



PLATE 1

Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 61, fol. 1^v.
Early 15th century
Geoffrey Chaucer, Troilus and Criseyde

This page is discussed in detail on pp. 37-8 and
the miniature on pp. 89-96.

THE VISUAL EXPERIENCE OF
FIFTEENTH - CENTURY
ENGLISH READERS



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PREFACE

My work on this thesis stemmed from the observation that late medieval English vernacular texts and the manuscripts that contain them often appeal to the reader's sense of sight. In English texts of the late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries it is much more common than it had been earlier for the reader to be invited to respond visually to an artefact described or implied by the text. In English manuscripts of the same period there is often a strong visual appeal, sometimes in illustrations, but also commonly in the elaborate and colourful treatment of functional features such as chapter- and paragraph-divisions.

I have tried to demonstrate these developments in literature and book production, and to explore the implications of their coincidence in time. I have not attempted to make a complete survey of fifteenth-century vernacular literature or books. For my work on manuscripts I have visited libraries in Paris, Brussels and Bruges. I have examined at more length manuscripts in London and Cambridge, but I have relied chiefly on those in the Bodleian and in Oxford College libraries. I have been concerned with a particular point of view, and have selected from the abundant material available certain areas that seemed symptomatic of one aspect of late medieval culture.

I hope that my selection of material and combination of different methods will offer some worthwhile insight into conditions and presuppositions that affected fifteenth-century English writers and readers.

In my discussion of medieval theories of visual perception I have trespassed in fields that are not my own, and have depended heavily on other people's understanding. In my work on medieval manuscripts I am deeply indebted to Mr M.B. Parkes and his work on the ordinatio of a text and its physical manifestations in the production of manuscripts, and to the late Dr L.M.J. Delaissé and his approach to the 'archaeology' of the medieval book. I owe special thanks to Mr Parkes, who has also supervised this thesis, for much generous help and guidance.

I should also like to thank M. François Avril of the Cabinet des Manuscrits in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris, for kindly lending me his index of manuscripts in the fonds latin that were made in England; and Dr J.J.G. Alexander, who kindly allowed me to use the photographs of Bodleian manuscripts which he and Dr Pächt had used in preparing their Catalogue of Illuminated Manuscripts. Since this Catalogue was published it has been an indispensable help. I am grateful to the librarians and staff of the University Library, the Fitzwilliam Museum and Trinity College, Cambridge, and of the Bodleian Library, All Souls, Balliol College and

Merton College, Oxford, for all their kind assistance; and to the Curators of the Bodleian Library and the Master and Fellows of Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, for permission to use photographs of manuscripts as Plates in my thesis.

Thanks are also due to Mr D. Gray, Dr A. Minnis and Miss P.R. Robinson for advice and help, and to my colleagues and pupils at Mansfield College for their interest and encouragement. To Dr and Mrs Caird and Dr and Mrs Sykes, who made the Principal's Lodgings a second home to me, I offer particular thanks.

I am grateful to Mrs F.J. Templeton: the visual appeal of the typescript is entirely her work.

Finally, I wish to thank my family - my parents and parents-in-law, for all their encouragement and support; and my husband, whose confidence and help enabled me to finish this piece of work.

Pamela de Wit

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6. Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Digby 232, fols. 2^v-3.
7. Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Rawl. poet. 223, fols. 43^v-44.
8. Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Douce 104, fol. 33^b recto.

NOTE ON REFERENCES & ABBREVIATIONS

In transcriptions from manuscripts, the punctuation of the manuscript is preserved. Abbreviations are expanded and expansions are underlined. < > indicates letters missing from the manuscript and supplied in the transcription. In bibliographical references and references to manuscripts, the following abbreviations are used:

Bibl. Nat.	Bibliothèque Nationale
<u>BLR</u>	<u>Bodleian Library Record</u>
Bodl. Lib.	Bodleian Library
Brit. Lib.	British Library
Brown & Robbins, Index	C.F. Brown & R.H. Robbins, <u>Index of Middle English Verse</u> (New York, 1943)
EETS, E.S.	Early English Text Society, Extra Series
EETS, O.S.	Early English Text Society, Original Series
<u>EHR</u>	<u>English Historical Review</u>
Emden, BRUO	A.B. Emden, <u>A Biographical Register of the University of Oxford to A.D. 1500</u> (Oxford, 1958)
<u>JWCI</u>	<u>Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes</u>
<u>MLR</u>	<u>Modern Language Review</u>
New Pal. Soc. II	New Palaeographical Society, <u>Facsimiles of Ancient Manuscripts</u> , ed. E.M. Thompson, G.F. Warner, F.G. Kenyon & J.P. Gilson, 2nd series (London, 1913-20)
Pächt & Alexander, 1	O. Pächt & J.J.G. Alexander, <u>Illuminated Manuscripts in the Bodleian Library, Oxford, Vol. 1, German, Dutch, Flemish, French & Spanish Schools</u> (Oxford, 1966).

- Pächt & Alexander, 3 ibid., Vol. 3, British, Irish & Icelandic Schools (Oxford, 1973).
- P.G. J.P. Migne, Patrologiae Cursus Completus, Series Graeca.
- P.L. J.P. Migne, Patrologiae Cursus Completus, Series Latina.
- PMLA Publications of the Modern Language Association of America.
- Rickert, Painting in Britain M. Rickert, Painting in Britain: The Middle Ages (London, 1965).

CHAPTER 1 : INTRODUCTION

Fifteenth-century Visual Experience

In July 1468 two brothers of the Paston family travelled from England to visit Bruges in the retinue of Margaret of York for her wedding to Charles Duke of Burgundy, 'and ther were neuer Englyshe-men had so good cher owt of Inglond'.¹ One of the brothers, John Paston III, wrote home to his mother:

my Lady Margaret was maryd on Sondag last past at a towne þat is callyd The Dame, iij myle owt of Brugys, at v of the klok in the mornyng. And sche was browt the same day to Bruggys to hyr dener, and ther sche was receyuyd as worchepfully as all the world coud deuyse, as wyth presessyon wyth ladys and lordys best beseyn of eny pepyll that euer I sye or herd of, and many pagentys wer pleyid in hyr wey in Bryggys to hyr welcomyng, the best þat euer I sye. And the same Sondag my lord the Bastard took vpon hym to answeere xxiiij knyts and gentylnen wyth-in viij dayis at jostys of pese; and when þat they wer answeyrd they xxiiij and hym-selue schold torney wyth othyr xxv the next day after, whyche is on Monday next comyng. And they that haue jostyd wyth hym in-to thys day haue ben as rychely beseyn, and hym-selue also, as clothe of gold and sylk and syluyr and gold-smythys werk myght mak hem; for of syche ger, and gold and perle and stonys, they of the Dwkys coort, neythyr gentylnen nor gentylnen, they want non, for wyth-owt þat they haue it by wysshys, by my troythe I herd neuyr of so gret plenté as her is.²

Dazzled as the writer was by the visual splendours of the Burgundian court, he was evidently accustomed to noting rich and colourful detail. His own life at home in East Anglia was not lacking in visual finery. His elder brother had inherited the disputed possession of Caister castle, built by Sir John Fastolf in the 1440s. An inventory made probably in 1470 of 'goodes and stuffe of howsold lefte in the maner plase of Caster by Sir John Paston', includes

Item, iij panes of glasse of xvij fete wele wrought wyth jimages and armes and other besy werk set in the chambir wyndowe over the chapell.³

Jewels and plate from the Fastolf estate, inventoried in the earlier 1460s by the father of John Paston III, includes such gorgeous items as

an nowche of gold after the facion of an aungell, wyth a flat dyamaunt loseyngewise wyth a dyamant flourrid, a rubye in the middes, and ij gret moder perles on eyther side of the aungell.⁴

There was also

Item, viij costers of aras, wherof somme grete and some smalle, wherof on is of the sege of Phalist, an other of the shepperdes and her wifes, an other of the Morys daunse, an other of Jason and Launcelot, an other of a batayle, on of the coronacion of Our Lady, a-nother of the Assumpcion of Our Lady.⁵

Elizabeth, sister of John Paston I who drew up these inventories, gave details in her will in 1487 of her plate and jewels, clothing and household goods. They included

an Agnus with a baleys, iij sapphires, iij perllys, with an jmage of Saint Antony apon it; and a tablet with the Salutacion of Our Lady and the iij Kingis of Collayn; a bee with a grete perle, a dyamond, an emerawde, iij grete perllys hanging

apon the same iij brode girdilles, oone
of tawny silke with bokill and pendaunt, a-
nother of purpill with bokyll and pendaunt,
and the iij^{dē} of purpill damaske with bokell
and pendaunt and vj barres of siluer and gilt -⁶

as well as colourful curtains and bedding, painted hangings,
vestments, and embroidered tablecloths.

These brief extracts from the papers of a fifteenth-
century family of country gentry with aristocratic connections
illustrate a number of facts about the visual experience of
fifteenth-century Englishmen and women. Such experience was
not confined to the surviving handful of works of art of the
finest quality, which the historian selects to show the
developments of taste and style: the Carmelite Missal, the
Beaufort Hours, the Wilton Diptych, the Norwich Retable, the
work of Siferwas and Herman Scheerre, the stained glass at
Malvern and York.⁷ Nor was it something found only abroad
in France⁸ or the Netherlands,⁹ though the fashion and
standards of foreign courts, as well as the leading churchmen
and aristocracy in England, were important arbiters of taste
for the wider circle of people who emulated a colourful and
elaborate way of life, with all its visual appurtenances.¹⁰

In grand displays and in detail, demonstrations of
wealth and occasion were admired for their brilliance, their
colour, their elaboration or 'besy werk'. Pictorial art
included jewellery, metalwork, embroidery, painted or woven
hangings and painted glass.¹¹ Visual spectacle included the
tournament and the street pageant.¹²

There are suggestions in the Paston inventories that
the same taste for visual display affected both secular and

religious art. The power of both temporal and spiritual hierarchies was impressed on everyone by visual means. Though he was crowned while still a minor, Henry VI's coronation procession and pageants proclaimed his kingship to the whole of London.¹³

In the worship and building of the church there was a rich visual experience available even to those whose everyday lives had little ceremony. In the Mass, the laity were onlookers at a careful ritual. In wall paintings¹⁴ and stained glass,¹⁵ in painted altar-pieces, polychromed alabasters, stonework and ivories, in carving, embroidery, rich metalwork, enamels and precious stones, the people could find illuminated 'books for the laity'. In the iconographic schemes in their churches, fifteenth-century worshippers were the inheritors of developments in pictorial art that had begun in the twelfth century.¹⁶ The range of religious art had been extended from the thirteenth century particularly under the influence of the Franciscans, in order to make the sacred stories generally known, and to encourage popular devotion.¹⁷ By the fifteenth century, the life of Christ and pictures of the saints and representations of the Day of Judgement had long been established among the images in churches. Some devotional images had become the focus of a 'cult of looking'¹⁸ which also influenced new iconographic forms, such as the Pietà.¹⁹

The visual splendour that still survives from the late Middle Ages, the records of visual spectacle, and the pictures

of courtly life and sacred history that are still extant in full-scale works of art and on objects of ordinary use, indicate only a small part of what there once was.

Changing fashions in secular art, and the attack of iconoclasts on religious art, as well as accident and decay have removed more than we can calculate. Some guesses may be based on the wall-paintings discovered under layers of whitewash in the Painted Chamber in Longthorpe tower.²⁰

It was decorated in the fourteenth century on walls and vault with pictures of the Nativity, the Seven Ages of Man, the Labours of the Months, the Wheel of the Five Senses, the Three Living and the Three Dead, Apostles, Evangelists, King David, a hermit and a vision of Christ, heraldic devices, and other subjects. Or we may read the angry records of iconoclasts listing what they had destroyed, and reconstruct the decorations of whole churches.²¹ Or we may imagine with the help of contemporary records and later copies the extravagant interior decoration of Henry III's palaces,²² some of which were still being repaired for continued use in the late fourteenth century.²³

In general taste and in iconographic detail, the books available to fifteenth-century readers were a part of this widespread visual culture. Late medieval books could be objects of prestige or devotion, with coloured and gilded pictures,²⁴ and covers adorned with rich fabrics, metalwork

and jewels,²⁵ such as were lavished on other fine objects. Their illustrations were sometimes used as models for designs in wall painting or tapestry or other decorative arts.²⁶ Vernacular romance texts sometimes describe the wall paintings and tapestries that were supposed to have enriched the fictional lives of their heroes,²⁷ and in the visual arts of real life the heroes of romance were represented.²⁸

This thesis is an examination of books in fifteenth-century England in terms of the visual experience of their readers. The purpose of this introductory sketch has been to place these books and readers in a context in which visual things were highly rated. In Chapter 2 we shall consider some medieval ideas about visual responses in relation to mental processes, as these ideas impinged on fifteenth-century thinking. Chapter 3 will be concerned with the books themselves, and Chapter 4 with some fifteenth-century English vernacular texts. Conclusions will be offered and some further implications suggested in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER 1 FOOTNOTES

1. Paston Letters and Papers of the Fifteenth Century, ed. N. Davis, I (Oxford, 1971), 538.
2. *ibid.*, pp. 538-9.
3. *ibid.*, p. 435.
4. *ibid.*, p. 108. Cf. also the inventories on pp. 120 et seq., 159 et seq.
5. *ibid.*, pp. 108-9
6. *ibid.*, p. 211.
7. These are discussed in, for example, Rickert, Painting in Britain, chs. 7 and 8.
8. On late medieval French art, see especially Joan Evans, Art in Medieval France (Oxford, 1969); also Millard Meiss, French Painting in the time of Jean de Berry, in three parts (London, 1967-74); G. Ring, A Century of French Painting (London, 1949); La Librairie de Charles V, Catalogue of an Exhibition held at the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris (1968); see also J. Huizinga, The Waning of the Middle Ages (London, 1955).
9. On the artistic patronage of the Burgundian court, see La Miniature Flamande: Le Mécénat de Philippe le Bon, Catalogue of an Exhibition held at the Palais des Beaux-Arts, Brussels (1959); see also E. Panofsky, Early Netherlandish Painting (Cambridge, Mass., 1953); L.M.J. Delaisse, A Century of Dutch Manuscript Illumination (Berkeley, 1968); and Huizinga (note 8).
10. Many recent books exploit modern techniques of colour printing to give a vivid impression of late medieval taste. See especially J. Evans, The Flowering of the Middle Ages (London, 1966). See also G. Mathew, The Court of Richard II (London, 1968), ch. V, 'Court Art and Aesthetics'; and J. Evans, Pattern. A Study of Ornament in Western Europe, 1180-1900, Vol. I (Oxford, 1931). Also of interest is The Secular Spirit: Life and Art at the End of the Middle Ages, Catalogue of an Exhibition held at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (1975).
11. Useful books on the minor decorative arts include J. Evans, English Jewellery (London, 1921); M. Chamot, English Mediaeval Enamels (London, 1930); A.G.I. Christie, English Medieval Embroidery (Oxford, 1938).
12. For a discussion of medieval English pageants, tournaments, plays and mummings, see G. Wickham, Early English Stages, Vol. I (London, 1959).

