v.

\textsuperscript{34} Johnson, \textit{A Dictionary of the English Language}, 470, emphasis mine.
of conversation as a deeply personal and natural act. In her discussion of Hannah More’s eighteenth-century poem The Bas Bleu, or Conversation, Kathryn J. Ready connects Locke’s understanding of language, what he calls “the common measure of Commerce and Communication,”35 with the transition in eighteenth-century Britain from a land-based to a commerce-based economy. Words, language, ideas, and knowledge are now exchanged or transferred through conversation as if commodities, and Johnson would also define conversation as “commerce.”36 This tendency is observed in a variety of other eighteenth-century writers. In Spectator 4 (1711) Richard Steele’s Mr. Spectator, for instance, aptly demonstrates the Petrarchan fusion between written and spoken communication. The only rule to live by for Mr. Spectator is “the Care of satisfying our own Minds in what we do,” and the best way to satisfy the mind is to enter into society not for purposes, however, of conversing but rather “to gratify his Curiosity.” The Spectator must “be exempt from the Passions with which others are tormented,” for this “is the only pleasing solitude.”37 Thus does Mr. Spectator enter into society yet remain aloof, seeing, observing, and receiving information without conversationally engaging with it. He admits to lacking all but one sense yet possessing it with great power.

Thus my Want of, or rather Resignation of Speech, gives me all the Advantages of a dumb Man. I have, methinks, a more ordinary Penetration in Seeing; and flatter my self that I have looked into the Highest and Lowest of Mankind, and make shrewd Guesses, without being admitted to their Conversation, at the inmost Thoughts and Reflections of all whom I behold.38

Mr. Spectator tells his audience that the only pleasures he has are those of sight, and that he never enters into the “Commerce of

36 Johnson, A Dictionary of the English Language, 460.
37 Steele, Spectator 4, 18, 19.
38 Steele, Spectator 4, 20.
Discourse” with anyone except his own friends. But though his conversation is limited and his senses isolated to sight, he hopes that his written work can furnish the women with “Tea-Table Talk.” Six essays later Joseph Addison expands Mr. Spectator’s character and role. If only a spectator, he will still encourage conversation amongst society, for as Socrates “brought Philosophy down from Heaven, to inhabit among Men … I shall be ambitious to have it said of me, that I have brought Philosophy out of Closets and Libraries, Schools and Colleges, to dwell in Clubs and Assemblies, at Tea-Tables, and in Coffee-Houses.” Addison principally worries about a set of men he labels the Blanks of Society. These men, wholly without ideas until the “Business and Conversation of the Day” supplies them with topics for discussion, will be furnished by Addison with “Materials for thinking.” The Blanks of Society, Addison advises, should not even leave their homes until they have read his daily essay, for they can be assured that he will “daily instil into them such sound and wholesome Sentiments, as shall have a good Effect on their Conversation for the ensuing twelve Hours.”

While many eighteenth-century writers view conversation in terms of commerce, others associate it with nature. Isaac Watts, for instance, writes that the “seeds of truth” grow in what he calls “free discourse.” This seems, for him, to transition conversation from an economic framework to a framework in which conversation is inevitably rooted in nature. Discourse is now “free,” still a fundamentally economic term, but no longer one that views ideas as commodities, for if discourse is free, ideas are no longer viewed in terms of property. Instead, they are, like seeds and fire, natural entities in our world, available for all. Ready argues that natural metaphors

39 Steele, Spectator 4, 21.
40 Addison, Spectator 10, 44.
41 Addison, Spectator 10, 46.
42 Watts, Improvement of the Mind, 40.
43 See Watts, Improvement of the Mind, 40.
in works such as William Cowper’s *Conversation* suggest these writers understand conversation as something local and agricultural. This builds upon ideas expressed by epistemologists like Liebniz who believed language to be natural and ultimately connected to the Garden of Eden. Conversation, therefore, not only inhabits an ever-expanding world of commerce but also is conducted in small villages or domestic settings.\(^{44}\) Cowper thus argues that conversation must be cultivated just like a tiller sows his soil,\(^{45}\) and speech and thought both inhabit a garden-like setting:

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The mind, dispatch’d upon her busy toil,
Should range where Providence has blest the soil;
Visiting ev’ry flow’r with labour meet,
And gathering all her treasures sweet by sweet,
She should imbue the tongue with what she sips,
And shed the balmy blessing on the lips,
That good diffus’d may more abundant grow,
And speech may praise the pow’r that bids it flow.\(^{46}\)
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Of course, neither Watts or Cowper mean to limit conversation. What they offer is the idea that while conversation can be open and expansive in a commercialized sense its ultimate worth comes in exercising the mind in small, localized, even domestic settings. It is in these settings where, as More puts it, “congenial fires” keep aflame a conversation directed in a very specific way, notably towards religious enlightenment.\(^{47}\) Natural, localized conversation in the domestic setting necessarily contrasts the commercialized view of conversation in that it places speakers in familiarized spheres. These spaces allow for more intimate and personal conversations, conversations in which individuals in a sense open their person to the other. As Jon Mee puts it, “The importance of opening one’s self


\(^{45}\) Cowper, *Conversation*, l. 6.

\(^{46}\) Cowper, *Conversation*, ll. 437–44.

\(^{47}\) See More, *The Bas Bleu*, *Conversation*, l. 84.
to the other in some modern thinking about conversation ... puts its priorities on the abeyance of conflict, as did many eighteenth-century theorists of conversation.\textsuperscript{48}

The personalized, local understanding of conversation was not necessarily a non-epistemological act, and many eighteenth-century writers followed Renaissance writers in their understanding of conversation’s role in the learning process. At the end of the sixteenth century, for instance, Francis Bacon wrote in “Of Studies” (1597) that “reading maketh a full man; conference a ready man; and writing an exact man,”\textsuperscript{49} something Johnson would quote almost verbatim in \textit{Adventurer}.\textsuperscript{85} Montaigne added that reading requires conversation, asserting that “The study of books is a languishing and feeble activity that gives no heat, whereas discussion teaches and exercises us at the same time.”\textsuperscript{50} Montaigne reveals a pleasure in difference and disagreement in conversation, what he calls “the sharpness and vigor” of discussion. Conversation is not “vigorous and generous enough if it is not quarrelsome, if it is civilized and artful, if it fears knocks and moves with constraint.”\textsuperscript{51} For Montaigne, truth is something inquired after but not possessed, approached only through rigorous debate. One should, then, never be “satisfied with [himself] and trust [himself]” but always “discontented and diffident.”\textsuperscript{52} This discontentment, however, should not lead to fear of meeting alternative opinions but should rather embrace them as opportunities to sharpen one’s own, however unsatisfied he must be with it.\textsuperscript{53}

\textsuperscript{48} Mee, \textit{Conversable Worlds: Literature, Contention, and Community, 1762–1830}, 2.


\textsuperscript{50} Montaigne, “Of the art of discussion,” 704.

\textsuperscript{51} Montaigne, “Of the art of discussion,” 704.

\textsuperscript{52} Montaigne, “Of the art of discussion,” 717.