13. See Lydgate's verse description of the occasion, printed in The Minor Poems of John Lydgate, ed. H.N. MacCracken, Part II, EETS, O.S. 192 (1934), 630-48.
14. See E.W. Tristram, English Medieval Wall Painting, I, The Twelfth Century (Oxford, 1944), II, The Thirteenth Century (Oxford, 1950), III, The Fourteenth Century (Oxford, 1955). Also A. Caiger-Smith, English Medieval Mural Paintings (Oxford, 1963).
15. See for example, L.A. Hamand, The Ancient Windows of Great Malvern Priory Church (St Albans, 1947); F. Harrison, Stained Glass of York Minster (London, 1937); H. Read, English Stained Glass (London, 1926).
16. See O. Pächt, The Rise of Pictorial Narrative in twelfth-century England (Oxford, 1962).
17. The influence of the Friars on medieval art has been much discussed. See especially E. Mâle, L'Art Religieux de la Fin du Moyen Age en France (Paris, 1922); E. Gilson, 'Saint Bonaventure et l'Iconographie de la Passion', Revue d'histoire franciscaine, I (1924), 405-24.
18. See R. Woolf, The English Religious Lyric in the Middle Ages (Oxford, 1968), 208-9.
19. See Woolf (note 18), Appendix F, pp. 392-4, 'The History of the Pietà'.
20. See M. Wood, The Mediaeval House (London, 1965), 399-401, pl. LX.
21. Extracts from the journal of William Dowsing are printed in D. Gray, Themes and Images in the Medieval English Religious Lyric (London & Boston, 1972), 42-3. See also F. Wormald & C.E. Wright, The English Library before 1700 (London, 1958) 165 et seq. for an estimate of the effects of the 1550 Act against Superstitious Books and Images (3 and 4 Edward VI, c. 10).
22. See T. Borenius, 'The Cycle of Images in the Palaces and Castles of Henry III', JWCI, VI (1943), 40-50; also R. Allen, Brown, H.M. Colvin & A.J. Taylor, The History of the King's Works, Vols. I-II (London, 1963), On the Painted Chamber at Westminster, see W.R. Lethaby, 'English Primitives: the Painted Chamber and the Early Masters of the Westminster School', Burlington Magazine, VII (1905), 257-69.
23. See Mathew (note 10), pp. 35-6.

24. The value of medieval books as containing the best-preserved continuous record of medieval painting has long been recognised. See G. Waagen, 'On the Importance of Manuscripts with Miniatures in the History of Art', Philobiblon Society Bibliographical & Historical Miscellanies, I (1854), item 13; also W. Oakshott, The Sequence of English Medieval Art, Illustrated chiefly from Illuminated Manuscripts, 650-1450 (London, 1950).
25. Fine bindings in satin, silk and gold on Richard II's books are described in Mathew (note 10), p. 23.
26. These could include even designs on floor tiles. See L. Haberly, Mediaeval English Pavingtiles (Oxford, 1937), 17-19, for the suggestion that picture tiles from Tring Church may have been based on illustrations for an apocryphal text on the Infancy of Christ, such as is found in Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Selden supra 38.
27. See M.A. Owings, The Arts in the Middle English Romances (New York, 1971).
28. For examples, see H. Büchthal, Historia Troiana, Studies in the History of Medieval Secular Illustration, Studies of the Warburg Institute, Vol. 32 (London, 1971); J. Evans, English Art, 1307-1461 (Oxford, 1949), 93-4. L. Lejeune & J. Stiennon, La Legende de Rolande dans l'art du Moyen Age (Brussels, 1966); R.S. & L.H. Loomis, Arthurian Legends in Medieval Art (Oxford & New York, 1938); R.S. Loomis, 'Richard Coeur de Lion and the Pas Saladin in Medieval Art', PMLA, XXX (1915), 509-28; idem, 'Illustrations of Medieval Romance on Tiles from Chertsey Abbey', University of Illinois Studies in Language & Literature, II (1916), 243-336; D.J.A. Ross, Illustrated Medieval Alexander-Books in Germany and the Netherlands (Cambridge, 1971); W.H. St. John Hope, 'On the English medieval drinking bowls called Mazers', Archaeologia, L (1887), 139-42; M.R. Scherer, The Legends of Troy in Art and Literature (New York & London, 1963). I am indebted for a number of these references to P.R. Robinson, 'A Study of Some Aspects of the Transmission of English Verse Texts in Late Medieval Manuscripts' (Unpublished B.Litt. thesis, Oxford, 1972).

CHAPTER 2 : SIGHT & MIND

Some Fifteenth-century Attitudes

'Nunquam sine phantasmate intelligit anima' ('the soul never understands apart from phantasms'): ¹ this Aristotelian idea about the importance of phantasms or mental 'images' pervaded all late medieval discussion of how the human mind understands.

The idea was a part of Aristotle's psychological theory in the De Anima, and concerned the relationship between the senses and the mind: phantasms are formed in the imagination in response to impressions received by the bodily senses, and are used by the mind when it thinks:

Phantasia ... non fit sine sensu, et sine hac non est opinio (imagination ... cannot occur without sensation, and without it there is no opinion ...)²

nihil sentiens, nihil utique addiscet, neque intelliget. Sed cum speculetur, necesse simul phantasma aliquod speculari (what does not perceive by sensation acquires no knowledge or understanding at all; and when thinking occurs there must be at the same time a phantasm as its object).³

The De Anima was translated into Latin before 1235, along with the commentary of Averroes.⁴ Once available to the medieval universities, these texts became involved in urgent controversy about the nature of the soul. The thirteenth-century followers of Averroes held that parts of the De Anima supported a doctrine of a unified soul, separate from human bodies and connected with them only intermittently as it chose to use sense impressions to act upon individuals.⁵ The Averroists, and in particular Siger of Brabant, provoked attack from orthodox commentators because of the implications of their ideas for individual immortality and moral responsibility.⁶ The treatise of Thomas Aquinas, De Unitate Intellectus contra Averroistas, was an attempt to refute on philosophical grounds these dangerous doctrines.⁷

But interest in Aristotle was a positive force as well: Aquinas's commentary on the De Anima is an exposition of the text with hardly any reference to the Averroist controversy.⁸ An understanding of Aristotle arose out of deep interest as well as fierce dispute. In the course of the discussions, a number of ideas about human psychology were canvassed and clarified, and one of the theories that emerged was a 'faculty psychology' which was commonly used to explain what the human mind did with the impressions received by the bodily senses.⁹ Individual writers modified the explanation in detail, but a common scheme was an account of the human brain as having three areas, each with its own function: imagination at the front, reason in the middle, and memory at the back.¹⁰ The phantasms formed by the common sense in response to stimuli received by

any of the five bodily senses were dealt with by imagination and reason and stored by the memory. The reason is not, in this connection, man's power of intellectual knowledge, but is a ratio sensibilis, an estimative power that reaches an understanding based on sensible things, with the help of imagination.

These theories were found useful in various ways by those who had a more pragmatic interest in the workings of the human mind. Some of them were mystics, 'evaluating mental powers as means to vision'.¹¹ They tended to regard imagination as a dangerous function, useful possibly in the early stages of understanding, but too closely connected to the material world perceived by the senses to be any further use to the mind seeking full illumination.¹²

But teachers of the laity responded differently to what they found in the schoolmen. The study of mental processes could be applied to questions of effective communication, and the idea of an understanding grounded in sensible things was particularly useful. The world perceived by the senses could provide a way of speaking about spiritual matters to those whose minds were not spiritually inclined. Even the mystic might concede this much:

Sed quis nesciat quam sit difficile, imo quam pene impossibile mentem carnalem, et adhuc in studiis spiritualibus rudem, ad invisibilium intelligentiam assurgere, et in illis contemplationis oculum figere? Nulla quippe novit adhuc, nisi corporalia; nil aliud adhuc cogitanti occurrit, nisi quae cogitare consuevit sola visibilia. Quaerit invisibilia videre, et nil occurrit nisi formae rerum visibilium; desiderat intueri incorporea, et nil somniat nisi imagines rerum corporalium... Facit tamen quod potest, intuetur ea quomodo potest. Cogitat per imaginationem, quia necdum videre valet per intelligentiae puritatem.¹³

(who is þat þat wote not how hard it is & nizehd impossible to a fleschly soule, þe whiche is 3it ruyde in goostly studies, for to rise in knowyng of vnseable þinges, & for to set þe ize of contemplacioun in goostly þinges. For whi a soule þat is 3it ruyde & fleschly knowip nouzt bot bodely þinges, and nobing comeþ 3it to þe mynde bot only seable þinges. And neuerþeles 3it it lokip inward as it may, and þat it may not se 3it cleerly by goostly knowyng, it þinkip by ymagynacioun).¹⁴

The preachers of the thirteenth century found in such arguments a justification of the use of exempla in preaching: they were an effective way of harnessing the working of the audience's imagination. Étienne de Bourbon explained this idea in his Tractatus de diversis materiis predicabilibus, which is a collection of exempla from many sources:

maxime valent exempla, que maxime erudiunt simplicium hominum ruditatem, et faciliorem et longiorum ingerunt et imprimunt in memoria tenacitatem.¹⁵

Étienne cites the parables and miracles of the Gospels, and the Incarnation itself, as precedents for effectively conveying in a corporeal and visible way the divine wisdom of Christ.¹⁶ He also adds the authority of 'beatus Dionysius':

Sermo enim corporeus facilius transit de sensu ad ymaginativam et de ymaginacione ad memoriam.¹⁷

It was probably the preacher's experience that Aquinas also drew on in his Summa, when discussing the question whether the intellect can understand without recourse to phantasmata. He took into account Aristotle's dictum that 'nihil sine phantasmate intelligit anima', and in his reply to the question he appealed to what 'anyone can experience for himself':

quando aliquis conatur aliquid intelligere, format aliqua phantasmata sibi per modum exemplorum, in quibus quasi inspiciat quod intelligere studet. Et inde est etiam quod quando alium volumus facere aliquid intelligere, proponimus ei exempla, ex quibus sibi phantasmata formare possit ad intelligendum

(if he attempts to understand anything, he will form images for himself which serve as examples in which he can, as it were, look at what he is attempting to understand. This is the reason indeed why, when we want to help someone understand something, we propose examples to him, so that he can form images for himself in order to understand.)¹⁸

Academic thinking about images formed in the mind was in contact with medieval preaching. It seems also to have reinforced another area of pastoral thinking, this time about painted and sculpted images in churches.

This tradition of pastoral thinking began with Gregory the Great.¹⁹ Gregory's attitude to the efficacy of images seems to have been formulated in response to a particular pastoral crisis. In 591, while he was Pope, he had occasion to write to one of his bishops with some pastoral advice.²⁰ Serenus, Bishop of Marseilles, had reacted to what he considered to be idolatry among his flock by breaking down the 'imagines sanctorum' in the church. The congregation had responded by deserting the church and absenting themselves from communion. Gregory urged the Bishop to restore these broken relations, and argued that the veneration of images was not necessarily idolatrous:

Aliud est enim picturam adorare, aliud per
picturae historiam quid sit adorandum addiscere.²¹

He went on to explain how a pictura may be 'pro lectione' for those who cannot read:

quod legentibus scriptura, hoc idiotis praestat
pictura cernentibus, quia in ipsa etiam ignorantes
vident quid sequi debeant, in ipsa legunt qui
litteras nesciunt. Unde et praecipue gentibus
pro lectione pictura est.²²

Gregory's idea that pictures are the books of the illiterate was a recurrent element in medieval pastoral thinking about pictures and images.²³ It was preserved by such authorities as Bede in the eighth century:

nunc picturas sanctarum historiarum, quae non ad ornatum solummodo ecclesiae, verum etiam ad instructionem intuentium proponerentur, advexit, videlicet ut qui litterarum lectione non possent opera Domini et Salvatoris nostri per ipsarum contuitum discerent imaginum²⁴

and by Walafrid Strabo in the ninth century:

Quantum autem utilitas ex picturae ratione proveniat, multipliciter patet. Primum quidem, quia pictura est quaedam litteratura inlitterato, adeo, ut quidam priorum legatur ex picturis didicisse antiquorum historias.²⁵

Gregory was still being quoted in the eleventh century at the Synod of Arras,²⁶ and in the early part of the twelfth century the forms of expression which his idea had received were reduced to a systematic statement:

Ob tres autem causas fit pictura: primo, quia est laicorum litteratura; secundo, ut domus tali decore ornetur; tertio, ut priorum vita in memoriam revocetur.²⁷

In the thirteenth century we find a more complex 'triple ratio institutionis imaginis in Ecclesia'. It is still ultimately derived from Gregory, but the comparatively unimportant decorative purpose of images has been replaced:

Fuit autem triplex ratio institutionis imaginis in Ecclesia. Primo, ad instructionem rudium, qui eis quasi quibusdam libris edocentur. Secundo, ut incarnationis mysterium et sanctorum exempla magis in memoria nostra essent, dum quotidie oculis repraesentantur. Tertio ad excitandum devotionis affectum qui ex visis efficacius incitatur quam ex auditis.²⁸

The final clause of this formula contains echoes of other ideas of Gregory's.²⁹ But the emphasis seems to be on the thirteenth-century preacher's awareness that his appeal was not to his audience's reason, but to their imagination. With images in churches, as with exempla in sermons, he could provide a kind of material that would be sufficiently appealing to promote their understanding.

The ratio triplex has been quoted here from Aquinas in his Commentary on the Sentences, but it recurs frequently in the later Middle Ages,³⁰ and is sometimes found alongside a thorough account of the role of images in mental processes culled from the commentators on Aristotle.³¹

By the early fifteenth century it had reached the English vernacular,³² and was a part of a new iconoclastic controversy, in which Gregory's opinion on the efficacy of images was bandied about by propagandists on both sides.³³

But by this time, there had been important changes in the laity's situation. These are implied already in the late fourteenth century, in Walter Hilton's treatise defending images.³⁴ He quotes Gregory's idea that pictures show the laity those things which clerks find in books,³⁵ but his laity are different from Gregory's. The 'simplices laici' still fix their minds 'in ipsas ymagines quas vident, et non in Deum', and Hilton defends this practice with an argument related to Basil's:

intencio tamen illorum habitualis refertur ad
Deum cuius nomine talem faciunt imagini adoracionem.³⁶

But by the fourteenth century the laity also included other groups, the 'litterati et docti et deuoti laici', and for

them images were useful 'ad recordacionem diuinorum', to stir them to devotion to higher things.³⁷

It has already been suggested that ideas about the effect of images in churches were reinforced by theories about the mental images necessary for understanding. In the fifteenth century, among some of Lydgate's devotional poems, we find evidence that for the literate laity of the late Middle Ages images placed in churches could be directly linked with the phantasms formed in the mind.

Lydgate's poem on Cristes Passioun³⁸ is a 'lytell bylle' intended to 'Hang affore Iesu', that is before an image of the Crucifixion.³⁹ The poem is spoken by the crucified Christ:

Man, to refourme thyn exil and thy loos
 Fro paradys, place of moost plesaunce,
 The to restore, I hange vp-on this Croos,
 Crowned with thorn, woundid with a launce,
 Handis and ffeet, tencres of my grevaunce,
 With sharpe naylles my blood maad renne doun.⁴⁰

The stanza ends with an injunction to 'thynk on my passioun':

Whan-euer thou felyst trouble or perturbaunce,
 Looke on my woundis, thynk on my passioun.⁴¹

It seems that the Crucifixion image is accompanied by representations of the instruments of the Passion and that these are regarded as aids to 'thinking':

Thynk and remembre vpon my bloody fface,
 The reed, the sponge, eysel meynt with galle,
 Fel rebukys, O man, ffor thy trespace!
 Hatful spitting on my vysage ffalle,
 Kyng of Iewis of scorn they gan me Calle,
 Blyndfellid, bobbyd by ffals derysioun;
 Man, for pi comfort among pi troublis alle,⁴²
 Looke on my woundis, thynk on my passioun!