\textsuperscript{53} Montaigne, “Of the art of discussion,” 709.
Montaigne’s essay on conversation seeks to make it more democratic, and he thus laments the intrusion of experts, who “beat you down with the authority of their experience: they have heard, they have seen, they have done—you are overwhelmed with examples.” Addison and Steele would agree. Addison’s desire to move philosophy from the closets and libraries and into the assemblies and coffee houses reveals a desire to see the democratic diffusion of ideas spread among a variety of people. In other words, while they speak of conversation using economic language, many eighteenth-century writers see this as an opportunity for knowledge to be disconnected from the codification, or commercialization, it receives in print and for reading to be a tool for conversation. Paul Tankard suggests that however powerful the effects of print technology on oral culture, the two nevertheless continued to exist side by side, and Kernan recognizes Johnson as a principle figure straddling the two eras of oral and print cultures. Johnson in many ways was a Gutenberg reader – rarely reading books through, sifting through them to glean only the essentially necessary arguments. Yet his own wry observation in Rambler 23 (1750) speaks to his reservations about print technologies:

> When a book is once in the hands of the public, it is considered as permanent and unalterable; and the reader, if he be free from personal prejudices, takes it up with no other intention than of pleasing or instructing himself; he accommodates his mind to the author’s design; and having no interest in refusing the amusement that is offered him, never interrupts his own tranquillity by studied cavils, or destroys his satisfaction in that which is already well, by an anxious enquiry how it might be better; but is often contented without pleasure and pleased without perfection.


57 Johnson, Rambler 23, 3:127.
But the attitude toward the same work changes drastically if it is still in manuscript form. Unlike the “permanent and unalterable” printed book, the unpublished work receives heated objections and criticism. The reader, so eager to enjoy the printed copy, reads now only to find fault, and “looks round for every opportunity to propose some specious alteration.” Johnson, in other words, recognizes the dangers of print culture and the tendency to read works differently, not based on their content, but on how that content is displayed, as if bookbinding magically makes the ideas complete, fixed, and above criticism. Mee further explains the eighteenth-century views that underscored their growing concern of print culture:

Not the least of these [eighteenth-century] tropes ... is the opposition between the ‘conversable world’ ... and the ‘cloistered’ domain of ‘learning’ found, for example, in Addison, Shaftesbury, Hume, and a host of other often nameless contributors to eighteenth-century periodical literature. Often what is going on in these tropes is a redefinition of literary culture away from (Catholic) scholarship and classical language and towards the vernacular culture of Protestantism and the world of goods. In this context of orienting knowledge towards the interactions of the everyday world, conversation starts to be defined as an intrinsic, sometimes even primary characteristic of being human.

This democratic epistemology, an epistemology increasingly open to the education of women, contrasts Luther’s notion that in sermons preachers must “feed the common people with milk” for they are in need of “simple instruction” and “High and subtle discourse, the

58 Johnson, Rambler 23, 3:127.

59 Mee, Conversable Worlds: Literature, Contention, and Community, 1762–1830, 16. See also p. 17 and p. 24: “More often the emphasis on conversation in eighteenth-century cultural commentary was part of a drive to value ‘learning’ only in so far as it is put out into circulation. Part of this formation conceived of reading as a productive form of conversation between the living and the distant or the dead, effectively bringing back to life what otherwise might have lain hidden in musty libraries.” Both David Hume and Henry Fielding argue that conversation specifically distinguishes us from the animals and the brutes. Hume, “Of Essay-writing,” 533, says, “The elegant Part of Mankind, who are not immers’d in the animal Life” are either considered “learned” or “conversible,” and Fielding, “An Essay on Conversation,” 121, calls those who shun society and conversation “savage.” Cicero, On Oratory and Orators, 1.8, 14, says, “For it is by this one gift that we are most distinguished from brute animals, that we converse together, and can express our thoughts by speech.” See, too, Randall, The Concept of Conversation: From Cicero’s Sermo to the Grand Siècle’s Conversation, 73.
strong wine, we will keep for the strong minded.”60 David Hume pushes against this, arguing that “Learning has been as great a Loser by being shut up in Colleges and Cells, and secluded from the World and good Company” and men who write are typically men “without any Taste of Life or Manners, and without that Liberty and Facility of Thought and Expression, which can only be acquir’d by Conversation.”61 Indeed, can we expect anything from “Men who never consulted Experience in any of their Reasonings, or who never search’d for that Experience, where alone it is to be found, in common Life and Conversation?”62 Likewise, while Johnson tells Hester Thrale that young men should always have a book by their side, he also argues that “Books without the knowledge of life are useless.”63 For Johnson education necessarily inhabits two spheres: libraries or universities and coffee houses or homes. Knowledge must be received and experienced, or lived out in the world, if it is to be whole.

III

Looking at Rambler 23 I have briefly remarked upon Johnson’s wry understanding of the pseudo-official nature of a work after it appears in print. In a similar fashion Johnson shows impatience with early modern education reforms, and this notably comes out in the “Life of Milton.” For instance, Johnson labels Ramus “one of the first oppugners of the old philosophy, who disturbed with innovations the quiet of the schools” and wonders whether Milton’s Art of Logic was not “an act of hostility against the Universities.”64 He furthermore castigates Milton’s educational philosophy as following the “scheme of improvement which seems to have busied many literary projectors of that age,” a scheme that emphasized the physical sciences and

60 Luther, Table Talk, 343.
63 Piozzi, Anecdotes of Samuel Johnson, 36, 171.
voluminous reading over morality, philosophy, and rhetoric.\textsuperscript{65} Indeed, at the end of the “Life of Milton,” Johnson echoes the above sentiments regarding the inherent orality of verse. Poetry, far from being merely visual, is to be heard like music, and because of this English blank verse does not please the ear as effectively as rhymed verse.

\begin{quote}
\ldots it is however by the musick of metre that poetry has been discriminated in all languages; and in languages melodiously constructed with a due proportiona of long and short syllables, metre is sufficient \ldots The musick of the English heroick line strikes the ear so faintly that it is easily lost, unless all the syllables of every line co-operate together: this co-operation can be only obtained by the preservation of every verse unmixed with another, as a distinct system of sounds; and this distinctness is obtained and preserved by the artifice of rhyme \ldots Blank verse, said an ingenious critic, seems to be verse only to the eye.\textsuperscript{66}
\end{quote}

This same principle is applied to the metaphysical poets, whose whole purpose was to display their learning in something one may call verse but not poetry. Indeed, their works were even considered verses not by the test of orality but by counting syllables.\textsuperscript{67} Years earlier, in his first \textit{Rambler} essay on Milton, Johnson argues that the poet’s unique superiority over other artists is his ability, even his duty, to unite music with reason, to move both the mind and emotions,\textsuperscript{68} and as Christine Rees points out, while it is true that Johnson’s objections to Milton are fundamentally political and religious, his first written criticism of Milton deals with his technicality as a poet.\textsuperscript{69} Johnson’s own practice of writing letters and poetry reflects the idea, following Alexander Pope, that “the sound must seem an echo to the sense.”\textsuperscript{70}

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Tankard, for instance, tells of how Johnson’s recitation of his letter to Chesterfield to Boswell in 1781, after nearly thirty years, retains not only most of the content but also the rhythm and syntax of the original. Likewise do the Yale Editors of *The Vanity of Human Wishes* acknowledge Johnson’s assertion that he wrote the poem in his head, in half-lines, arguing that “evidently Johnson knew that the rime words would keep the second halves in mind.” In these two examples Johnson seems to have composed, and remembered, his works both orally and visually.