'Thinking' is not here an act of reason, but is the mental activity that follows upon the visual experience of images

perceived by the sense of sight. This mental activity results in the preservation by the memory of what has been seen:

Thynk and remembre.⁴³

We find the same idea in other stanzas of the poem:

Regystre al this, thynk on my passioun.⁴⁴

Alle these tokenys enprente hem in bi mende.⁴⁵

At the end of another of Lydgate's poems On the Image of Pity,⁴⁶ in a versified version of part of the ratio triplex, we find a similar link between the spectator's memory and images in churches:

To suche entent was ordeynt portrature
And ymages of dyverse resemblaunce,
That holson storyes thus shewyd in fygur
May rest with us with dewe remembraunce.⁴⁷

The nature of the mental activity required to form this link is described elsewhere by Lydgate as 'Inward sight': The Dolerous Pyte of Crystes Passion⁴⁸ speaks of man's response to an image of Christ as Man of Sorrows:

Erly on morwe, and toward nyght also,
First and last, looke on this ffygure;
Was ever wight suffred so gret woo
For manhis sake suyche passioun did endure?
My bloody woundis, set here in picture
Hath hem in mynde ...

Set this lykenesse in your remembraunce,
Enprenteth it in your Inward sight.⁴⁹

The 'Inward sight' is also mentioned in one of the stanzas of the poem on Cristes Passioun with which we began:

The scalyd ladder up to be cros strecchyng,
 Wich vertuous baner put fendys to be flight;
 Kokkys crowyng, onkynde folk rebukyng,
 That slombre and slepe be longe wynteris nyght;
 Bit hem a-wake, & with ther Inward sight
 Loke on my tormentis.⁵⁰

The 'Inward sight' must be different from the bodily sense of sight, and yet is evidently closely connected with the image in the church as well as with the memory. It appears to be a term for the mental process of forming and using phantasms, involving the imagination and the memory, in response to the experience of the sense of sight.

How does this whole process begin? What is it that first stirs the mind to form phantasms? One element which all these poems have in common is the emotive quality of the images. The extremes of woe and pain are emphasised in order to evoke pity:

Handis and ffeet, tencres of my grevaunce
 With sharpe naylles my blood maad renne down.⁵¹

Beth not rekles whan ye forby passe,
 Of myn Image devoutly taketh heede ...
 Blood meynt with water for you I did bleede,
 Lyk as witnesseth this dolorous pite.⁵²

And there seems to be a close connection between the pity evoked and the mental process that is being encouraged:

My bloody woundis, set here in picture,
 Hath hem in mynde knelyng on your kne,
 A goostly merour to euey Cryature,
 Callid of my passioun the dolerous pyte.⁵³

When Lydgate wrote his poem on The Fifteen Joys and Sorrows of Mary,⁵⁴ he was in the position of spectator and reader as well as writer. What prompted him to write, he explains, was a book containing a 'meditacioun' on the

Fifteen Joys and Sorrows, with a Pietà picture preceding the text:

Tofor which was sett out in picture
 Of Marie an ymage ful notable,
 Lyke a pyte depeynt was the figure
 With weepyng eyen, and cheer most lamentable:
 Thouh the proporcioun by crafft was agreable,
 Hir look doun cast with teerys al bereyned, -
 Of hertly sorwe so soore she was constreyned.⁵⁵

Lydgate's response to the picture was duly emotional - indeed this 'affeccioun' was what prompted him to record in his poem the verses on the Joys and Sorrows which he found in the book:

To beholde it did myn herte good;
 Of affeccioun turnyd nat my face,
 But of entent, leiseer cauht and space,
 Took a penne, and wroote in my maneere
 The said balladys, as they stondyn heere.⁵⁶

His emotion, and its link with the picture, are emphasized again when he comes to the end of the Fifteen Joys and begins the Sorrows:

Of dreedful herte tremblyng in euery membre,
 My penne quakyng whan I gan to write,
 For to beholde the terys reed and white
 In sondry placys from hir eyness reyne,
 Which to considre it was to me gret peyne.⁵⁷

We may take it that this 'considering' involved the mental processes we have examined in this chapter, and resulted in a memory of the picture which enabled Lydgate to describe it here.

But the picture was not the only visual experience which Lydgate found in his book. After describing the picture, he also adds:

Vpon the said meditacioun,
Of aventure, so as I took heed,
By diligent and cleer inspeccioun,
I sauh Rubrisshis, departyd blak and Reed,
Of ech Chapitle a paraf in the heed,
Remembryd first Fifteene of her gladynessys,
And next in ordre were set hyr hevynessys.⁵⁸

These other visual aspects of fifteenth-century books will be considered further in my next chapter.

1. Cf. Aristotle, De Anima, III, 7, 431^a 16. In discussing the De Anima as it was known in the Middle Ages, I have quoted from the thirteenth-century Latin version of William of Moerbeke, which was the text used by Aquinas as the basis for his commentary on the De Anima. See Thomas Aquinas, In Aristotelis Librum de Anima Commentarium, ed. A.M. Pirotta (Turin, 1936), which contains both Moerbeke's text and Aquinas's commentary. English translations are from Aristotle's De Anima in the version of William Moerbeke and the Commentary of St Thomas Aquinas, trans. K. Foster & S. Humphries (London, 1951). For the opening quotation, see Pirotta, p. 172 and Foster & Humphries, p. 442.
2. Cf. Aristotle, De Anima, III, 3, 427^b 15. For my quotations see Pirotta (note 1), p. 209 and Foster & Humphries (note 1), p. 376.
3. Cf. Aristotle, De Anima, III, 8, 432^a 7. For my quotations see Pirotta (note 1), p. 256 and Foster & Humphries (note 1), pp. 453-4.
4. See P. Mandonnet, Siger de Brabant et L'Averroisme Latin au XIII^eme siècle, Part 1, Les Philosophes Belges, Vol. VI (Louvain, 1911), p. 14, note.
5. See Mandonnet (note 4), pp. 132 et seq.
6. See Mandonnet (note 4), esp. pp. 108 et seq. and 172 et seq.
7. See Mandonnet (note 4), pp. 175 et seq. For a brief exegesis of the De Unitate Intellectus, see Foster & Humphries (note 1), pp. 20 et seq.
8. For further discussion, see Foster & Humphries, pp. 17 et seq. Mandonnet (note 4), p. 108, emphasizes the common ground between the disputants in the controversy.
9. For a full discussion, see M.W. Bundy, The Theory of Imagination in Classical and Medieval Thought, University of Illinois Studies in Language and Literature, XII (Urbana, 1927), 179 et seq. and 265 et seq. I am also indebted to Dr Alastair Minnis for generously sharing with me his knowledge of medieval ideas on imagination, and for helping me to clarify a number of points in this chapter.
10. See for example the De Proprietatibus Rerum of Bartholomew Anglicus, as translated by Trevisa: 'in þe brayn bep þre smale celles. Þe formest hatte ymaginativa, þerin þingis pat þe vttir witte apprehendip withoute bep i-ordeyned and iput togedres withinne ... Þe middil chambre hatte logica þerin þe vertu estimatiue is maister. Þe þridde and þe laste is

memoratiua, the vertu of mynde. Pat vertu holdip and ke-pip in be tresour of mynde pingis pat bep apprehendid and iknowe bi be ymaginatif and racio.' See On the properties of things, ed. M.C. Seymour et al., 2 vols (Oxford, 1975), I, 98.

11. Bundy (note 9), p. 266.
12. For a full discussion, see Bundy (note 9), pp. 199 et seq.
13. Richard of St Victor, Benjamin minor, ch. XIV., P.L., 196, 10.
14. This translation is from the fourteenth-century English version of the Benjamin minor, printed in Deonise Hid Diuinite and other Treatises on Contemplative Prayer, ed. P. Hodgson, EETS, O.S. 231 (1955), 23.
15. A.Lecoy de la Marche, Anecdotes historiques légendes et apologues tirés du recueil inédit d'Etienne de Bourbon, Société de l'histoire de France (Paris, 1877), 4.
16. *ibid.*
17. *ibid.*, p. 5 - though this dictum from 'Dionysius' sounds like a thirteenth-century commentary on the Dionysian text - see the text of the Coelesti Hierarchia, P.G. 3, 119-24 with the notes of Corderius (123-8), who quotes later commentators on the progress of the mind towards full understanding by way of 'materialia et corporalia'.
18. Aquinas, Summa Theologiae, 1a. 84, 7, Sed contra and Responsio. I have quoted the text and translation from the Blackfriars edition, vol. XII (London, 1968), 40-1.
19. The earlier opinion of Basil on the admissibility of images in worship - 'qui adorat imaginem, adorat in ea depicti subsistentiam' - seems to have been known in the west only from the eighth century, through the translation into Latin of the deliberations of the Second Council of Nicaea. From the twelfth century, Basil's opinion was also available through the translation of John Damascene's De fide orthodoxa, in which Basil is quoted. See the helpful account in R. Woolf, The English Mystery Plays (London, 1972), 86 et seq.
20. Gregory, Epistola XIII, Ad Serenum Massiliensem Episcopum, P.L., 77, 1128-30.
21. *ibid.*
22. *ibid.*
23. A number of instances are conveniently listed in L. Gougaud, 'Muta Praedicatio', Revue Bénédictine, XLII (1930), 168-71.
24. Bede, Homilia XVII in natale S. Benedicti Biscop, P.L., 94, 228.

25. Walafrid Strabo, De exordiis et incrementis quarundam in observationibus ecclesiasticis rerum, ed. A. Knoepfler (Munich, 1890), 24.
26. See G.D. Mansi, Sacrorum conciliorum nova (Venice, 1769-98), XIX, 454.
27. Gemma animae, I, ch. 132, attributed to Honorius of Autun. See P.L. 172, 586.
28. Aquinas, In III Lib. Sent. dist. IX, qu. 1, art. II, sol. 2, ad 3^{um}.
29. The power of a picture to excite emotion is referred to in Gregory's Epistola LII, Ad Secundinum, P.L. 77, 990-1. The introduction to Gregory's Dialogues includes a general consideration of the idea that 'plus exempla quam praedicamenta succedunt' (P.L. 77, 153).
30. See, for example, Holcot, In Librum Sapientiae, XIII, lectio CLVIII.
31. See, for example, Johannes Balbus de Janua, Summa qua vocatur catholicon, s.v. Ymago.
32. See the version in the early fifteenth-century treatise Diues and Pauper, ed. P.H. Barnum, EETS O.S. 275 (1976), 82:
 DIUES. Querof seruyn pese ymagys? I wolde pey weren brent euerychon.
 PAUPER. Pey seruyn of thre thynggys. For pey been ordeynyd to steryn manys mende to thynkyn of Cristys incarnacioun and of his passioun and of holye seyntys lyuys. Also pey been ordeynyd to steryn mannys affeccioun and his herte to deuocioun, for often man is more steryd be syghte pan be heryng or redyngge. Also pey been ordeynyd to been a tokene and a booke to be lewyd peple, pat pey moun redyn in ymagerye and peynture pat clerkys redyn in boke.
33. See G.R. Owst, Literature and Pulpit in Mediaeval England (Oxford, 1961), 137-48.
34. The treatise is unpublished, but is discussed with lengthy quotations in J.M. Russell-Smith, 'Walter Hilton and a Tract in Defence of the Veneration of Images', Dominican Studies, VII (1954), 180-214. See also the discussion in Owst (note 33) 137-9.
35. See G.R. Owst (note 33), p. 137.
36. Russell-Smith (note 34), pp. 189-90. For Basil's defence of the adoration of images, see note 19 above.
37. See Russell-Smith (note 34), p. 189 and Owst (note 33), p. 138.

38. Printed in The Minor Poems of John Lydgate, ed. H.N. MacCracken, Part I, EETS, E.S. CVII (1911, reprinted 1961), 216-21.
39. *ibid.*, p. 221, lines 113-5.
40. *ibid.*, p. 216, lines 1-6.
41. *ibid.*, p. 216, lines 7-8.
42. *ibid.*, p. 217, lines 9-16.
43. *ibid.*, p. 217, line 9.
44. *ibid.*, p. 219, line 72.
45. *ibid.*, p. 219, line 75.
46. Printed in MacCracken (note 38), pp. 297-9.
47. *ibid.*, p. 299, lines 37-40.
48. Printed in MacCracken (note 38), pp. 250-2.
49. *ibid.*, p. 250, lines 1-10.
50. MacCracken (note 38), p. 218, lines 41-48.
51. Cristes Passioun, MacCracken (note 38), p. 216, lines 5-6.
52. The Dolerous Pyte of Crystes Passioun, MacCracken (note 38), p. 251, lines 25-32.
53. *ibid.*, p. 250, lines 5-8.
54. Printed by MacCracken (note 38), pp. 268-79.
55. *ibid.*, p. 268, lines 8-14.
56. *ibid.*, p. 269, lines 31-35.
57. *ibid.*, p. 274, lines 171-75.
58. *ibid.*, p. 268, lines 15-21.

CHAPTER 3 : FIFTEENTH CENTURY-ENGLISH BOOKS

It had been realised even before the fifteenth century that the major and minor divisions of a text needed to be clearly distinguished if a reader was to follow it conveniently. Mr Parkes has shown how, from the twelfth century, certain dominant attitudes to the ordering of studies and the structure of reasoning were reflected in the division of texts, and in the arrangement of those divisions on the pages of books.¹ The layout of a page began to reflect 'in practical and visual terms'^{1a} those ways of thinking that required the scholarly apparatus of paragraphing, headings, running titles, indexes and cross-references that we now take for granted in technical books of any kind - or even in popular newspapers.

These divisions reflecting the ordinatio of the text also provided opportunities for decoration. They opened up space which could be filled with pattern and colour without disturbing the sense of the text. As the divisions of texts became increasingly more sophisticated, so did the efforts of book producers to provide clear indications of the texts' organisation. Mr Parkes points out^{1b} that it was the job of the rubricator in the thirteenth century to insert the numbers

of sections in the margins of texts, adding litterae notabiliores and paraph marks to indicate stages in an argument, and red and blue running titles at the top of each page. More complex methods developed in the fourteenth century.^{1c} Just as the author of a text was aware of a hierarchy of major and minor divisions in his work - prologue and books, chapters, sections and sub-sections within chapters, so the craftsmen who copied and decorated his text used a hierarchy of scripts and decorative features to mark the various divisions of the text.^{1d} They developed a wide range of these features: scripts of different kinds and sizes, some regarded as more formal than others, inks and paints of different colours, gold leaf, initials of different sizes, variously flourished or illuminated, borders on one side of a page, or on several sides, or all round the text, and of varying width and elaboration, pictures in the margins, in small frames or in initials, or larger pictures taking up most of a page or all of it. In an age of increasing literacy^{1e} and increasing prestige for texts in the vernacular, the increasing sophistication of methods of book production was also a response to the general taste for elaboration and display which was referred to in Chapter 1.

There is evidence that from the fourteenth century, features of books which had first been developed to meet the needs of twelfth- and thirteenth-century scholars were becoming part of the general expectations of all readers. When those who habitually read carefully divided texts began to compile texts for laymen to read for themselves, they naturally used

the methods of thought which they had learned in their own studies. An important indicator of the process^{that} was at work is the Pseudo-Bonaventura Meditationes Vitae Christi^{1f} and its English translation. The Latin text was written by a Franciscan about 1300 as a devotional handbook for a woman belonging to the sisterhood of the Poor Clares. It was rapidly translated into most European vernaculars^{1g} and became widely available to lay readers. It is still extant in hundreds of copies from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. The text was originally divided into sections, based on different episodes in the life and ministry of Christ. But it also had another, devotional, structure implicit in it, which is made explicit in the early fifteenth-century English translation by Nicholas Love.^{1h} He adopts the divisions of the original and adds more by grouping sections of the text together into meditations for each day of the week, beginning with the account of God's plan for man's salvation on Monday, and including the Passion narrative on Friday and the account of the Resurrection and Ascension on Sunday. Nicholas Love also points out in his Prologue that certain parts of the text are appropriate to certain seasons of the Church's year, and he gives a list of numbers of chapters for the different seasons. Plate 2 shows pages from a copy of Love's translation in which the effects of these developments can be clearly seen.

The same influences were also affecting copies of secular texts in the fourteenth century. In Book II of Troilus and Criseyde,¹ⁱ when Pandarus enters Criseyde's paved parlour, he

finds Criseyde and two of her women sitting together to hear another woman reading aloud to them. In reply to Pandarus's question about the subject of the 'fayre book', Criseyde explains that it is a 'romance of Thebes'. They have been listening to that part of the story which tells how King Laius died at the hands of Oedipus:

And here we stynten at thise lettres rede
 How the bisshop, as the book kan telle,
 Amphiorax, fil thorough the ground to helle.^{1j}

The rubricated headings that mark the narrative sections of the text are a visual guide that enables Criseyde and her companions to find their way around their 'romance', and to know where to pick up the story again when they return to it after an interruption.

In fifteenth-century English books, these developments were being fully realised and extended. There seems to have been a sharp awareness of how much visual display could add to both the prestige and the usefulness of a book. Vincent of Beauvais had explained the usefulness of the ordinatio of his Speculum in terms of a visual metaphor: 'ut huius operis partes singulae lectori facilius elucescant'.^{1k} One way of summing up the fifteenth century's response to what they inherited from such scholars would be to say that the fifteenth century realised the full force of the metaphor, and seem to have been intent on making the parts of a book 'shine forth' quite literally.

A particularly striking example is Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Lyell 33. This book contains a genealogy from Adam to Edward IV and his children. Only three of his children are included, which dates the manuscript about

1469-70. The genealogy is a fifteenth-century English text based on an earlier Compendium of biblical and world history compiled towards the end of the twelfth century and generally attributed to Peter of Poitiers.¹¹ In early copies² this work usually takes the form of a genealogical diagram with a brief commentary written around it. It was an example of a particular kind of compilation reduced to a specialised form of ordinatio, and the prologue that appears in thirteenth-century copies shows that the compiler was hopeful of providing a convenient and helpful book: considering the difficulty of studying the Scriptures, especially their long and complex historical content, and mindful of the needs of those who have few books and would like to be able to hold the stories of sacred history in their memory as in a little bag, the writer has reduced into order in one small book the line of Christ traced through his Old Testament ancestors, 'so that the prolixity might be a delight to the mind of the unwilling because of the form which is laid out before their eyes, and so that, held before the eyes of the studious, it might be easily committed to memory, and thus usefulness might be conferred on all readers.'³

The fifteenth-century producer of MS Lyell 33 has responded boldly to the opportunities offered by such a work. He has chosen an unusual format. The work is written on a long narrow sheet of parchment as if to make a roll, but the roll was designed to be folded concertina-wise and bound up as a codex, with the sewing of the binding parallel to the lines of writing in the commentary. The lines indicating

genealogical descent are at right angles to this, and so run on, unbroken, from page to page of the finished codex. The book thus combines the ease of handling of a codex with the continuity of a roll. The layout and decoration are also governed by considerations of what will be attractive to the reader.

Highly polished gold leaf and a variety of bright colours are lavishly used throughout the book. The opening pages are specially inviting (see Plate 3a). The volume is in small folio size, but since the text is written across the longer dimension of the page there is ample room for three columns. They are clearly distinguished, but all are richly decorated: on the left of fol. 1^v is the Prologue, beginning with an initial, eight lines high, on a gold ground with sprays of coloured leaves that spread into a border in the top and left-hand margins; in the middle the commentary begins, marked by a gold initial five lines high on a coloured ground; the Ages of the World in the right-hand column forms an additional summary note and begins with a gold initial, two lines high and flourished in brown ink. The arrangement of these opening pages is a masterly demonstration of how much information can be clearly laid before the reader with the help of a wide repertoire of visual features. There is space under the Ages of the World for a diagrammatic representation of the division of the world into Asia, Europe and Africa. The rest of this first opening carries the beginning of the genealogy, starting from the highly-coloured roundel, predominantly green and flesh-coloured in a pink, blue and gold frame, showing Adam

and Eve and the Tree of Knowledge with the serpent entwined in it. From this roundel down the centre of the page goes a gold line with a blue stripe on each side, which leads through roundels containing the names of the great men of the Old Testament until it comes to Christ on fol. 40. Several separate roundels then represent crucial stages in Jesus's earthly life. Also from Adam and Eve runs another, thinner line, this time in red, to Ham and Japhet, sons of Noah, on fol. 3^v. From Japhet is then traced the red line that leads down the right-hand side of the page to Brutus, first king of this land, on fol. 11^v. All the ancestors of Brutus have their names written in a circle bordered with gold and red or gold and blue, but Brutus's name is bordered in blue and the border is surmounted by a large gold crown. The commentary on Brutus is also distinguished by a gold initial B. All Brutus's progeny are now marked by gold crowns as well as coloured circular borders, and on fol. 42, after the ascension of Christ, the line of Brutus in the Christian era is carried across to the central position on the page. The British kings keep this central position until they are superseded on fols. 47^v-48 by the Saxons (see Plate 3b). On fol. 48 the decoration begins to approach the sensational as gold crowns are given to the kings of all the seven kingdoms of the Heptarchy, spreading over almost all the page. On the left we are shown their descent from Woden, whose line travels back up the book to Japhet again. On the right the British line runs on. But the main attention now will be on the English kings down to Edward IV and his first three children.

There had been copies of this text before with line-drawings or colour-washed pictures and some pretensions to fineness,⁴ but the ostentation, immediacy and convenience of MS Lyell 33 go far beyond anything attempted in thirteenth- and fourteenth-century copies.

The English Prologue in MS Lyell 33 articulates from the writer's point of view what is evident from the very appearance of the manuscript:

Consideryng the lenght and the hardnesse of holy scripture and nameli of the ground of the lettir historial. the negligence also of summe that myght laboure and wilnat. summe for lak of bokes . sekynge to gete solace to har sympelnesse. willyng as in alitel boke myndely to holde that thei se in the stori. I have put the names and the werkes of the holy old fathers by order and by rewe. the kynrades bothe of preestys and of kynges and har werkes. of whom crist came after the flesche. to bryng it in to thys litel werke. to take away lenght fro ham that ben wery and of litel wille. comferte and solace in fourme and figure to the bodely eye. greet profet and comferte to the saules of ham that ben wele willed and list by studie to laboure. as compendiously vnder fewe wordis as god wil send me grace I shal sette to my laboure. no thyng puttyng owte. nor cuttyng away thyng to suche werke acordyng...

Most of this is based on the Prologue in the original Latin text, but when we compare it with the earlier version we find that the English translator has placed a new emphasis on the visual aspects of the work. The thirteenth-century writer thought of the eyes of the reader as a useful medium through which to delight the mind of the unwilling student and to teach the memory of the more assiduous ('et fastidientibus prolixitatem propter subiectam oculis formam. animi sit oblectatio. et a studiosis facile possint pre oculis habita memorie commendari'). The English writer has rewritten this

expression of a dual purpose into three distinct clauses:

to take away lenght fro ham that ben wery and
of litel wille: comferte and solace in fourme
and figure to the bodely eye: greet profet and
comferte to the saules of ham that ben wel
willed and list by studie to laboure.

By separating out the comfort and solace of the eye in the series of carefully punctuated clauses, and by forming the central clause, quite independently of the Latin, with such careful rhythm, and balance of alliterated words, he has emphasised the force of visual attraction. It is not surprising then that he should have translated other parts of the Latin in order to make the same point: for example, 'memoriter tenere narraciones hystoriarum' is rendered by 'myndely to holde that they se in the stori': the response to a story is visual, and a book's function is to help to make the 'story' accessible to the reader's memory.

This way of thinking about the purpose of a book may help to explain one oddity of translation. The Latin writer thought of his work as a memorable compendium of history, which the reader could hold in his memory 'quasi in sacculo', as if in a little bag or purse. The English writer has either misunderstood or ignored this simile and has translated 'quasi in sacculo' by 'as in a litel boke'. The translated phrase is rather awkward - 'willyng as in a litel boke myndely to holde that they se in the stori'. Is this also a simile, the reader's memory now being compared to a book, rather than to a little bag? It is difficult to be sure how far to take the translation figuratively. Perhaps, between the need to translate, and the need to convey his own concept of the link

between books, visual perception, and knowledge, the writer's syntax is strained. But what does come across clearly is that for this fifteenth-century Englishman, books are things to be seen.

Unusual though the form of MS Lyell 33 is, this manuscript is not unique in either its form or its splendour. Another copy of the same text in Oxford, Bodleian Library MS e Mus. 42⁵ is bound up in the same way, and is similarly treated by the same scribe and the same illuminator as MS Lyell 33. There are other fine copies, some of them evidently produced by the same workshop, and sometimes similar in format.⁶ It seems that there was some demand for copies that would fulfil very directly the English translator's intentions to appeal to 'the bodily eye'.

Fifteenth-century manuscripts of texts based on Peter of Poitiers provide some particularly colourful examples of methods of production that were used in many books throughout the century. The Ellesmere manuscript of the Canterbury Tales,⁷ made in the early part of the century, contains an elaborate apparatus which is used as an opportunity for decorative display: running titles, marginal notes, pictures of the pilgrims as well as headings at the beginning of each tale, and indications of minor divisions within each tale. Even the diagrammatic indication of rhyme schemes, which is a visual feature found in many fifteenth-century books (see for example my Plate 4), becomes in the Ellesmere copy of Sir Thopas⁸ an opportunity for exuberant patterning.⁹

A copy of Misyn's English translations of Richard Rolle's Incendium amoris and Emendatio vitae, Oxford, Corpus Christi College, MS 236, is one among a number of fine copies of devotional treatises still extant.¹⁰ Its first page is entirely surrounded by a narrow double band of gold and colour with a border of daisies, coloured acanthus leaves and spoon-shaped leaves, the main motifs displayed on a background of polished gold pricked in patterns. Two large initials on this page mark the opening of prologue and text: one initial is in gold on a coloured ground; the other is a coloured initial decorated with acanthus scrolls on a gold ground. A new text begins on fol. 45 with a similar large initial. Divisions within the text are marked by gold initials three or four lines high on coloured grounds with sprays of leaves. More minor divisions are indicated by paraph marks in red flourished with mauve, or blue flourished with red. Chapter headings are in red.

Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Douce 159 is a volume devoted entirely to apparatus for another text: an Index in French to a Statute Book, covering statutes made in the reign of Henry VI up to the mid-1440s. It is decorated with as much lavishness and attractiveness as the statutes themselves might be. It begins with a historiated initial¹¹ showing lawyers disputing, on a gold ground, linked with a narrow band of gold and colour in the left-hand margin, with a border of sprays and acanthus leaves spreading out to cover the top and bottom margins. The first entry in the Index for each letter of the alphabet begins with a gold initial five lines high on a ground which is

parti-coloured in red and blue, or decorated with pink and blue acanthus leaves. Sprays of coloured kidney-shaped leaves and gold leaves and studs extend into the margins. Other entries are marked with red or blue paraph marks.

The style of the decoration of these books is typical of developments in the first half of the fifteenth century. This development involves a rich palette and a proliferation of new decorative motifs - rounded, scrolled and serrated leaf forms,¹² and sprays of small leaves shaped like kites, spoons, spades, trumpets, thimbles or kidneys.¹³ But fifteenth-century book decoration is not to be defined solely in terms of its distinctive individual patterns. These elements, and any miniatures, are parts of a continuous pattern that includes rubrics and initials in a conscious overall design.¹⁴

A useful example of the contrast with earlier books may be found in the catalogue of a recent exhibition held at Corpus Christi College, Cambridge.¹⁵ Plates 28 and 29 show a page from MS 61, an early fifteenth-century book (reproduced also in my Plate 1) opposite a page from MS 20, made in the fourteenth century. The contrast in the use of colour and pattern is remarkable. The fourteenth-century page contains a few lines of text and a large framed miniature showing the coronation of a king. The miniature provides a few large areas of colour, some of it bold and contrasting, some of it pale wash, all of it sharply defined, with little shading. It shows a sense of pattern based on a wide variety of juxtaposed shapes carefully disposed on the page, with areas of colour often separated by areas of white or gold. By contrast, the pattern and colour

of the fifteenth-century page are rich and dense. The miniature alone would provide this contrast, with its pink and red and blue, shaded in tones of the same colours, and areas of dark green lightened by paler green and yellow, all lit by areas of polished gold, variously patterned and pricked. Small areas of white paint here only emphasise the dense, rich colouring. But the picture is only one element contributing to the decorative design of the whole page. The very wide border round the picture is a frame of polished and decorated gold, itself thickly ornamented with moulded curled-leaf forms in pink, blue and red. Outside that again the margins are more lightly but still thoroughly filled with sprays of coloured leaves and gold studs. The fourteenth-century miniature was added to the page to delight, even to impress, but in this fifteenth-century book the whole page is designed to capture attention. Moreover, this page, which faces the beginning of the text of Troilus and Criseyde, contributes to a larger design: the bold contrast between this highly-coloured verso page and the text on the facing recto announces to the reader the opening of the poem.

In the second half of the fifteenth-century, individual decorative features change in style, and a sense of balance and perspective is often missing. Some individual features become exaggerated and overblown: exotic fruit and flower forms grow out of clusters of serrated leaves.¹⁷ New influences, particularly from Flemish books, are evident but hardly assimilated.¹⁸ Colour is often used with a vulgar, bold sense of contrast. Subtly shaded leaf decoration gives

way to multi-coloured, variegated forms.

Some of the effects of these changes may be seen in the Abingdon Missal,¹⁹ made in 1461. The decorated page (fol. 113^v) which precedes the prayer of consecration is a hotch-potch of varied designs.²⁰ The miniature combines a Crucifixion picture with a representation of the Trinity. The frame of leaf scrolls round the miniature incorporates the sacred monogram, repeated three times, and the symbols of the four evangelists in medallions at the corners. Outside this frame is another border, discordant in design, with a kneeling abbot, probably William Asshenden, in the lower outer corner, his prayer extending on a written scroll up the left-hand margin past an angel holding a shield on which are blazoned the Five Wounds. The abbot's own arms are displayed on two shields in the lower margin. The remaining corners and the centre of the right-hand margin contain highly-coloured plant motifs, all of them different, and all the remaining space is filled with sprays of small flowers and various leaves. 'The motifs are large and coarse, and the colouring is strong and ugly ... there is not much to be said for the Abingdon Missal.'²¹ But perhaps this much can be said: the page is not intended as a picture only. It is a verso page which is part of a visual whole - the whole double opening - in which the two pages are linked in design and meaning. On the facing recto page is the prayer of consecration surrounded by a similar leaf and flower border and beginning with a historiated initial showing the sacrifice of Isaac, which is a type of the Crucifixion and hence also of the Mass. In the same ostentatious manner that

also characterises MS Lyell 33, made about eight years later, these pages of the Abingdon Missal are designed as a whole to make the arrangement and meaning of the text 'shine forth'.