A look at Johnson’s understanding of the role of conversation in epistemology helps to deepen our understanding of his views towards both the metaphysicals and Milton. Quoting Bacon’s “Of Studies” essay in *Adventurer* 85, Johnson posits that education ought to be comprised of three elements: reading, writing, and conversation. Each has its own particular role in the growth of the intellect and none can be outbalanced, or isolated. But if reading and writing, as Johnson frequently notes, are toilsome, difficult, or unpleasant, conversation is the arm of epistemology that makes learning pleasurable and counterbalances subjectivity. One must thus read to be educated, for through reading one consults tradition. But conversation prepares one, as it were, to think on his feet and to understand both his and his opponent’s views more clearly. He who merely reads does not practice how to articulate his views, and, worse, has no views but his own to articulate. He has, in other words, stores of useless knowledge that cannot be applied. Moreover, the “accidents of conversation,” the inevitable twists and turns, make it most valuable, for unlike book-learning, conversation is unpredictable and allows us to discover something we have not previously conceived. In order to be truly learned, then, the intellectual must experiment with his position, “presenting it in different points of view, connecting it with known and granted truths, fortifying it with intelligible arguments, and illustrating it by apt similitudes.”


then, have power to change any one position into what Johnson calls “various forms.”

Through conversation ideas grow and mature in their nuance. The ideal scholar will thus read to grow broadly in knowledge, write to narrow and hone his ideas, and converse to exercise them in the real world.

Conversation, though, is not merely a check to understanding but a deeply personal activity. Johnson’s *Rambler* 89 falls almost right in the middle of his long critique of Milton (*Rambler* 86, 88, 90, 92, 94), and in it he makes a similar argument to that of *Adventurer* 85: the reclusive scholar must fly from himself and seek communication. But the conversation Johnson encourages in *Rambler* 89 is the lighthearted conversation of trifles, an activity which Locke advocates and which has the ability to be both profitable and pleasurable. Johnson calls this activity “the most eligible amusement of a rational being,” something that often creates lasting friendships. The primary end of this conversation is to be pleased with companions – an activity that is eternal. Trifling conversation is not merely pleasant in the moment, but so often also affords “loose sparkles of thoughtless wit” that “may give new light to the mind,” and this “gay contention for paradoxical positions rectify the opinions” well after the conversation has ended. Thus the conversationalist leaves not merely pleased with the company but improved intellectually. The benevolence and equality he experiences in the conversation, moreover, increases his confidence.

As Ong explains, this type of social knowledge which deals with other people is knowledge of belief, or faith:

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Belief in a person includes also much more than this. To believe in God is to look for a response from Him. The construction of our expression and thinking with the term “in”—a construction found in many languages other than English—is significant here. It suggests that somehow in believing in someone, we enter into him. He is not merely an “object” of belief with whom our belief terminates. He is an interiority into whom our belief penetrates and with whom it enables us to commune.75

When considering conversation and epistemology from the perspective of personhood and relationships, Taylor argues, the process of learning requires a giving over of oneself in which the intellectual reception of knowledge cannot be separated from the emotion of love.

This reception of the intentional form of the object is a most basic and intuitive cognitive impulse, the first reflex to experience knowledge as union, possession, with the essence (the form) of the thing to be known. And this is the poetic tendency of the cognitive life, this getting within the immaterial reality of the objects of knowledge prior to rational thought. So deep and involuntary is this impulse, that among the various definitions of a human being, one is certainly that we are poetic beings, for it is always the end of poetry to bring us sympathetically inside the experience of reality, always in search of union, fulfilling our innate desire to know. Aquinas adds that “the knowing being is naturally adapted to have also the form of some other thing.” We are naturally proportionate to knowing in this way, a necessitas naturalis of knowing. And, this “to have” that Thomas speaks of is similar to, if not the same as, the love (possession) spoken of by St. Augustine in his definition of knowledge.76

Once inside the experience, or in the love relationship, the knowledge received cannot be conveyed through language. There is, in other words, an impossibility of transference understood in the above sense of commercial transaction because instead of being codified, linear, or exact, knowledge is mysterious. It is something we enter into, love, and possess, but, like in any relationship with another person, not something fully comprehended.

75 Ong, “Voice as Summons,” 265. See also Josef Pieper, Belief and Faith, 17–24.

In Johnson’s “Life of Milton,” one recognizes an explicit rejection of many of the above seventeenth-century epistemological tendencies. While Johnson defends Milton’s chosen profession as a schoolmaster, he is averse to his plan of education. The biographers who speak about Milton’s school praise what they see as a “formidable list” of Greek and Latin authors, read by the boys from ages ten to sixteen. But Johnson suggests that mere volume of reading may be counterproductive if the students are not taking in the material fully. Instructors must, instead, embrace the fact of “slow advances” from students and the “patience it requires to recall vagrant inattention, to stimulate sluggish indifference, and to rectify absurd misapprehension.” In other words, education is not merely a linear intake of disconnected information but like any relationship a laborious process full of stops and starts, dead ends, and rabbit trails, and for this reason it must necessarily be connected with the lived experience.

Johnson also criticizes Milton’s desire to teach something more “solid” than literature by emphasizing the physical sciences in his curriculum. This, too, is largely disconnected from the student’s actual experience in life, and Johnson argues that the appropriate knowledge for these schools provides, among other things, materials for conversation:

But the truth is, that the knowledge of external nature, and the sciences which that knowledge requires or includes, are not the great or the frequent business of the human mind. Whether we provide for action or conversation, whether we wish to be useful or pleasing, the first requisite is the religious and moral knowledge of right and wrong; the next is an acquaintance with the history of mankind, and with those examples which may be said to embody truth, and prove by events the reasonableness of opinions. Prudence and Justice are virtues, and excellences, of all times and of all places; we are perpetually moralists, but we are geometricians by chance. Our intercourse with intellectual nature is necessary; our speculations upon matter are voluntary, and at leisure. Physiological learning is of such rare emergence, that one man may know another half his life without being able to estimate his skill in hydrostaticks or astronomy; but his moral and prudential character immediately appears.


The authors one should read at school, argues Johnson, should supply principles for prudence and moral truth and materials for conversation, and those who should be read are thus poets, orators, and historians. Johnson closes his digression on Milton’s school by appealing to Socrates. He attacks the Renaissance innovators for shifting education from life to nature, for those innovators “seem to think, that we are placed here to watch the growth of plants, or the motions of the stars. Socrates was rather of opinion, that what we had to learn was, how to do good, and avoid evil.” The importance of morality in education, and the purpose of education being formative for how to live in the world, follows not only Socrates, but the Aristotelian understanding that virtue is not prescriptive but something inherently tied to action. In his analysis of the moral dimensions of *Rasselas* Fred Parker explains the work is Aristotelian rather than prescriptivist, a novel in which morality is understood not as adherence to a set of rules or laws but as practical wisdom: How does one act in any particular situation? Aristotle, whom Johnson deems the father of criticism, has taught moreover that poetry is an art of imitation, something that reflects the real world. The metaphysicals (and Milton) do not accomplish this because they do not properly imitate life. They write in order to be admired instead of understood, “rather as beholders than partakers of human nature; as Beings looking upon good and evil, impassive and at leisure.” They do not, in Johnson’s understanding, go emphatically into their subject, as McLuhan describes above, but rather view knowledge at a distance, and for this reason little instruction, in the sense of practical wisdom, is gained from reading them.