The admiration for books with this 'enlumyned' quality continued through the century. Such books probably even gained in prestige by contrast with cheap new printed books, only one of which has survived from fifteenth-century England with any illumination at all.²² When Earl Rivers translated into English the Dicts and Sayings of the Philosophers, he was willing to give Caxton financial support to print an edition of it. But the presentation copy he had made for Edward IV is a manuscript, illuminated with a handsome presentation miniature.²³

In response to a taste for Flemish styles, which Edward IV had helped to establish,²⁴ the illuminated English books of the end of the century were differently decorated: borders are wide frames with motifs imitating Flemish trompe l'oeil painting on a ground of powdered gold.²⁵ But they were still appreciated for the sense of ostentatious splendour which they created. In his Garland of Laurel, written in 1523, John Skelton fancied himself being ushered into the court of the Queen of Fame and having to rely for her favour upon the evidence written in the lady Occupation's 'book of remembrance'. The self-congratulatory list of his works is read from a book of suitable impressiveness modelled on these manuscripts in late fifteenth-century style:

With that of the book loosened were the claspes:
 The margent was illumined all with golden railles
 And byse, empictured with gressops and waspes,
 With butterflies and freshe peacock tailles,
 Enflored with floweres and slimy snailles;
 Envived pictures well touched and quickly;
 It would have made a man whole that had been right sickly
 To behold how it was garnished and bound,
 Encovered over with gold of tissue fine;
 The claspes and bullions were worth a thousand pound;
 With balasses and carbuncles the borders did shine;
 With aurum mosaicum every other line
 Was written.²⁶

The fifteenth-century taste for visually attractive books affected all levels of production, in all kinds of books and for all kinds of readers. The fashion was no doubt established and maintained by luxury manuscripts made for wealthy patrons. The fourteenth century had had its wealthy patrons too, and John Duke of Bedford,²⁷ or Humfrey Duke of Gloucester²⁸ were in one sense following in the footsteps of the Bohun family;²⁹ their brother King Henry V commissioned books³⁰ as Richard II³¹ had done; after Abbot Lytlington of Westminster³² other great churchmen had fine books made: men like Thomas Arundel³³ and Henry Chichele,³⁴ who between them held the see of Canterbury during most of the first half of the fifteenth century. But the books made for these men had a newly self-conscious sense of prestige about them, expressed in large portrait miniatures³⁵ and their coats of arms³⁶ blazoned in initials and borders. The Duke of Bedford took advantage of his regency in France to buy the French royal library in 1424 - more than 800 volumes, many of them richly decorated and illustrated.³⁷ Not many of these ever came to England,³⁸ but the scale of the purchase indicates the ambition of some English bibliophiles. The royal interest in fine books was maintained by Henry VI, for

whom some exquisite volumes were made,³⁹ and was extended by Edward IV, who after his return from temporary exile in Bruges from 1470 to 1471 began to build up the English royal library, inspired by what he had seen in the library of his host in Bruges, Louis de Gruuthuse.⁴⁰

But the love of fine books spread its influence much wider than the royal house and the leading aristocracy. The books owned by such people were varied in subject matter and often contained texts in English, and other Englishmen were interested and ambitious to own such things too. Whereas the finest illuminated books of the fourteenth century had been chiefly service books, the fifteenth century produced books of hours, vernacular verse, English bibles, devotional treatises, documents, chronicles and academic text books, all competing with the finest missals in impressive format and visual splendour.⁴¹

Copies of Gower's Confessio Amantis dating from the late fourteenth century, when Gower was still alive, are finely decorated and illustrated copies.⁴² They suggest that the newly fashionable English poetry not only was commissioned by kings but was from an early stage available in books of corresponding dignity. The splendour of some of the earliest of the extant Chaucer manuscripts, such as the Ellesmere copy of the Canterbury Tales,⁴³ or the Troilus and Criseyde in the library of Corpus Christi College, Cambridge,⁴⁴ point to the same conclusion. Presentation miniatures in copies of Hoccleve's or Lydgate's work almost certainly reflect similar miniatures in the earliest copies actually presented to royal

patrons.⁴⁵ But they did not all actually belong to kings. The finest Hoccleve presentation miniature, showing the De Regimine Principum being offered to Prince Henry, is on a page in one of Arundel's books, and Arundel's arms are in the opening initial.⁴⁶ There are several copies of Lydgate's Troy Book with presentation miniatures,⁴⁷ and one at least was destined for other hands than the king's. Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Digby 232⁴⁸ has a presentation miniature on fol. 1 (see Plate 6) and also a border round all four sides of the page. In the lower border a space was left for a coat of arms, an indication that the book was put up for general sale, to be completed with the arms of whoever eventually bought it. The space has in fact been filled with a simple black ink drawing of the arms of the Vintners Company. In the mid fifteenth century, the books illuminated by William Abell, who seems to have been something of a specialist in heraldic decoration, included a number of commissions from London Companies and other institutions as well as books owned by royalty and the aristocracy.⁴⁹

Even individuals among the merchant classes owned fine books. A large folio copy of the English translation of the French version of the Legenda aurea, Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Douce 372, is decorated in a style and on a scale similar to that of the finest Lydgate manuscripts. A note in the book indicates that it was owned by John Burton, citizen and mercer of London, who in 1460 bequeathed it to his daughter dame Katerynne for her use, and after her death to the Prioress and Convent of Augustinian nuns of Holywell, London.

The academic world also shared in the general appreciation of the visual possibilities of carefully divided texts, especially from the 1430s onwards.⁵⁰ Richard Fitzjames, Fellow of Merton College in the 1460s and 1470s, and later Warden of the College and successively Bishop of Rochester, of Chichester and of London, chaplain to the bibliophile King Edward IV and later to Henry VII, was himself a collector of books.⁵¹ He bequeathed a number of them to the library of Merton College.⁵² They include some finely illuminated folio volumes made specially for him, volumes such as Oxford, Merton College, MS N.2.11. Art.,⁵³ containing Jerome's commentary on the Minor Prophets. The companion volume on Isaiah, Oxford, Merton College, MS B.3.3,⁵⁴ has a fine border and Fitzjames's arms on fol. 1, together with a historiated initial and a picture of a bishop kneeling in the margin, and other initials throughout the book are flourished, or illuminated with sprays of multi-coloured flowers and leaves filling the whole width of the margin. Fitzjames seems to have been a regular buyer of books: the same craftsmen were employed on another Jerome, Oxford, Merton College, MS A.1.3,⁵⁵ a smaller book, but elaborately flourished, and containing the text of Jeremiah in red ink with Jerome's commentary in black. Yet another of Fitzjames's Jerome collection⁵⁶ is oddly but strikingly coloured: the bounding lines on each page are ruled in purple, and maroon and green inks are used for flourishing initials, as well as the usual blue and red.

A contemporary of Fitzjames's, William Gray, Fellow of Balliol and later also a Bishop, bought books even more

extensively.⁵⁷ He gave about ninety-five books to Balliol, of which seventy-two are illuminated books, mostly in folio. Gray's tastes and travels were far-ranging. In the 1440s and 1450s he travelled to Cologne, and in Italy, and employed scribes to copy books there.⁵⁸ Some of these books were illuminated on the spot; others were brought back to England to be illuminated: in some of these cases the English illuminators seem to have responded to the elegant layout of Italian script by reining in their usual exuberance.⁵⁹ Gray employed Italian, Dutch and German scribes, as well as English.⁶⁰ One German scribe, Theodore Werken, travelled with him from Cologne to Italy.⁶¹ A German scribe working in England, John Reynbold, was employed by Gray as well as other Oxford fellows.⁶² But in spite of the diversity of production of Gray's books, they give an overall impression of a visually impressive collection, marked by Gray's own taste, and less florid than the Fitzjames collection at Merton, but equally self-conscious about the ostensible worth of fine books.

Both Fitzjames and Gray included in their collections finely decorated folio volumes from the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries:⁶³ in the academic world, texts used centuries earlier were still current. No doubt the first incentive to using such early books was the clarity and reliability of their copyists. But it is probable that the clean, bright layout of a large-format twelfth-century or early thirteenth-century page, and the opulence of much early book decoration appealed also to the visual taste of men who paid the scribes and illuminators of their own day for

sumptuous copies of academic text books.

Fitzjames and Gray were in some ways unusual among Fellows of Colleges: they were connected with important families and were destined to become church leaders. Their wealth affected the scale of their book-buying, but others with smaller means were also interested in the same types of books. A two-volume set of illuminated folio volumes of Nicholas of Lira⁶⁴ came to Balliol from Richard Colling, one-time Fellow, who at his death in 1438 was vicar of St Lawrence Jewry in the city of London. Richard Scarborough, a Fellow of Merton in the generation before Fitzjames, whose father was a citizen and skinner of London,⁶⁵ was able to buy in the early 1450s a six-volume set of Duns Scotus on the Sentences, richly illuminated with multi-coloured borders and finely written and laid out by the scribe John Reynbold who, as we have seen, also worked for William Gray. These books were bought from Scarborough by another Fellow of Merton, Thomas Bloxham, who later gave them to the college library.⁶⁶

At the same time as these academic readers were taking advantage of fashions in illumination which exploited the ordinatio of academic books, other readers were using very different kinds of books which were nevertheless adapted to the same standards. Copies of the Statutes of England, reference books for working lawyers, are markedly different in the fifteenth century from what they had been earlier. The slim volumes of the thirteenth century,⁶⁷ and the tiny pocket books characteristic of the fourteenth,⁶⁸ have given way to thick books in large format, sometimes handsomely

decorated. These changes are partly owing to an accumulation of laws, but partly also to the aspirations of the owners of the books. We have already discussed the illuminated Index to the Statutes in Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Douce 159 (see above, pp. 36-7). A copy of the Statutes themselves, made in the early fifteenth century, Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Douce 362 also has fine borders and initials. A late copy, Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Hatton 10, is one of the most lavishly decorated English books of the century. It contains a copy of Magna Carta and of the statutes from Edward III to the eleventh year of the reign of Henry VII. The first item in the book is an alphabetical Index, the first entry for each letter of the alphabet being marked by ^ainitial on ^acoloured ground with acanthus sprays. Magna Carta, and the beginning of each reign thereafter, ^ais marked by heavily decorated pages with coloured borders all round the page, filling the whole width of the margin and containing a wealth of varied detail. In the earlier parts of the book the border decoration issues from a thin band of gold and colour separating it from the text. The margins are filled with fine black sprays and gold leaves and studs as a background to colourful motifs: birds, flowers, acanthus leaves, butterflies and drolleries, the whole effect being rich and flamboyant.⁶⁹ From fol. 328^v the style of the borders changes to a Flemish one, with backgrounds of powdered gold.⁷⁰ Minor divisions throughout the book are marked by coloured initials and heavy sprays of flowers and leaves.

For those who could not afford such luxury in copies of statutes and other legal texts, there were numerous less lavish copies which still carried an impressive proliferation of colourful detail - books like the quarto volume, Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Douce 312, made in about 1445. Its main divisions are marked by gold initials on parti-coloured grounds with simple sprays of gold and green leaves and studs. Minor divisions are indicated by blue initials flourished in red, and paraph marks in blue and red are placed in the margin and in the text to point out chapter numbers and other references.⁷¹

Another kind of reference book often treated decoratively in the fifteenth century was the cartulary. The incentive to decoration was no doubt affected by the fact that the original documents themselves would often begin with display headings, sometimes illuminated and accompanied by illustrations.⁷² But the decoration lavished on reference copies in codex form was probably also influenced by the example of academic text books, for we find more than just opening initials and borders. Pretensions to handsomeness affect the whole of Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Wood Empt. 7, a cartulary made in 1445 containing rentals and terriers of the lands in Leicestershire belonging to Bartholomew Brokesby.⁷³ As well as the decoration on fol. vii - an initial on a gold ground with acanthus decoration, and a textura heading - there are running titles at the head of pages and in margins, in a large Textura Quadrata script; less formal running titles in a cursive script are also found, underlined in red; main divisions are

marked by red initials flourished in brown, other divisions by brown initials shaded in red; in the top right-hand corner of each recto page is a folio number written large in red and brown ink.

Such a book, containing the owner's coat of arms and a text that makes it clear he is a man of property, is certainly intended to convey a sense of prestige, among other things.⁷⁴ But even in books much less grand, containing perhaps no decoration except for a few calligraphic initials shaded with yellow (see, for example, Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Gough Suffolk 3, a rental of lands belonging to Bury St Edmunds, made in 1435), there is a general impression not of accounts, but of a book, expressed visually in terms of wide margins, careful spacing, running titles in both top and side margins, and some attempt to maintain a hierarchy of initials. A list of Mayors and Sheriffs of London, which makes up part of the chronicle and similar material in Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Rawl. B.355,⁷⁶ is made into more than a mere list: Rawlinson called it 'a Pretty Thing', a response to its careful arrangement and its decoration.

This awareness of visual impact is one of the most widespread and consistent aspects of books in a period when book production was diverse and complex. We know very little about the centres of production and the relationships of even the few craftsmen whose names are known to us.⁷⁷ The fullest study so far of any English bookshop in this period indicates the wide range of texts with different kinds of decoration that might be bought in one shop by a variety of customers.⁷⁸ But there was

an idea of what sort of impact a book should have, which seems to have been generally influential, and to have affected not only the styles of commercial book production, but also the efforts of those who made their own books. Even the most ordinary personal notebook, like that of Nicholas Bishop, citizen of Oxford,⁷⁹ reflects in its careful layout the same concern for the visual impact of what was written on a page.

The same interest is still found in the early sixteenth century in another home-made book, Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Ashmole 61. This is a compilation containing, among other things, extracts from Rolle, a version of the romance Sir Orfeo, the romance of Sir Isumbras and a metrical version of the ten commandments (see Plate 4). The manuscript is on paper, and is in an odd, long, narrow format made by folding single large sheets lengthwise.⁸⁰ The sheets seem to have been kept folded again the other way at some time before being bound, and many of them still have a horizontal fold visible across the middle. The texts are all in one hand, a very fluent cursive, but they seem to have been written at various different times, for there are frequent changes in the shade of the ink and the size or compression of the script. Many of the items in the miscellany are signed 'quod Rate' or 'Amen quod Rate'. The book appears to be a compilation gathered together over a period of time for the personal use of someone with this name. There is no colour at all in the book. Everything is in black ink. But, for all its plainness and cheapness, even this book demonstrates the visual exploitation of the divisions

required by the ordinatio of the compilation. The visual features of this book are personal, even idiosyncratic. The signatures at the ends of items are written in a larger and more formal script than the text, and some items begin with a large initial. And throughout the book, one item is marked off from another by a big drawing of a fish or a flower or both. This device becomes a kind of visual equivalent of 'explicit' or 'quod Rate', and may stand without any words at all. It is valued also for its visual impact. There is a certain panache about this book, the result of these big, bold drawings contrasting with the plain but well laid out text. Plate 4 shows a particularly striking opening. The romance of Sir Isumbras ends with 'Amen quod Rate' and a fish. The metrical version of the Ten Commandments begins with an initial three lines high and ends with another 'Amen quod Rate' and another fish. There was still a space not filled with text, and this has been used for a circular motif filled with a six-petalled design. It is very large, and was done with some care, being drawn with a compass in drypoint before being inked in. It is a contribution to the visual impact of the book, dominated by an impulse to use the space available decoratively. A similar impulse probably led to the diagrammatic indication of the rhyme scheme found on every page of this manuscript and very commonly ⁱⁿ other fifteenth-century copies of verse texts. This is one way in which a design present in the text was also made explicit visually.

It is a part of the purpose of this chapter to show that such a powerful awareness of books as things 'to behold' was a part of the experience of reading in the fifteenth century. But I wish to suggest more than the idea that visual experience was a separate accompaniment of a reader's contact with the text. I think his contact with the text and his understanding of it was often intimately connected with the visual appearance of the book in which it was written.

The visual appearance of the book was often decorative. And fifteenth-century taste in decoration was, as we have seen, elaborate, colourful and sometimes florid. But this fact enabled the producers of books to emphasize more strongly the links between text and decoration. There was generally a distinction between the two, for the text was monochrome and the decoration was variously coloured and gilded, and this distinction was an essential part of the clarity of layout designed for the reader's benefit. But the decoration not only drew his eye to the book; it led it through the pages, and the 'shape' of the text, the disposition of its parts and the ordering of its thought, was the main factor determining the decorative scheme. The 'design' of the book was not superficially imposed upon a text which could equally well do without it. It was a design present in the text and made explicit visually as well as verbally.

One indication of this quality of fifteenth-century books is the way in which copies of one text are often distinguishable from copies of a different text even at a distance from which the writing is illegible: their visual appearance gives them

each their peculiar stamp, because the visual appearance depends in each separate case upon a different text.

Plates 5, 6 and 7 have been chosen to demonstrate this point. Between them, these pages from copies of Gower, Lydgate and Chaucer show a wide range of the decorative features which were available throughout the fifteenth century: miniatures, historiated initials, initials filled with flower and leaf designs, borders and sprays of different kinds, flourished initials, coloured inks, various sizes and degrees of formality of script. Each of the three manuscripts contains a different selection from these features but, as the plates show, all the manuscripts have a direct visual attractiveness (heightened still further, of course, by the rich colouring of the originals). The decoration of these pages is less dense than some of the examples we have examined so far, but there is a similar richness and consciousness of overall effect, based on a combination of diversity of detail with a sense of balance between wide, clear margins and boldly filled spaces. The incentive to fill as much space as possible seems to become stronger as the century progresses: Plate 5 shows a copy of Gower from the beginning of the century, Plate 6 is taken from a copy of Lydgate made between 1420 and about 1450, the Chaucer in Plate 7 is later, probably about 1450-60, and it is noticeable as one moves from the earliest manuscript to the latest that the decoration is spreading to take over most of the margins.

Any description of these manuscripts must take account of idiosyncracies which cut across generalisations. The

Chaucer manuscript shown here is odd among surviving copies of Chaucer in its historiated initials, a type of illustration occurring in no other copy of the Canterbury Tales and showing scenes not found in any form in the other copies of the text. It also has its own eclectic use of citations of auctoritates and other 'learned' apparatus in the margins of some of the tales.⁸¹ But such individual features, and the developments in style over a period of time, do not destroy the distinctive character of the visual appearance of copies of the three texts represented here.

Plate 5 shows a double opening of a copy of the Confessio Amantis. Of all English poetry of this period, this is the one with the largest quantity of learned apparatus, probably supplied by the poet himself, and the visual appearance of such copies is a direct result of the division of the text and the Latin verse introductions and prose summaries which accompany the divisions. As in many academic text books the text is laid out in double columns, and book numbers are written at the top of the page as running titles. The Latin is written in red, as lemmata in a commentary often are. In this copy, as is frequent in later copies of Gower manuscripts, the summaries are treated exactly like the Latin verse passages, rather than being written as a separate gloss in the margins. The result is that the columns of black text are interrupted very frequently by smaller areas of red, so that the wide regular spaces in the margins are left uncluttered, to be used for the lavish decoration of major divisions of the text.

Nothing is allowed to disturb the striking elegance of these pages, dependent as it is upon heightened contrasts - black and red in the text, colour in the border decoration and initial, wide clear spaces in the remaining margins: the nota mark in the centre margin on fol. 9 is very unobtrusive.

The pictures in this book combine very skilfully the functions of illustration and indexing with decoration. In this respect, also, the meaning and organisation of the text are closely related to the decoration of the book. There are two pictures. One is a historiated initial on fol. 8^v, shown in Plate 5; the other is a small miniature, half the width of a column of text, on fol. 4^v.⁸² At first sight the pictures may seem to contradict what has been said above about the link between the ordinatio and the decoration of a book, for neither of them occurs at the beginning of a section. One is placed part of the way through the Prologue; the other is part of the way through Book I. But I think it can be shown that the placing of both pictures is a more subtle response to the text. While illustrating the passage nearest at hand, each is also a guide to the ordinatio of the text, for the passages chosen for illustration are also epitomes of the framework of the whole. The historiated initial in my plate, showing the Lover confessing to the Priest, would not belong as an illustration at the beginning of Book I, with its account of the dreamer's conversation with Venus, but is more appropriate later, where the Lover meets Venus's Priest. The historiated initial is delayed until this point, but this is also the point where the Confession begins, on which the

structure of the whole poem is framed.

The Prologue miniature seems to be used in a similar way.

The picture shows the image of the giant made of various different metals, which Nebuchadnezzar saw in his dream.

It appears in the course of the Prologue, at the place in the text where the story of the dream is first mentioned.

But as the text makes clear, the image represents the whole thought of the Prologue about the way of the world: the lines just above the picture run:

... þis world shal turne 7 wende
 Til it be falle to his ende
 Wherof þe tale telle I schal
 In which it is be tokned al.⁸³

The two pictures in this manuscript of the Confessio Amantis are unusually small. Among those copies that are illustrated at all, miniatures the full width of the margin are the general rule. Perhaps in our manuscript costs were being cut, but it is interesting to note that the two pictures are still included - were they felt to be inextricably connected to the text? The degree of consistency among copies of the Confessio has been remarked on by Macaulay,⁸⁴ and it may be not only that Gower had a direct supervisory influence over early copies of the text, but also that the organisation of the text was itself strong enough to exercise a continuing control.

There is one way, however, in which Gower's intentions are probably not being followed in this manuscript. It looks as if the decision to incorporate the prose summaries into the column of text may have been taken for purely aesthetic reasons, without regard to the awkwardness this sometimes produces in

reading. On fol. 9 in my plate, in the middle of the left-hand column, the summary Primo geni sacerdotis super confessione ad amantem breaks into the middle of an English sentence, and, making it more awkward still, the second part of the sentence begins with the kind of flourished coloured initial usually used for a new section of the text. It seems probable that Gower would have intended such summaries to be placed like a gloss in the margins (as in some manuscripts they are) rather than interrupting the verse.⁸⁵

Another example of an attempt to create and decorate an ordinatio which is not really there in the text, may be seen in one or two details in Plate 6. This shows a double opening from a copy of Lydgate's Troy Book, Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Digby 232. Here, sections of text are marked off by flourished paraph marks, alternately purple on gold, and red on blue, but a close examination shows that only occasionally do they mark off an important idea with precision. On the verso page, lines about Ovid and Lollius as authorities for the story of Troy are distinguished with these marks, but other lines about Homer, Virgil and Dares are ignored. The line marked in the right-hand column,

¶ To hyde trouthe falsely vnder cloude,
 may have been picked out as having a morally sententious quality, but it is an unmemorable line found in mid-sentence. The paraph mark on fol. 3 would make more sense if it was placed a line earlier, at the beginning of a sentence -
 ther was an auctour of ful hye renoun-

as an introduction to the subject of Guido delle Colonne. It looks as if the desire to make a visually attractive book has led to the creation of false opportunities for decoration. Lydgate's text is probably to blame for this: his style depends more on continuation than division, and offers fewer opportunities for display than the Confessio Amantis.

I think these examples of visual features taking undue precedence strengthen rather than weaken my case for the essential connection between text and decoration in fifteenth-century books. They are examples of decoration uncontrolled by the pattern of the text, but they are kinds of decoration that had been developed for texts that did provide a pattern that could be expressed visually. Though the technique was applied irrationally in these cases, the fact that it was applied at all shows how natural a part of the reader's and scribe's expectations it was.

The other decorative features of the pages from Lydgate in Plate 6 are closely related to the major division in the text between the end of the Prologue and the beginning of Book I. This division has been used as an opportunity for a colourful cluster of decorative devices: a rubricated 'Explicit prologus' with a flourished paraph mark before it and a decorative blue line-filling after it; a miniature the full width of the column; and a coloured initial four lines high on a gold ground with colourful and extensive marginal decoration in the centre margin and at the top and

bottom of the page. All this is allowed to stand in marked contrast with the wide side margins and the almost undecorated page opposite. Except for the few paraph marks already mentioned there is no further apparatus and no more decoration on these pages. But the impression is, nonetheless, lavish. The book is very large, and the decoration it does have is bold and ostentatious. It lacks both the elegance and the complexity of the Gower in Plate 5, but proclaims itself nevertheless as a fine book.

The fineness of the Chaucer manuscript shown in Plate 7, Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Rawl. poet 223, is in many respects characteristic of its later date (c. 1450-1460). The decoration is more florid. Even the ruling is in mauve ink. The strange stylised plant form in the decorated initial is typical of the second half of the fifteenth century. So also is the use of a self-consciously calligraphic display script for the heading of the Miller's Tale. Leaf sprays fill the whole width of the margin, and the running title is written large and has almost merged with the marginal decoration. Gold leaf is used lavishly. Even the script of the text is affected by this pervasive decorative purpose: it is a fluent Bastard Secretary script⁸⁶ with calligraphic approach strokes on initials extending well into the left-hand margins.

But, in spite of the distinctively later style of the decoration of these pages, they remain characteristically pages of Chaucer. They demonstrate how the arrangement of a text could impose a pattern upon the decoration of a book that

could survive through a long period.⁸⁷ Typical of Chaucer manuscripts are the single column of text, the use of running titles, and the elaborate heading for a new tale, all of which features together produce a very different appearance from that of either the Gower or the Lydgate manuscript.

So far, my argument has been based on the decorative features in books rather than on illustrations. Where pictures in books have been considered at all, it has been as part of a total scheme of pattern and colour on a page. But if my argument so far is accepted, and if we consider what was said in chapter 2 about the late medieval attitude to the function of images, we might expect to find that the pictures in fifteenth-century books were especially important.

We immediately encounter a difficulty, for it has to be admitted that pictures make less of a visual impact than decoration in fifteenth-century books. Few books have any pictures.⁸⁸ Those that are illustrated rarely have more than a handful of pictures, and small miniatures or historiated initials are more common than full-page miniatures. Pictures are often in grisaille, or drawn in ink, sometimes lightly washed in pale colour, rather than treated with the bright colour and gold leaf that is lavished on initials and border decoration. One of the most richly decorated manuscripts that we have discussed so far (the genealogical roll in Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Lyell 33) has only one picture, the roundel on fol. 1. The large miniature of the Crucifixion in the Abingdon Missal is the only miniature in that book; other illustrations are in historiated initials.⁸⁹ The copy of the

Confessio Amantis in Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Bodley 693, which we have discussed, contains one very small framed miniature and one historiated initial. Several Gower manuscripts contain two pictures similar to these, but it seems that only three of the surviving copies of the Confessio have more than this.⁹⁰ The copy of Lydgate's Troy Book in Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Digby 232 has a presentation miniature and four others at the beginnings of Books. There are a few surviving Lydgate manuscripts with extensive series of pictures,⁹¹ but the number looks unimpressive when compared with the large numbers of copies with no pictures at all: out of about three hundred and fifty extant copies of various works by Lydgate, I have counted only twenty-six that have pictures; these vary from the extensive but rare series of more than fifty pictures to the more common cases of a handful of pictures, or even only one. Very few manuscripts of Chaucer's Canterbury Tales are illustrated: there are two historiated initials in the copy we have already considered,⁹² a series of pictures of the pilgrims in the Ellesmere manuscript,⁹³ a shorter series in Cambridge, University Library, MS Gg.4.27, three pilgrim pictures in the surviving fragments of the 'Oxford' manuscript,⁹⁴ and one historiated initial in Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Bodley 686.⁹⁵

This situation is all the more surprising if we consider how many fully illustrated books there had been in the fourteenth century. Books were often designed to be looked at for their pictures, as well as read - some of them, like the Holkham Bible Picture Book,⁹⁶ to be looked at rather than read. Psalters and

books of hours often included a number of leaves, usually preceding the first page of text, containing nothing but pictures.⁹⁷ Apocalypse manuscripts,⁹⁸ and Lives of Christ⁹⁹ were commonly illustrated, often with miniatures filling half of every page. New series of pictures were devised for teaching the 'lewd' men who now owned their own books: one fourteenth-century English manuscript¹⁰⁰ shows in pictures at each stage of the French text 'Ceo qu vous devez fere 7 penser a chascun point de la messe'.

There had also been new developments in illustrated books during the fourteenth century. Towards the end of the century, scientific treatises, which had rarely had pictures in earlier copies,¹⁰¹ were beginning to be illustrated. Symptoms of the change may be found in literary texts, as well as in the manuscripts themselves.

Gower's Confessio Amantis contains the earliest reference I know of in Middle English literature to an illustrated book of any kind. In the Tale of Nectanabus (Book VI, lines 1789 et seq.), we are told how Nectanabus, deprived of his kingdom in Egypt and fleeing into Macedonia, arrives in the capital city, where, struck by the beauty of the queen Olimpias, he gains a private audience on the pretext of being a scholar sent to her with an important message. He brings with him to this meeting a golden astrolabe and an illustrated book of astrology:

And ek the hevenly figures
 Wroght in a bok ful of peintures
 He tok this ladi forto schewe,
 And tolde of ech of hem be rewe
 The cours and the condicion.
 And sche with gret affeccion
 Sat stille and herde what he wolde.¹⁰²

Olimpias is sufficiently impressed to accept Nectanabus's story that he brings a message from an Egyptian god who is enamoured of her...so begins the sorcery that leads to the conception of Alexander the Great. The same story as it is told at the beginning of the century, in the romance of Kyng Alisaunder,¹⁰³ has no mention of an illustrated book. There, Nectanabus dazzles Olimpias with a learned account of the colours associated with different planets. His demonstration of his erudite understanding is entirely verbal.

A real astrological book with 'peintures', belonging to the time of Gower, and a part of his cultural milieu, is Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Bodley 581, a copy of a compilation of geomantic texts put together for Richard II. This volume is regarded as the presentation copy prepared for the king.¹⁰⁴ It includes, as an impressive part of the tables from which predictions could be made, a series of carefully-finished miniatures, each showing a different man, distinguished by his costume and gestures, and in some way representative of one of the geomantic diagrams which appear in the tables, and again in the form of a thumb-index in the outer margins of the verso pages. The precise function of the miniatures is obscure to us. I am practically certain that they are not pictures of 'philosophers' as the Summary Catalogue suggests: one of them is a forlorn figure with holes in the elbows and knees of his clothes. I have not been able to find any other explanation. But they seem to be there as a sort of index to the various sections of the table. This part of the manuscript has the rubricated title: Tabula ymaginum figurarum cum naturis

et proprietatibus suis (fol. 15^v). I take it that the figurae are ^{the} geomantic diagrams composed of patterns of dots, and that the miniatures are the ymagines of these figures. We may perhaps see Nectanabus's book, as Gower describes it, as a similar volume to MS Bodley 581: the 'heavenly figures' are geomantic diagrams and they are written in a book which has miniatures. When Nectanabus expounds the book to Olimpias he does it by telling her about each section 'be rewe' - this would be the natural way to go through the tables in such a manuscript as MS Bodley 581, where each miniature stands to the left of a section of the table that takes up half the height of the page and extends across each double opening. Each section is ruled into nine spaces across the page and three spaces down, so that there are twenty-seven different spaces in three rows. In each space is written something about the 'natura et proprietas' of the appropriate geomantic figure - we may perhaps take Gower's 'cours and condicion' as a translation of this last idea. Perhaps a function of the miniatures, in addition to any technical usefulness they had, would have been their colourful attractiveness - 'a bok ful of peintures' (like a golden astrolabe) is a way of making information at once memorable and impressive.