81 Parker, “We are perpetually moralists”: Johnson and moral philosophy,” 16, 19, 23.
It is also important to discern how Johnson approaches Milton in “The Life of Milton” more generally. While he deals with Milton as a technical critic in *The Rambler*, *The Lives of the Poets* comes closest to mimicking Johnson’s conversational style as rendered by Boswell. They were, moreover, written at a time in Johnson’s life when he was nearly in constant conversation with others, specifically at the home of the Thrales in Streatham, as anecdotes recorded in Frances Burney’s journals certainly suggest. His conversational style is moreover purposely directed at reaching a wide audience whom he can please and instruct, and for this reason it is, as J. R. Brink notes, more “personal and deliberately provocative.” If Johnson writes about Milton conversationally, it only makes sense that he would discuss Milton with regards to the poet’s own ability to be conversational in the sense of inviting readers to enter into or dwell with the poem. Thus it is that Johnson concludes that while Milton’s subject may be universal, readers are nevertheless unable to participate in it, principally because the themes do not speak to real humans in real situations.

This may help illuminate many troubling statements Johnson makes concerning Milton’s poetry. According to Johnson there seems to be an inherent tendency toward isolation in Milton, whether it be religious or political. While Jack Lynch argues that Johnson is able to dissociate Milton the poet from his poetry, Johnson nevertheless sees a tendency toward specialized knowledge in Milton’s poetry that in some manner reflects his own political and religious isolation. One example Johnson dwells on is *Lycidas*, a poem which is praised

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84 See Demaria, Jr., “Johnson and Change,” 28, 35.
86 Brink, “Johnson and Milton,” 494.
for its singularity. Specifically, what is lacking in *Lycidas* is “the effusion of real passion” because passion does not “run after remote allusions and obscure opinions.” Remote for Johnson can mean “distant; not at hand” or “alien; not agreeing,” and the problem as he sees it is fundamentally the reader’s inability to enter into the types of passions effused in the poem. Later Johnson quotes lines 27–29: “We drove a field, a both together heard / What time the grey-fly winds her sultry horn, / Battening our flocks with the fresh dews of night.” The “true meaning” of these lines are “uncertain,” “remote,” and cannot be found, again emphasizing the reader’s apparent inability to dwell with the poem. Finally, Johnson censors Milton’s joining of the pastoral with Greek mythology, a “long train of mythological imagery” that “College easily supplies,” as if one could have as easily learned the information in a textbook. Indeed, the poem does not “display” (“spread” or “exhibit”) knowledge as a poem should, and the poet who grieves like Lycidas “will excite no sympathy.” To sympathize is, like to converse, to “feel with another,” and *Lycidas*, so far as Johnson’s judgment goes, does not invite the reader to feel with the poet in any substantial way. The problem with *Lycidas*, then, is not that it suggests grief is a solitary, isolated emotion but rather that the poem does not present grief in any way recognizable for the reader. Thus it is that when Johnson discusses *L’Allegro* and *Il Penseroso* he acknowledges the inherently isolated emotional quality of mirth and melancholy. *Lycidas* is alone in his grief, in so far as grief and melancholy are internal “inhabitants of the breast that neither receives nor transmits communication.”

91  Johnson, *A Dictionary of the English Language*, 1675.
but in the former two poems, those emotions are expressed in ways to lead the reader into the poem and toward a deeper understanding, experience, and therefore knowledge of them.

The emphasis changes slightly when considering *Paradise Lost*. Whereas *Lycidas* does not spread much knowledge to the reader, *Paradise Lost* does. However, like *Lycidas*, *Paradise Lost* does not invite the readers into its content: one admires the epic poem but is not pleased with it. Crucially, for Johnson, poetry is the combination of pleasure and truth, and epic poetry is the highest expression of this mixture. *Paradise Lost* is indeed a very learned book. Milton has taken “known truths” and displayed them by way of “intermediate images”; he has united study and genius and taken “a great accumulation of materials,” appropriately digesting them and imaginatively bringing them together. He took what he had learned from nature, story, fable, and science, and this “accumulation of knowledge impregnated his mind … and [was] exalted by imagination.”

There is, in short, much to be said for *Paradise Lost* as a book of “universal knowledge” that one goes to for the purposes of instruction.

Some of the universal knowledge one gains from reading *Paradise Lost* is of course theological. Johnson, no doubt, has religious and political scruples with Milton’s poetry, but readers should not insist these are Johnson’s only issues. In fact, Rees points out that Johnson writes against critics who read *Paradise Lost* as an unorthodox poem, including such heresies as the rejection of the Trinity, Arianism, or Socinianism. In 1738–39 specifically, *The Gentleman’s Magazine*, Johnson’s employer, engaged in a correspondence regarding the charge of Arianism in the poem. This Johnson certainly would have been aware of, yet when he delivers his final analysis of the poem, he does not once hint at the problem of heterodoxy, and this despite his harsh critique of Milton’s personal religious practice.

When discussing *Paradise Lost* directly, Johnson goes so far as


to defend Milton’s Satan against the educationalist John Clarke’s censorship. Rees argues that “Johnson believes that *Paradise Lost* does conform, scrupulously and rigorously, to the truths of revealed Christianity, including the doctrine of the Trinity.” Rees further points out that Johnson goes so far as to include in the fourth edition of the *Dictionary* one of the most controversial lines from *Paradise Lost* to elucidate the word *sang*: “Thee [Christ] next they sang, of all creation first.” Thus does Rees conclude that it is not for theological reasons that Johnson finds fault with the poem. On the contrary, it is principally because Johnson accepts the poem’s theology that he is disturbed by it. It is not the subject of Milton’s poem that causes problems for Johnson but rather how that subject is represented and that representation’s ability to encourage readers to enter into the situation of the poem.

Thus while *Paradise Lost* may be full of truth and even theologically orthodox, there is something about its instruction that is distant or removed: “the want of human interest is always felt.” Because of its design, most of the moral insights must occur after the fall (book 9), and as Johnson argues in *Rambler* 4, stories about people in real situations can be more instructive (or dangerous) than stories removed by consequence of their subject matter. This is not so much a slight to Milton as it is an observation of what he believes to be the fact of the matter: that readers cannot enter into Adam and Eve’s prelapsarian existence. Indeed, *Paradise Lost* . . . comprises neither human actions nor human manners. The man and woman who act and suffer are in a state which no other man or woman can ever know. The reader finds no transaction in which he can be engaged; beholds no condition in which he can by any effort of imagination place himself; he has, therefore, little natural curiosity or sympathy.