Why did such developments in book illustration make apparently so little impact upon fifteenth-century book production? Fourteenth-century books were still available, and were still appreciated. Certain service books may have become outdated as new liturgical feasts were introduced,¹⁰⁵ but psalters, books of hours, copies of statutes, books of

history and devotion were still found useful,¹⁰⁶ and Richard II's taste for fine books was equalled, and even surpassed by his successors.¹⁰⁷ Explicit evidence of a fifteenth-century reader's response to the pictures in a fourteenth-century book is found in the Vernon manuscript,¹⁰⁸ a compilation of varied devotional material in English and French, written in the late fourteenth century. It is a volume in huge format with more than four hundred leaves, and the texts are written in ^{two or} three columns. It must have been obvious that if such a collection was to be of any use it had to be clearly laid out and its items carefully distinguished. This need was met already in the fourteenth century in a visually attractive way: at the head of each item is a rubricated title beginning with a large coloured initial and in some cases a miniature as well, the width of one column. In the early fifteenth century however, perhaps twenty years after the manuscript was made, an index was added.¹⁰⁹ This is a visual aid of a more self-conscious kind. The Index gives a title to the whole compilation - 'Salus anime. and in englyhs tonge Sowlehele' (fol. 1) - and provides a long list of 'þe tytles of þe book', occupying three folios. The usefulness of the Index as a guide to the whole volume is enhanced by its division according to folio numbers. These are cross-references to the visually prominent roman numerals in red ink in the top left-hand corner of each verso page in the book. And in one of the Index entries is a comment on the value of the existing visual elements in the book. It states that the miniatures were regarded by this fifteenth-century reader as a helpful guide to the book's

ordinatio. The text that begins on fol. 104B is a Story of the Gospel, and is indexed as follows:

.C.iiii

Of þe Anunciacioun ihesu crist
 Of his Natiuite Of his circumcisioun
 Hou he offred to Symeon Of þe passioun
 Of þe resurrexioun Of þe asscensioun
 Of þe sendynge of þe holi gost
 Of þe comynge of þe day of dom
 And opere diuerse Stories of ihesu
 crist and of his modur þe whyche
 in diuerse paneles in peyntur and
 euery panel had his scripture acordaunt
 þer to þe whiche peynture his table
 suffisaunt.110

- 'The painting is sufficient index'. Six of the miniatures here referred to survive on the two pages of this text that are still present in the manuscript. After this eight leaves are missing, but enough survives to show how illustrations to a text could be used by the reader as a means of finding his way round the text: he did not even need to use the headings, the 'scripture acordaunt to' the pictures; he used the pictures to find the section of the text he wanted. Such a means of indexing is at once eye-catching, being in colour, and as distinctive and specific as a title, since it is based on illustrations of recognisable parts of a familiar narrative.

Did fifteenth-century readers then think of pictures as indexing devices rather than illustrations? Is this a reason for the comparative lack of pictures in fifteent^h-century books? Either more were not needed or they could be replaced by other kinds of decorative signals for the beginning of major sections of text? Some of the evidence may seem to point in this direction. If we consider again the manuscript of Lydgate's Troy Book, Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Digby 232, we find the

Prologue and the first four Books each marked by a miniature and an initial with elaborate marginal decoration, but Book V has no miniature, only the initial and border. A picture of Telamon and Ulysses for Book V seems to have been commonly available, and is found in several other copies of the text,¹¹¹ but it seems that it was felt that this copy could do without it.

Illustrated copies of Gower's Confessio Amantis may seem to suggest a similar conclusion. They commonly have a picture of the image of Nebuchadnezzar's dream part way through the Prologue, and another of the Lover's Confession at the stage in Book I where the Confession begins, just as we have seen in Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Bodley 693.¹¹² The bibliographical note on Gower's writings that often appears in copies of the Confessio Amantis makes two main points about the subject matter of this poem: that 'secundum Danielis propheciam super huius mundi regnorum mutacione a tempore Regis Nabugodonosor usque nunc tempora distinguit'; and that, drawing on various sources, the poem also treats of love - 'Nomenque presentis opusculi. Confessio Amantis specialiter intitulator.'¹¹³ The two most common illustrations make these same two points, and, from one point of view, more pictures are simply not needed. The beginnings of Books may be indicated instead by decorated initials and margins.

It is rarely safe to discount altogether the possibility of a relationship between the pictures in a copy of a text and its ordinatio. Several copies of Lydgate's Troy Book all contain miniatures, similar in subject matter and iconography, related to each of the Books of the text, and the same

hierarchy of decorative features in minor details of decoration.¹¹⁴
 In other copies the hierarchy of decoration is different and the pictures have different subjects, but the miniatures still stand in the same relation to the divisions of the text.¹¹⁵ In cases like these it is easy to imagine a reader using the pictures as a guide to the content of the text, as Criseyde used the rubrics in her romance of Thebes, or as the Vernon manuscript indexer used the pictures of the life of Christ.

But to conclude from such evidence that pictures were not appreciated except as indexing devices is to ignore other evidence. In the same Lydgate manuscript that has no picture for Book V, other miniatures are exploited fully for their pictorial potential. The miniature shown in Plate 6, which marks Book I of the text, is a complex narrative picture, showing in consecutive order the whole story of the Myrmidons, which forms an important part of the text at this point. On the left the race of the Myrmidons are destroyed by the gods' anger: the sky above them is red, and upon them falls 'fery leuene ... wip hayl 7 reyn'. In the middle is King Pelleus at prayer. On the right, in answer to his prayer, the ants crawling among the tree roots in the lower corner are being changed into the new race of Myrmidons, and the sky above them is gold: Jupiter's grace

he made from heuen for to shyne
 Benygnely vnto þe erthe down
 That a sodeyn transmutacioun
 Was made of amptes to forme of men anon.¹¹⁶

A few copies of the Troy Book show artists engaged upon very extensive schemes of pictures illustrating many aspects

of the text.¹¹⁷ Other texts evoke a similar response: in one of the copies of Lydgate's Fall of Princes, there is only one picture, but it is a composite illustration including a number of episodes from the text.¹¹⁸ In a copy of Gower's Confessio Amantis in Oxford, New College, MS 266 there is a series of miniatures instead of the usual two.¹¹⁹

Other manuscripts, although they have few pictures or none, have spaces left in the text which have not been filled in. The Helmingham manuscript of Lydgate's Troy Book has three miniatures, and spaces for others.¹²⁰ The copy of Troilus and Criseyde in Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, whose splendid 'frontispiece' page we have already examined, has spaces for ⁱⁿ the text, some of them apparently intended for pictures.^{120a} The copy of Lydgate's Lyf of Our Lady in Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Bodley 596¹²¹ is an ill-planned and often confused book, but it has the same provision for illustration: twenty spaces have been left, in each case before the title of a chapter, although only four and part of a fifth have been filled in.

What we are dealing with, then, is not a lack of interest in pictures in the fifteenth century, but an interest expressed only sporadically or incompletely. It seems likely that the explanation for this is a financial one. Pictures would have been an expensive addition to a manuscript for a number of reasons. One of these would have been the cost of colours and gold leaf or gold paint. We may infer that these were expensive from the fact mentioned earlier, that drawings or grisaille pictures were often preferred to fully coloured miniatures. Bell¹²² speaks of colours as one of the 'minor

costs of production', but a lot seems to depend on the quantity and variety of colour involved. Some of the most detailed accounts of costs that survive from the fifteenth century are in academic text books where the cost of red, blue and yellow ink for underlining and picking out key-words, and for drawing plain initials, was quite small. Materials and workmanship together might cost up to twelve pence a volume.¹²³ But the same price might be paid for the decoration of a single page with a 'vynet', a border with leaf-scrolls and sprays in a variety of colours and perhaps some gold. In 1467 Sir John Howard paid to Thomas Lymnour of Bury five pence for flourishing five-hundred initials, but marginal decoration in the same accounts was charged at twelve pence for a 'hole vynet' and four pence for a 'demi vynet'. Howard paid fifteen shillings for vynets in a book which cost twenty pence a quire to write and twelve shillings to bind.¹²⁴ When we consider that coloured pictures were generally associated with marginal decoration too (as in Plate 6), it is not surprising if customers often settled for vynets alone and dispensed with the additional luxury of coloured pictures, or chose to have no colour at all and to have their pictures in plain brown ink or grisaille.

These considerations may have affected the work of the English illuminator William Abell. He has been identified as the artist of a number of books.¹²⁵ They include books of hours, a number of charters and other documents, the Abingdon Missal, and copies of several English translations from French texts: Lydgate's Pilgrimage of the Life of Man, and two

translations by Stephen Scrope, the Dicts and Sayings of the Philosophers and the Epistle of Othea. All of these books have pictures, and the Crucifixion miniature in the Abingdon Missal, or the twenty-two miniatures in the 'Warwick' Hours, show that Abell did work in gold and colour when required. But only two of his books have more than one miniature. The other seventeen attributed to him have a scattering of historiated initials, or a single miniature, or both, or else have only drawings or grisaille pictures. These are particularly characteristic of the Lydgate and Scrope translations. The Lydgate has fifty-three coloured drawings; one of the Scropes has numerous colourwash drawings; the other, a single coloured miniature and five pictures in tinted grisaille.

These examples draw attention to another economic factor in the production of illustrated books. Abell's fine fully-coloured painted miniatures when found in any numbers are in books of hours; his less expensive techniques are used for the English translations. It is unlikely that this reflects different attitudes to the different kinds of text contained in the various books. There are examples elsewhere of devotional books with drawings or grisaille,¹²⁶ and of copies of vernacular non-devotional texts with fully painted miniatures - indeed, Abell's pictures for the Epistle of Othea have been identified as copies of the painted miniatures in a French translation of the same text owned by Sir John Fastolf.¹²⁷ The more likely explanation is that illustrated copies of vernacular texts could involve extra expense, because the

artist could not work from 'stock' patterns. He might have to make a special exercise of copying an existing picture-series, as Abell did for the Epistle, or he might even have to devise a new series of his own. There were probably not many customers who would be as willing as Sir John Fastolf to add still further to this inevitable expense by having the pictures fully painted and gilded as well.

These suggestions may explain also the rarity of fully-illustrated copies of Gower, Lydgate and Chaucer. It may have been very convenient that Gower's Confessio Amantis could be adequately illustrated by only two stock miniatures. One of the very few copies that has more, Oxford, New College, MS 266, includes one miniature that suggests some of the difficulties of devising an extensive series of new pictures. On fol. 81^v is a small framed miniature representing a battle; it shows a few heads and shoulders of wounded armed men in close-up. This is a pictorial technique not favoured in medieval illustration in general, and the miniature appears to have been awkwardly adapted, perhaps even traced, from one corner of a much bigger picture where this detail would be only one small item in a complex composition of the kind found in half-page or whole-page pictures in contemporary Flemish manuscripts.¹²⁸ The illustrations of Lydgate's Troy Book in the Digby manuscript mentioned above are again a stock handful, made possible perhaps by the rich pictorial tradition that had gathered around the Troy story in ^{Continental} / illumination.¹²⁹ The eclecticism of Chaucer in seeking out the material for the Canterbury Tales seems to have defied narrative illustration altogether.

The illustration of texts that had previously been illustrated seldom, if at all, was probably made more difficult and expensive by a lack of miniaturists in England with the skill to undertake the work. William Abell seems to have been unusual among English artists of the time in his skill and in the scope of his commissions. In other cases we frequently find that artists working on books are French or Flemish.¹³⁰ They often work on the same manuscripts as English craftsmen who are responsible for the distinctively English border decoration,¹³¹ but few English artists seem to have been called on to execute the pictures. It appears that the market would have worked to the advantage of the few skilled craftsmen, but probably not to the advantage of English readers who would have wanted books with pictures if they could have met the considerable extra cost.

Perhaps booksellers would sometimes arrange for spaces to be left in a book in the hope that it might attract a buyer willing to incur the extra cost of the pictures. Perhaps the unfinished picture-series that are found were samples begun in the hope of persuading someone to provide the funds to pay for the rest. Or perhaps the customer or the bookseller was dissatisfied, or found himself unable to meet the costs of illustration when he had discovered what these actually were. There are many manuscripts which contain less illumination the further you read. Possibly a customer with limited funds at his disposal would decide to lavish it on the early pages of the book, which might be all he would ever need to display if he wanted to show it off, and which would be sufficient to

establish the manner of ordinatio to be expected in the rest of the text when he used the book for his own reading. Or possibly the craftsmen were paid piece-rates,¹³² and a customer who began ambitiously had to be more sparing as the book progressed.

The suggestions I have made about the financial pressures affecting the production of illustrated manuscripts seem to be confirmed by the evidence of fifteenth-century printed books. The details of the market for the new technique are different, but the underlying circumstances seem very similar. Although Caxton was printing in England by 1476 or 1477, and had already printed six or seven texts on the continent, he did not produce a book with pictures until 1481, when he finished the first edition of The myrroure of the worlde, illustrated with eleven pictures and various diagrams, and the third edition of Parvus Cato, in which two of the same pictures were used.¹³³ The pattern after that is uneven. Though he was printing various texts through the next two years, he did not produce another illustrated one until the Game and playe of the chesse in 1483. The illustrated Legenda aurea with its sixty-nine pictures may also belong to this year. In 1484 he produced an illustrated Aesop, a considerable undertaking with a hundred and eighty-six woodcuts, and perhaps his second edition of the Canterbury Tales, which, unlike the first edition, had twenty-three cuts. It is possible that there was another pause here in the production of illustrated copies, until 1486, when the Speculum vitae Christi was printed, with twenty-nine woodcuts, and, perhaps as late as 1487, the Book

named Ryal, which has seven woodcuts. Some of these picture series appear again in later editions of the same books: the Legenda aurea in 1487, the Speculum vitae Christi and the Myrrour of the worlde in 1490; but otherwise Caxton's concern for fully illustrated books ceases. In the last five years of his publishing career he issued eight books with pictures, all of them devotional texts with no more than one or two conventional religious images apiece. In the ten years of his life as a publisher he produced a total of only nineteen illustrated editions.

One of the main reasons why Caxton's printing venture succeeded while others failed seems to have been his monopoly of a carefully-chosen corner of the market - the need for fashionable literature in English:

Other merchants were selling Burgundian manuscripts in England, but only Caxton was able to provide cheap, plentiful translations of that literature. Other booksellers in England were able to provide their customers with English literature, but only Caxton could provide them with literature which was also the courtly reading of the Burgundian court.¹³⁴

Though Caxton was also producing books for professional men,¹³⁵ and probably relied on the London merchant class to buy some of the copies of editions that may have numbered two hundred volumes or more,¹³⁶ the custom that he seems to have sought after and advertised most assiduously was the custom of the nobility. He was careful to indicate in his prologues who his noble patrons were, and the ways in which his books were approved by them,¹³⁷ and it has been suggested that an important reason for his choice of Westminster as the site of his press was that there he would be within easy reach of

the court.¹³⁸ Now the Burgundian court culture which Caxton emulated included a taste for luxuriously illuminated manuscript books,¹³⁹ and it is hard to believe that Caxton would not have imitated such books if it had made sense commercially to do so. This taste was certainly shared by some English readers, as the book-buying of Edward IV shows.¹⁴⁰ But Caxton, like the producers of manuscripts in his own time and earlier, probably had difficulty in finding pictorial exemplars and skilled craftsmen - whether painters or wood engravers. The engravers he did employ were almost all foreigners,¹⁴¹ which suggests that in this, as in miniature painting, England was producing few artists of her own. Those Caxton books that are illustrated with any major picture series all contain texts that had already acquired a set of illustrations in manuscript copies.

In the case of the Fables of Esope, dated late in March 1484 and illustrated with an extensive series of a hundred and eighty-six woodcuts, there may have been a particularly fortunate combination of a good model and the services of a wood engraver. An Act of Parliament in January of the same year had been designed to restrict foreign workmen in most trades in England, with the express exception of anyone engaged in the book trade.¹⁴² To them, considerable freedom was granted to work in England, and perhaps it was in this way that Caxton was able to find someone to follow the woodcuts of Sorg's edition of 1480 (itself ultimately based on the well-known series printed by Zainer at Ulm¹⁴³) in cutting the woodblocks for his English book.

Caxton's earlier excursion into illustrated books in The myrroure of the worlde in 1481 may also have been encouraged by the existence of a model for the pictures. In the case of this edition, there is still extant the illustrated manuscript which Caxton used as his exemplar for both pictures and text. The manuscript is now London, British Library, Royal MS 19 A. ix. Though Caxton's edition has more woodcuts than the manuscript has pictures, the manuscript does seem to have been the starting point for the printed illustrations.¹⁴⁴ In the case of this book we should also allow for Caxton's sense of the sheer necessity of illustrations for the understanding of the text. He says in his prologue to this edition, translating from the prologue of his French source, that his book

conteyneth in alle lxxvij chapitres & xxvij figures
without whiche it may not lightly be understande
(sans les quelles il ne porroit estre de legier
entendu)¹⁴⁵

It is interesting that in one of his expansions of the French text of the prologue he adds:

In whiche book a man resonable may see and understande
more clerer by the visyting and seeyng of it and the
figures therin:¹⁴⁶

it seems that Caxton had taken to heart the necessity for figures which the French text was insisting upon.