The problem is similar to the metaphysicals. Milton only knew human nature at large, but never studied the minute “shades of character nor the combinations of concurring, or the perplexity of contending passions.”\(^{106}\) His learning came from books, but it was not fully integrated, for he did not experience what books cannot teach, namely vigorous conversation. Indeed, this affects even the language of Milton’s poetry, a language found in no previous poets and one that surprises the reader. His verse is founded ultimately on an overly learned, pedantic principle. The result is that readers never truly enjoy Milton because of his obvious superiority. The reader feels himself “in captivity to a higher and nobler mind” and “sinks in admiration.”\(^{107}\) Milton’s poetry, in short, is so far above the reader that he does not read it with pleasure but as a duty. He will read “for instruction, retire harassed and overburdened, and look elsewhere for recreation; we desert our master, and seek for companions.”\(^{108}\) We cannot, in other words, have the Petrarchan experience of reading and entering into conversation with Milton as we would a friend.

All of this is not to suggest that Johnson ultimately judges correctly about Milton. But as T. S. Eliot suggests, disagreeing with Johnson is dangerous, and the above should provide some context for why Johnson read him as he did.\(^{109}\) It suggests that while perhaps misapplied, Johnson’s criticism of Milton is rooted in very sensible and practical principles. Johnson, of course, has great respect for Milton, arguing in *Rambler* 90 that he has done everything our language would allow him to do and “that his skill in harmony was not less than his invention or his learning.”\(^{110}\) In *Rambler* 94 Johnson concludes his series of essays on Milton by acknowledging that


\(^{110}\) Johnson, *Rambler* 90, 4:115.
Milton sacrificed harmony for his primary cause: “to vindicate the ways of God to men.” That is, Milton sacrificed poetic craft for truth, something Johnson would greatly respect. For Johnson, then, Milton is a great poet with several faults, but his poetry generally yields to the truth of things even if readers are unable fully to experience that truth with him.

Milton nevertheless falls short when compared to another great early modern poet, namely Shakespeare. When we read Shakespeare, we experience dialogue that is so natural, so true to the event in which it is placed, that it seems to have been taken from everyday conversation and events. Shakespeare’s materials indeed arise from the “living world,” and drawing from the examples he had before him, his plays are thus the “mirror of life.” Shakespeare may even be a good antidote for Milton, for readers who have bewildered themselves with Milton’s elevated thoughts may through Shakespeare be “cured of his [the reader’s] delirious ecstasies, by reading human sentiments in human language.” Shakespeare, unlike Milton, is therefore more agreeable to the ear than any other poet of his time, and while he is largely read for pleasure, his just representations of human nature provide a great deal of instruction, “practical axioms,” and “domestic wisdom.” The mixture of pleasurable, life-like dialogue, and instruction creates a drama one delights in because, at once, it represents “to the auditor what he would himself feel if he were” in the character’s position. In other words, the viewer dwells inside the play while remaining very much himself. Philip Smallwood suggests that Johnson displays this very thing in his Shakespeare edition: his emotional remarks to plays such as Othello or Lear demonstrate that he “is living within the atmosphere of the plays” while writing about them. In Shakespeare, then, Johnson seems to find a fullness of his principle that poetry should instruct and please, and if we conclude, as we should, that Johnson was right about Shakespeare, reading his criticism of Milton should at the very least give us reason to pause.

111 Johnson, Rambler 94, 4:142–43.
112 Johnson, Preface to Shakespeare, 422–23.
113 Johnson, Preface to Shakespeare, 421.
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Bibliography


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Corinne Wieben
Stricken by Terror: Seeing and Knowing in Late Medieval Criminal Case Records

Corinne Wieben

University of Northern Colorado

Medieval legal records frequently feature parties and lawyers willing to stretch the truth and weave tales that fulfill statutory requirements and promote their cases, but what happens when defendants testify against themselves? When Giambono of Matraia, a monk from the monastery of San Ponziano in Lucca, appeared before Lucca’s episcopal court in 1356, he found himself facing charges of adultery, robbery, and murder. After four witnesses testified against him, Giambono confessed. When all seemed lost, Ser Giovanni Folchini, a well-known Lucchese notary, appeared as Giambono’s legal representative and claimed his client’s confession was false, since “he said these things while stricken by terror and fear of torture.” So when is a confession not a confession? How do we tell the story of a case when we are unsure of its purpose and meaning? This study explores the medieval legal theory of torture and confession and the politics of fourteenth-century Lucca, all while seeking to unravel the mystery of Giambono’s case and, in so doing, to suggest useful analytical strategies for “knowing how to see” when working with criminal court records.

Historians often see but rarely know.¹ Those of us who work in medieval legal records know that we can always rely on interested parties and their lawyers to stretch the truth and weave tales that fulfill statutory requirements, please the court, and promote their cases, but what happens when defendants testify against themselves? When Giambono of Matraia, a monk from the monastery of San Ponziano in Lucca, appeared before Lucca’s episcopal court in 1356, he found himself the subject of a litany of dire accusations, including theft, adultery, and murder. After four witnesses testified against him, Giambono confessed to a plan to rob the monastery, to adultery with two married women, and to having robbed and murdered a man. When all seemed lost, Giambono’s legal representative appeared and

¹ This research is the result of funding from the University of Northern Colorado Research, Dissemination & Faculty Development program. An earlier version of this paper was presented at the Rocky Mountain Medieval and Renaissance Association’s 2019 annual conference and the 2019 annual meeting of the Medieval Association of the Midwest.
claimed the monk’s confession was false, elicited not by guilt but by torture. The court, unconvinced, condemned Giambono anyway, in an apparent contravention of the norms governing medieval judicial torture. So when is a confession not a confession? How do we tell the story of a case when we are unsure of its purpose and meaning? Complicating the search for answers is the role medieval judicial torture has played in depicting the Middle Ages, as Jody Enders puts it, “as a distant, irrecuperable Other.”

In part, this study resulted from my own discomfort with this case. I find the ambiguity of its details both fascinating and daunting. Ultimately this case raises more questions than it answers, but it has led me to explore the medieval legal theory of torture and confession and, consequently, to a strategy for “knowing how to see” when working with criminal case records and tortured testimonies in the Middle Ages.

On September 16, 1356 Giambono appeared before Thomas of Foligno, episcopal vicar general and magistrate of the episcopal court, in order for the monk to answer a litany of “excesses and crimes committed and perpetrated by him.” According to the record, on the first of August Giambono, “having put off his monk’s habit, assumed the dress of secular servants and of impetuous and dissolute men, and in such attire he remained for many days and nights in the house of Angiolino, a gardener from San Ponziano who lived next to the monastery.” So far, the charges seem innocent enough and typical of some late medieval monks and clerics who attempted a break from the strictures of ecclesiastical life by temporarily assuming secular guise. However, according to the record, while Giambono was staying with the gardener, he armed himself “in the manner of a thief in order to kill his lord father abbot, Gerardo.”

When the abbot failed to leave the monastery after Giambono had

3 Archivio Storico Diocesano di Lucca (ASDLu), f. 162 recto.
4 ASDLu, f. 162 recto.
6 ASDLu, f. 162 recto.
lain in wait for several days, the monk “prompted by a diabolical spirit…, sent one of his boys [quendam suum ragassinum] to climb over the monastery wall, enter the monastery, and kill the abbot.”

However, the record states that Giambono’s plot was foiled when he was discovered—armed and in secular dress—by two servants, Duccio di Giovanni and Piero di Ghello, both of Pisa, who had been sent to the monastery by their master, Friar Antonio, “an inquisitor of heretical error [inquisitoris heretics pravitatis].”

After this initial charge of attempted murder, a series of other accusations appear, including that Giambono had been committing adultery by having sex with the gardener’s wife, called Divisa, in the couple’s house for the last year. Almost as an afterthought, the record continues with a charge of murder, saying that Giambono had hosted a traveling merchant, killed and robbed him, and disposed of the body in secret. However, the record fails to assign a name to the murdered merchant. Finally, the court attacked Giambono’s character, saying “he professes to be a Benedictine and ought to lead a praiseworthy and honest life, restrained in his actions and gestures, a holy man and a good example, but he is a perverter of the [Benedictine] Rule in all ways, to the peril of his soul and the scandal of others, and an example of damnation.”

As proof of his bad character, the case record states that for the last two years Giambono had frequented “dishonest” places where he gambled at dice and consorted with “unsavory and foul persons [scleratis et turpibus personis].”

Four witnesses appeared to testify against Giambono: the servants

7 ASDLu, f. 162 recto.

8 Though it shares a name with the infamous Spanish Inquisition and the later Roman Inquisition, the title of the Pisan inquisitor here indicates that he was probably part of the Papal Inquisition movement, which began in 1231 under Pope Gregory IX and commissioned various groups of Dominican and Franciscan friars to root out heresy. ASDLu, f. 162 recto.

9 ASDLu, f. 162 verso.

10 ASDLu, f. 162 verso.
of the Pisan inquisitor, Duccio and Piero, Guillielmo del fu Tolomei of Camaiore, and Ser Aloysius San Albizelli di Villa of Lucca. There is no record of the specific testimony of each witness, which is frustratingly typical of these records. Instead the record states that the witnesses testified that “the inquest discovered these things.”

In response to the charges against him, Giambono confessed only to a plan to steal a gilded vestment [pallium] from the monastery in order to return it and receive a reward of twelve florins from the abbot. He denied all of the other charges outright.

However, in the same portion of the record that contains this confession to a lesser crime, Giambono then began to confess to a series of grave crimes. First, he confessed to multiple thefts from churches, though he did not give specific details as to the locations, items, or amounts. He then confessed that “he has often lain with Divisa” and to adulterous sex with Margarita, a married woman, from whom he also stole twelve chickens with the help of Francesco, the abbot’s nephew. Most gravely, he confessed to having murdered a man in order to steal 125 florins (from which act he received about 45 lire after a three-way split with his accomplices), though he neither gave the man’s name nor described the circumstances of the murder. Finally, he confessed to a series of thefts, murders, and assaults, always without specific detail.

When all seemed lost, Ser Giovanni Folchini, a well-known Lucchese notary (his name appears in a multitude of episcopal case records), appeared as Giambono’s legal representative and presented several points of argument to exonerate Giambono. First, Folchini declared that the bishop did not have jurisdiction to try this case, since Giambono was privileged by his status as a Benedictine monk. On this point Folchini even invoked the name of the current pope to

11 ASDLu, f. 162 verso.
12 ASDLu, f. 165 recto.
13 ASDLu, f. 165 recto-165 verso.
14 ASDLu, f. 166 recto.
lend additional weight to this argument. Folchini then stated that Giambono rescinded his confession, claiming it was false, since he was “saying these things while stricken by terror and fear of torture, since he had been tortured repeatedly and beyond human endurance [*ultra modum humanum]*) and that none of what he confessed was true. Folchini concludes by arguing that the case against Giambono should be dismissed and only heard by a papal tribunal. This attempt to have Giambono’s case dismissed ultimately failed. According to a marginal note at the beginning of the case record, the court condemned Giambono on 15 October to “perpetual incarceration [*in perpetuum carcerem]*)”

Punitive incarceration for monks had existed since the early thirteenth century, and sentences of perpetual incarceration appeared more frequently by the mid-thirteenth century. Judicial officials tended to reserve this sentence for violent crimes or crimes of apostasy, though lesser crimes could and did receive this sentence when the magistrate felt it was warranted. The Council of Béziers in 1246, for example, decided that perpetual imprisonment was a fitting punishment for relapsed heretics, fugitives, and those who failed to answer a court summons and were thus judged contumacious. The principal behind this punishment was separation, both from society and from the monastic community. Thus separated, the convicted offender could no longer harm or pollute those around him.

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15 Though Folchini dropped the name of the current pope, Innocent VI, his hopes were perhaps misplaced. By 1356, the papacy had spent nearly half a century outside of Italy (after relocating the papal curia to the southern French city of Avignon in 1309) and showed little interest in intervening in local Italian politics.

16 ASDLu, f. 167 recto.

17 ASDLu, f. 167 recto.

18 ASDLu, f. 162 recto.


Some of the charges brought against Giambono, outlandish as they may seem, are typical of the charges brought against many ecclesiastics in the fourteenth century. Parish priests in particular frequently found themselves subject to accusations of adultery and assault, as the records of Lucca’s episcopal criminal tribunal attest. Elsewhere I have argued that sexuality and violence were most frequently associated with secular masculinity and therefore most expressly forbidden to those who had abandoned the secular world. The sheer number of crimes of which Giambono stood accused, coupled with an astonishing lack of detail and the absence of other evidence casts a deep shadow over Giambono’s confession. However, despite the fact that Giambono’s lawyer argued his confession was false, coerced by torture or the threat of torture, the confession appears to have stood, since Giambono was sentenced to perpetual imprisonment.

But the sentence is not the most striking feature of this case. Rather, it is the application of torture. For historians, judicial torture often serves as a microcosm of medieval jurisprudence. Those who envision medieval Europe as particularly benighted tend to focus on torture as a synecdochic element of a disordered and violent time. In his 1866 essay on judicial torture, Henry Charles Lea depicted a chaotic and violent medieval inquisitorial procedure, which he starkly contrasted with the rationalism of modern jurisprudence. Lea’s descriptions of the medieval judicial process are as evocative as they are disparaging, as when he argued medieval inquisitorial procedure determined the suspect “was to be hunted down and entrapped like a wild beast, that his guilt was to be assumed, and that the efforts of his judges were to be directed solely to obtaining against him sufficient evidence to warrant the extortion of a confession without allowing him the means of defence.”

22 Wieben, “Virtù,” 144.
23 Wieben, “Virtù,” 141-144.
Lea’s view went on to heavily influence discussions of medieval jurisprudence in the early twentieth century. Johan Huizinga, attempting to understand the cultural moment that produced Van Eyck and other artists like him, argued for a fifteenth century defined more by a sense of the past and decay than of the future and innovation. The title of his first chapter, “The Violent Tenor of Life” is emblematic of his depiction of medieval life as “so violent and motley… that it bore the mixed smell of blood and of roses.”

This excessively violent medieval Europe reappeared in the work of Michel Foucault, who contrasted the spectacular corporal punishments of the ancien régime with the rise of imprisonment in the modern era, imagining medieval Europe as “the country of tortures, dotted with wheels, gibbets, gallows, pillories.” Barbara Tuchman would later champion these same views, primarily relying on Froissart’s chronicles with support from Gibbon and Michelet to imagine a late medieval Europe rife with judicial cruelty. As Tuchman tells it, “the tortures and punishments of civil justice customarily cut off hands and ears, racked, burned, flayed, and pulled apart people’s bodies. In everyday life passersby saw some criminal flogged with a knotted rope or chained upright in an iron collar. They passed corpses hanging on the gibbet and decapitated heads and quartered bodies impaled on stakes on the city walls.”

The true shift in perspective on medieval judicial torture occurred in the 1970s and 1980s with the work of John Langbein and Edward Peters. Like Foucault, Langbein argues with Lea’s narrative that the abolition of torture in the eighteenth century was due to the influence of Enlightenment thinkers. Unlike Foucault, however, Langbein depicts an orderly and rational medieval legal system in which jurists transitioning from the ordeal to Roman-canon procedure saw torture as a necessary measure to establish certainty of guilt in cases of capital crimes. As alternative punishments arose in early modern

26 Huizinga, The Waning of the Middle Ages, 18.


28 Tuchman, A Distant Mirror, 135.
Europe, Langbein argues, the need for judicial torture diminished, making the abrogation of torture a practical matter rather than the sign of a more enlightened age.\textsuperscript{29} In his survey of torture in the west, Peters also identifies the roots of medieval judicial torture in the need to elicit a confession in order to satisfy the demand for proof.\textsuperscript{30} In his work on inquisitorial procedure, Peters argues that the alterity of the Middle Ages allowed modern critics of the medieval church to create “the myth of The Inquisition … universalized in a series of great artistic works into an indictment, by a modern world, of an earlier Europe for its crushing of the human spirit.”\textsuperscript{31}

Most recently, Larissa Tracy has addressed judicial torture in medieval literature, arguing that contrary to popular imagination, representations of torture and judicial brutality in high and late medieval literature did not reflect actual practice. Rather, they represented satirical, critical, and dissenting views that alleviated growing cultural anxieties surrounding national identity by relegating such violent practices to a barbarian “Other,” especially along borderlands and other cultural peripheries.\textsuperscript{32} In fact, Tracy finds a number of dissenting voices criticizing the use of judicial torture in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.\textsuperscript{33} In the end, Tracy’s study finds parallels with our own use of—and discomfort with—torture in these medieval critiques, though she points out the pervasiveness of Lea and Tuchman’s violent Middle Ages, as “even now we hear ‘torture’ and think ‘medieval,’ however erroneously.”\textsuperscript{34}

This view of a rational and critical medieval jurisprudence of torture promoted by Langbein, Peters, and now Tracy is evinced by the enormous efforts of medieval jurists to regulate the use of torture.

\textsuperscript{29} Langbein, \textit{Torture and the Law of Proof}.

\textsuperscript{30} Peters, \textit{Torture}.

\textsuperscript{31} Peters, \textit{Inquisition}, 1.

\textsuperscript{32} Tracy, \textit{Torture and Brutality}, 5-7.

\textsuperscript{33} Tracy, \textit{Torture and Brutality}, 10.

\textsuperscript{34} Tracy, \textit{Torture and Brutality}, 17.
While the ecclesiastical court of Lucca must have utilized torture in the fourteenth century, almost no mention of its application appears in the criminal case records. One reason for this may be that torture was not considered part of the case proper—it was merely a tool for eliciting a confession where one was required—and therefore remained unrecorded. Indeed, it would have gone unrecorded in this case had Giambono’s lawyer not mentioned it in his efforts to have the case dismissed.

Another reason might be a certain discomfort with the use of torture among ecclesiastical authorities. The jurisprudence of torture developed in thirteenth-century northern Italy as part of the larger development and dissemination of the Roman-canon legal system. The earliest extant city statute with rules on torture is the *Liber iuris civilis urbis Veronae* (1228), and a decree of Holy Roman Emperor Frederick II in 1231 declared that torture should be applied to people of low status who were under grave suspicion of capital crimes. It is essential before going any further to distinguish torture from punishment: judicial torture is the use of physical coercion in order to investigate allegations of crime and was never intended to be punitive. Instead, torture served as a further measure of acquiring knowledge when eyewitness testimony or other evidence proved insufficient. In contrast to popular depictions of medieval torture as violent, unjust, and arbitrary, statutory law went to great lengths to ensure that torture served only to confirm guilt in the presence of overwhelming evidence or a partial confession. As John Bellamy has argued, “when medieval men were cruel there was usually a good reason for it. Rarely were they brutal out of sheer sadism.” Medieval jurists attempted, whenever possible, to inject humanity into the law of torture and prevent its abuse.

36 Fiorelli, *La tortura*, 85-86.
39 Maffei, *Dal reato alla sentenza*, 100.
In his extensive work on the history of judicial torture in premodern Europe, Langbein finds its roots in the shift from trial by ordeal to criminal trials adjudicated by ecclesiastical or royal officials after the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215. This shift required communities to change their thinking about the nature of government and state authority as human discernment took the place of divine judgment. As Langbein puts it, “How could men be persuaded to accept the judgment of professional judges today, when only yesterday the decision was being remitted to God?”40 The answer was the Roman-canon legal system of statutory proofs. In the absence of divine wisdom, conviction would have to depend on the absolute certainty of guilt.

According to the system of Roman-canon law that permeated continental Europe in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, the court could convict only on the basis of testimony from two eyewitnesses. Circumstantial evidence, even in considerable amounts, was insufficient for a conviction. One example asserts that even if the suspect is seen running away from the house of a murdered man with a bloody dagger in one hand and the victim’s property in the other, that is only enough evidence to warrant an investigation. In practice this meant that in the absence of two eyewitnesses only the defendant’s confession carried enough weight for a conviction.41 This system worked well in the case of overt crimes, but what of covert crimes where there were no witnesses? The need for eyewitness testimony or, barring that, a confession in order to convict a defendant even in the face of overwhelming circumstantial evidence created an untenable tension around the desire to bring unrepentant covert criminals to justice.

This tension opened the door to the use of judicial torture in order to secure a confession in the absence of sufficient evidence. In order to employ judicial torture against the defendant, the court needed at

least “half proof.” This could take the form of either one eyewitness or two pieces of especially damning circumstantial evidence.\textsuperscript{42} Circumstantial evidence, therefore, did not technically enter into the question of guilt or innocence but was only relevant to the question of whether the court should examine the accused under torture or not.\textsuperscript{43} The use of torture itself, even when warranted by evidence, was problematic for many medieval jurists who sought to place extensive restrictions on the use of torture, mostly to answer moral concerns. These restrictions included that torture should only be employed in cases of capital crime—never for petty crimes—and as a last resort if there was no other means of collecting evidence. Torture was not to be practiced on immune persons, which could include pregnant women, minors, the aged infirm, aristocrats, high-ranking public officials, clergy, physicians, and doctors of law, and not on Sunday and other principal holy days.\textsuperscript{44}

In terms of the administration of torture, the judge or magistrate himself must personally order its use and be present to oversee the questioning. While modes of torture could vary, the most common worked on the body’s extremities (\textit{strappado}, the rack, thumbscrews, legscrews, etc.) in order to reduce the risk of death or permanent injury. Medieval jurists were well aware of the danger presented in securing justice.\textsuperscript{45} In line with the use of torture as a measure of last resort, legal manuals instructed magistrates to first threaten torture before actually torturing a defendant and to avoid suggestive questioning that might cast doubt on a confession’s veracity. Since the purpose of a confession obtained by torture was to provide sure evidence of guilt, the confession had to appear to be a true and \textit{voluntary} admission of guilt. A confession obtained via torture had to be repeated again freely in court. Freedom was relative, however, since a retraction or denial of the confession in court could warrant a second application of torture.\textsuperscript{46}

\textsuperscript{42} Langbein, \textit{Torture and the Law of Proof}, 5.

\textsuperscript{43} Langbein, \textit{Torture and the Law of Proof}, 8.

\textsuperscript{44} Langbein, \textit{Torture and the Law of Proof}, 13.

\textsuperscript{45} Dean, \textit{Crime in Medieval Europe}, 16.

It is difficult to read a case like Giambono’s. It is, of course, impossible to know what happened outside of the context of the record itself. All that is really possible to determine in records of criminal and civil cases is what those testifying said happened. But how best to approach a case where the defendant insists that he gave a false confession under torture or the threat of torture and in which torture may have been applied outside of statutory bounds? Given the complex nature of Giambono’s confession, it may serve to turn our attention away from the case record and toward the context of the case. To that end, I should say a few words about criminal procedure in late medieval Europe and politics in fourteenth-century Lucca.

Under the system of Roman-canon law that predominated in continental Europe, criminal proceedings required a formal denunciation to the court, usually rendered by an aggrieved party, or that a cursory investigation of a community (during an episcopal visitation, for example) yield up news that someone had committed a crime that was public knowledge (publica vox et fama). From there, the court took over the duties of investigation, seeking out and questioning witnesses, evaluating circumstantial evidence, and building a case against the defendant. The first question in a criminal case and often the first piece of information recorded is the name of the denouncer. Who was it who first brought the offender to the court’s attention?

This case record seems to indicate that the ex officio investigation began not with an individual denunciation but as the result of Giambono’s general reputation, his fama, within the vicinity of San Ponziano. After introducing the name of the judge and the source of his authority—Thomas of Foligno, vicar general of the bishop of Lucca—the actual details of the case begin with the following: “We, Thomas of Foligno, the aforementioned vicar, since it recently came to our hearing and attention and that of our court, not without many complaints but with notorious and clamorous insinuation, preceding not from malicious but from suitable and trustworthy persons and the reports of notorious infamy that too often reached us about
This construction suggests that the court’s cause to investigate Giambono originated either as the result of a series of complaints or after a general inquest in the community. However, this explanation raises more questions than it answers. How would the community know about Giambono’s supposed offenses? It seems unlikely that a monk who was ostensibly cloistered away within the monastery until at most six weeks prior to the trial had suddenly become infamous within community at large, especially since the two local witnesses are listed as residents of Camaiore and the city of Lucca, respectively, and not residents of the vicinity of San Ponziano. It seems far more likely that the denunciation originated with Duccio and Piero, the servants of the inquisitor Friar Antonio, who just happened to arrive at the monastery in time to seize Giambono. What were two servants of a Pisan inquisitor doing investigating a monastery in Lucca in the first place?

It is significant that Friar Antonio was not based in Lucca but rather in the neighboring city of Pisa, especially in light of the fraught relationship between Lucca and Pisa in the mid-fourteenth century. Following the death of the famed Lucchese lord Castruccio Castracani in 1328, Lucca found itself subject to over four decades of foreign rule, first by the Holy Roman Emperor Louis IV and a series of royal vicars, then by the commune of Florence in 1341, and finally by the commune of Pisa, beginning in 1342 and ending with the resumption of self-rule in 1369. This means that in 1356, the year in which Giambono’s case appeared in the episcopal court, the city of Lucca was still under Pisan rule.

The original terms for Pisan rule of Lucca were relatively lenient. There would be a fifteen-year league between the two cities; Pisa would have custody of Lucca’s walls and defenses; Lucca would be ruled ad comune by the Anziani, Podestà, and other officials, whom the Lucchesi could elect themselves, provided they were not enemies of Pisa; Pisa would not interfere directly in government or financial matters; Pisa would not alienate Lucca or its territories;

47 ASDLu, f. 162 recto.
and Lucca and its territories would regain independence at the end of the fifteen-year term. Pisa, however, was too weak to adhere to this plan and still maintain control of Lucca, and the terms broke down over time. By September 1342, the Anziani of Lucca authorized Pisan intervention in government elections, and by 1355, Pisa had obtained an imperial vicariate over Lucca from Holy Roman Emperor Charles IV and negotiated both another twenty years of the league and the election of Pisan Anziani as captains and defenders of Lucca. Even though this was the case, Lucca was always governed separately, with no attempt at assimilation. Pisa preferred exercising indirect control over the elections of traditional offices—the Podestà, Anziani, chancellor and other officials—over changing established institutions.\footnote{Meek, The Commune of Lucca, 17-31.}

During the period of Pisan rule, the authorities of Pisa repeatedly attempted to control the election of the bishop of Lucca, but they were never quite able to gain control of the episcopal office. In October 1348, just before the death of Bishop Guilielmo II of Lucca, Pisa tried to secure the appointment of a Pisan bishop in Lucca, sending embassies to the pope in September and October 1349. They ultimately failed, and the bishop’s death resulted in the election of Bishop Berengario II of the Biagini family of the city of Lucca.\footnote{Meek, The Commune of Lucca, 30-31.} It is significant that Berengario was not from the surrounding countryside, as Guilielmo was, but was a native son of the city itself and furthermore a member of one of Lucca’s more prominent families. Though the bishop of Lucca never really had the power to challenge the operations of the commune or communal authority, it is clear that the canons of Lucca were sending a message to their Pisan overlords: the bishop of Lucca was to be Lucchese.\footnote{On the power of the bishop in relation to the urban commune, see Osheim, An Italian Lordship and Wickham, Courts and Conflict.} Because of this determination, the episcopal court may have been the last source of public justice in the city that was more or less free
from Pisan political interference. The monastery of San Ponziano, which lay a mere two hundred meters outside the main eastern gate of Lucca’s medieval walls, would be a tempting target for a Pisan inquisitor looking to make inroads into Lucca’s ecclesiastical community in order to expose scandal there.

The joy and frustration of medieval legal records is that we can see and still not know. Giambono’s case reminds us of this fact. This case’s ambiguities, its silences, its lack of detail all leave us in the dark trying to explain this tantalizing and seemingly exceptional case. In order to make sense of it, however, it helps to expand our focus from the details of the case itself to encompass the world that created it. We cannot know if Giambono committed the crimes with which he was charged, but we do know why a Pisan inquisitor might be keen to bring charges against a Lucchese monk and why the episcopal officials of Lucca—and perhaps even the monastery of San Ponziano—felt their hands tied on the question of defending Giambono. Giambono the defendant is an obscure figure, but Giambono the pawn sheds light on the larger political chess match between Lucca and Pisa. It makes me uncomfortable to strip Giambono of his agency and even of his personhood in order to make him a symbol of late medieval Italian political struggles, but I would argue that, in the end, this method ensures that we do not get so swept up in seeing the human drama that we sacrifice the few things that we can know.

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