In the middle years of his career as a printer, from 1483 to 1489, Caxton seems to have had to rely more heavily than he had done at first on a middle-class market. The change is evident in the prologue of the second edition of the Game and playe of the chesse (1483).¹⁴⁷ He no longer uses the elaborate dedication of the first edition of 1474 to 'the right noble, right excellent and vertuous prince, George Duc

of Clarence' - in 1478, Clarence had been executed for treason against his brother the King.¹⁴⁸ In April 1483, King Edward died.¹⁴⁹ In June of the same year, during the struggle for power that followed Edward's death, Caxton's principal patron, Earl Rivers, was beheaded.¹⁵⁰ The 1483 edition of the Game and playe of the chesse appeals to no particular patron. Caxton begins by appealing to the Pauline dictum that 'alle that is wryten is wryten unto our doctryne', and presents his book as being 'ful of holsom wysedom and requysyte unto every astate and degree'. At the end of the book, in place of the first edition's prayer for the success and welfare of Edward IV and the Duke of Clarence, there is a short conclusion:

Thenne late every man of what condycion he be
that redyth or herith this litel book redde
take therby ensauple to amende hym.¹⁵¹

From this time until 1489, Caxton never mentions a patron by name, and so far as we can deduce anything about them, they often seem to have been merchants rather than the nobility.¹⁵² Sometime after December 1483 the Caton was published, with a dedication to the City of London, stressing Caxton's own connection with the merchant class of London and appealing directly to this part of his market.¹⁵³

It seems that this wider appeal to readers of 'every astate and degree' may have been the reason for more frequent production of illustrated books. Except for the Myrroure of the worlde in 1481, all the major series of illustrations in Caxton's books were produced during the years when he had no noble patrons.¹⁵⁴ Although he could not hope to compete with

luxury manuscripts, he may have found it an advantage, whenever pictorial models were available, to produce cheaper pictures for an audience who did not have luxury manuscripts within their reach in any case.

A particular and interesting link between this wider market and the pictures in a book is revealed in Caxton's prologue to the second edition, already mentioned, of the Game and playe of the chesse. There had been no pictures in the first edition. Now, 'bycause thys sayd book is ful of holsom wysedom and requysyte unto every astate and degree, I have purposed to enprynte it, shewyng therin the figures of suche persons as longen to the playe, in whom al astates and degrees ben comprysed'.¹⁵⁵ Caxton is inviting his readers to find themselves represented in both text and pictures. It is possible that a similar link was an extra inducement to include pictures of the pilgrims in the second edition of the Canterbury Tales in 1484. The first edition of 1478 had had no pictures. Caxton does not mention the new pictures in the second edition prologue, but he does say that among the Canterbury Tales he finds 'many a noble hystorye of every astate and degre', and the book is addressed not to any one patron, but to the generality of readers - 'alle ye that shal in thys book rede or heere.'¹⁵⁶

Yet another motive for Caxton's use of pictures, among other improvements, was suggested by Gordon Duff.¹⁵⁷ He pointed out that a rival press was set up in London by John Lettcu in about 1480, and he linked this date with the use of a smaller and neater type, the use of signatures, and the

illustrated books produced in 1481. Though it is possible that Lettou's competition was a spur to Caxton, it was probably in Wynkyn de Worde's time as head of the business that rivalry among different printers was felt as a real incentive to the production of more attractive books. De Worde was working in the peaceful conditions of Henry VII's reign, and had inherited an already flourishing business and he did not have Caxton's reasons for using pictures in his books as a way of getting established in surer markets. But his more than 350 illustrated editions¹⁵⁸ do suggest that he found it worthwhile to maintain his foothold and to extend his range. He did of course start with the advantage of having a stock of woodblocks inherited from Caxton, and these he re-used frequently.¹⁵⁹ But he added many new ones. Hodnett estimated that his total stock must have numbered at least a thousand.¹⁶⁰ It appears that de Worde was able to take advantage of a market opened up by Caxton, and he rarely issued a book without at least one woodcut, and often provided many more. Though there is little evidence to support H.R. Plomer's suggestion¹⁶¹ that Wynkyn de Worde was mainly responsible for influencing Caxton to produce illustrated books, he certainly seems to have been sufficiently astute as a businessman to take advantage of the market that was available to him in the 1490s and later.

The evidence of printed books seems to confirm the suggestion made earlier that if pictures are comparatively rare in fifteenth-century books this is owing to economic causes. It is interesting then to see what happened in cases where there was no financial constraint. We sometimes find those who owned a book with no

pictures adding their own, which cost them ^{almost}/nothing; or a book made for the scribe's own personal use may have been illustrated by him in the course of his own reading of it; or we may find an occasional example of a skilled and well-paid miniaturist able to convey in a picture something of the wealthy reader's experience of literature. In such cases, where financial problems have not distorted the evidence, there seems to be further confirmation of my conclusion that fifteenth-century readers expected from books a visual experience that included pictures.

The early fifteenth-century manuscript containing the unique copies of Pearl, Purity, Patience and Sir Gawain and the Green Knight contains such indications. The manuscript is now bound into London, British Library, Cotton MS Nero A.x.¹⁶² The texts of all four poems were written by one scribe. For some reason he was careful to leave a blank verso page after each text before beginning to write the next: thus, Pearl finishes a little more than half-way down fol. 55^v and both sides of the next leaf were left blank, with the text of Purity starting on fol. 57; Purity finishes one third of the way down fol. 82, and the verso of this leaf was left blank before the beginning of Patience on fol. 83; Patience finishes on fol. 90 and again the verso was left blank before the beginning of Sir Gawain on fol. 91. It is the kind of procedure that would be natural to a scribe copying each text into a 'booklet'¹⁶³ and leaving the end of the last quire of each booklet blank so as to begin a new text in a new booklet, but in fact none of the

texts in this manuscript begins on the first leaf of a new quire. It is possible then that the scribe had some other purpose in mind. He may have planned to leave room for a 'frontispiece' picture on the verso page facing the beginning of each new text. This possibility is made a little stronger by the fact that at the beginning of the manuscript, before the text of Pearl, there is a blank bifolium (now fols. 37 and 38) which would have formed an endleaf and a leaf for a picture at the beginning of the book. But, whatever his intentions, it seems unlikely that he had foreseen the way in which every available spare piece of parchment - including even the two ruled folios¹⁶⁴ at the end of the book after the text of Sir Gawain - would be filled with rough illustrations of the four poems.

The bifolium before the text of Pearl is completely filled with four full-page pictures to illustrate the text. Both sides of the blank leaf before Purity have full-page pictures. The large space, about two-thirds of a page, after the end of the text of Purity, has a picture, and so does the verso of that leaf, both pictures illustrating the next poem, Patience. The blank page before Sir Gawain has one picture, and there are three more at the end on the ruled leaves.

The way in which the pictures are arranged in clusters at the beginning and end of texts is an odd feature which suggests that they were not part of the scribe's planning of the book. The way the pictures are distributed among the four texts also looks suspicious. There are four pictures for Pearl, rather repetitive ones which give the barest account of the dreamer's

progress through the poem; the two pictures for Patience illustrate only the whale episode and Jonah preaching at Nineveh, leaving out the story of the gourd; Purity also has only two pictures, one of the ark on the flood, and one of Belshazzar's Feast, while the equally important exemplum of Sodom and Gomorrah is omitted; the artist had more room for pictures of Sir Gawain, but even the four pictures he provided there - the arrival of the Green Knight, the lady visiting Gawain in bed, the meeting at the Green Chapel, and Gawain's arrival home - give barely adequate coverage of the story. These facts, and the roughness of the drawing, make it seem unlikely that the pictures are professional work.¹⁶⁵ It seems more probable that they were added to the book by a reader not long after the book was made. He was limited by the space available, and by his own moderate skill, but not by financial considerations: he seems to have felt that the book needed pictures and he used what space and skill he had to provide some.

The same impulse seems to have led to the addition of pictures in a group of books from Reading Abbey. Four manuscripts, all of them originally made in the mid-twelfth century, attracted someone in the fifteenth century to add skilful drawings in the margins.¹⁶⁶ Less skilful, but also attempting to give pictorial expression to a reader's response to a text, are the ink sketches of two crowns in Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Fairfax 23. They are found on fol. 126^v, on the last page of a booklet containing texts about the royal house of Scotland. Such sketches and scribbles are unself-conscious. But we sometimes find a deliberate acknowledgement

of the reader's taste for pictures in even minor details of the production of a book - in the pictorial wit displayed in catchwords or corrections. In Cambridge, Trinity College, MS O.9.1 catchwords are treated decoratively, and in some cases the decoration becomes a pictorial reflection of the snippet of text contained in the catchword. On fol. 105^v, for example, the catchword 'and to conquere' is surrounded by drawings of various beasts, including a gryphon; on fol. 96^v, 'they were acorded' is decorated with a heart, and two birds billing. In London, British Library, Arundel MS 38, a pictorial joke on fol. 65 draws attention to a verse which was omitted by mistake and has been added in the margin. Instead of the usual small mark to indicate where the correction belongs, there is a picture of a figure with a rope pulling the missing verse into its place in the text.

A lively response to the pictorial possibilities in words has affected the whole appearance of one of the surviving copies of Piers Plowman. Like so many other vernacular texts copied in this period, Piers Plowman is rarely illustrated. But in this copy, Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Douce 104 (see plate 8) there is abundant evidence that freedom from economic restrictions has allowed a reader's visual and pictorial experience of the text to find visible expression.

The whole manuscript bears the personal stamp of one reader. The book was made in 1427.¹⁶⁷ The text was regarded by Skeat as 'wholly of the C type', but he added that it also has unusual readings, all 'more or less peculiar', which 'leave little doubt as to the general character of the

manuscript'.¹⁶⁸ This 'general character' is borne out by the book's general appearance: it is made up of bifolia, often uneven in size or shape, and bound up in quires that are variously of eight or ten leaves. In the narrow margins are a large number of pictures - seventy-five unframed drawings, most of them boldly coloured, and also condemned by Skeat as 'very rudely drawn' and varying in quality from 'curious' to 'very poor'.¹⁶⁹ The book was certainly not produced for the commercial market. It seems rather to have been made for his own use by one man who copied the text, painted the pictures, and supplied the marginal apparatus, according to his own needs and in the light of his own understanding of the text.

Though the manuscript is not stylish, it exhibits consistent and coherent thought about text and pictures, and the relationship between them. Some care was taken in the division and layout of the text: the different Passus are distinguished by large flourished initials, and the main divisions of the text, the Visio and the three parts 'Dowel', 'Dobet' and 'Dobest', are indicated by initials on parti-coloured grounds with sprays of leaves. Where a modern editor would indent the text to indicate a new verse paragraph, there is often in this manuscript a red paraph mark in the margin. Latin quotations are underlined in red. None of these devices is uncommon: they are all, as we have seen, regular ways of indicating the organisation of a text. But there is an interesting hint on fol. 58^v that the man who made this book took a particular interest in such details. On this page there is a gold paraph mark, the only one in the book, alongside a line (cf. text, Passus IV, line 270) which is

also referred to by a marginal note, 'nota de rich lordis'. Here is an example of the visual qualities of a book being subtly exploited in accordance with the satirical intentions of the text: normally a gold paraph would attract the eye to an important or interesting passage - and to the prestige of the book's owner; here it draws attention to a passage denouncing this very kind of attraction. The general tenor of the marginal notes throughout the manuscript is in keeping with the interest revealed here. They were written by a scribe sympathetic to Langland's theology and view of society:

nota de repentans (fol. 24),
 nota de woo of pore pepill pat wonnyth
in por howsyn 7 hap childyr (fol. 41^v),
 po<ue>rte is best yef paciens hit follouu (fol. 57^v).

Some of them suggest that he was looking out for useful sermon material himself:

nota for ham pat fedyp flatres
 7 lyers (fol. 31^v),
 Nota for peves (fol. 90^v).

But much of this reader's sympathy and interest is revealed by the pictures which show a remarkable combination of vigour and detail and meticulous reading of the text. Out of the seventy-five pictures in the book, sixty-four coincide with lines that make special mention of what is illustrated, and the rest are placed centrally in the margin of the same page as the text they illustrate, or else are placed on a page where the text involves the subject illustrated. There is an unusually large proportion of pictures that seem to have been designed specifically to illustrate this text. About one third of the pictures show as a whole or in some detail a close relationship to the subject matter of the text yet

do not seem to have been taken from any general repertoire of iconography available in the fifteenth century. Thom Stowe with two staves, for example, (fol. 23; see C text, Passus vi, lines 131 et seq.) can hardly owe much to any other iconographic scheme. Most of the other pictures rely more obviously on standard iconography. Examples are the enthroned king at fol. 18, or the scribe seated at his work (fol. 52^v), who is apparently a representation of Scripture. But the typical details are not allowed to contradict the text.¹⁷⁰

The pictures of the Seven Deadly Sins (Passus **VII-VIII**) demonstrate a close reading of Langland's text, and often bring together in one picture details that are scattered over many lines of text. An interesting feature in many of these pictures, and of others in the manuscript, which emphasizes the thoughtful correlation between text and pictures, is the way in which the eyes of a character in a picture are directed straight to the line that names the character, as in the picture of the pilgrim shown in Plate 8. The staring eyes of a human figure are an effective nota mark.

It is clear that whoever drew the pictures in this manuscript knew the text intimately. The suggestion that the artist was the scribe himself rests on a number of pieces of evidence. First, there are a large number of marginal notes, written apparently by the same scribe who wrote the text (making allowances for the smaller and less formal script in some of them), but written on top of the coloured pictures in every case except two. Secondly, one of these notes, or sometimes a small paraph mark, is almost always to be found

alongside the section of text illustrated by a picture. In Plate 8 we find both a note and a paraph mark against the passage referring to the pilgrim who appears in the picture. The scribe who made the notes seems to have had the same interests as the man who had drawn the pictures (and to have been very astute in some cases in finding exactly which line the picture was referring to¹⁷¹). Thirdly, the pictures throughout the book seem to share features of style and palette with a picture on fol. 1 which was certainly done by the scribe: it is fitted neatly into an odd, irregularly shaped space left alongside the first eleven lines of text, and takes the unusual form of a human figure - the dreamer sleeping - acting as the initial I for the first line. The idiosyncrasy of leaving such an odd space and of filling it in this ingenious way suggests that both the problem and the solution were produced by the one man who wrote the text - and who, in the course of subsequent close readings of the text, added a variety of pictures, notes, and paraph marks which all reveal the same distinctive combination of idiosyncrasy and thoughtfulness. This manuscript is more coherent than the Gawain manuscript, but it shares with it the mark of an important idea: that there should be pictures. Undeterred by his lack of skill and unconcerned about the 'professional' finish of commercial book production, someone has produced the book he wanted to have.¹⁷²

Let us consider, finally, a manuscript in which there is a rare example of a very highly skilled miniaturist painting a picture in a copy of an English vernacular text. We have

already considered the Corpus Christi College Cambridge manuscript of Troilus and Criseyde from the point of view of the visual impact made by the 'frontispiece' page.¹⁷³ Let us now consider the subject-matter of the picture on this page (see Plate 1).

Like the pictures we have just been discussing, this one seems to have been produced without financial constraints, though the reason was different in this case: it seems that the patron's aspirations after a fine book did here coincide with sufficient means on his part and sufficient skill on the part of the artists who painted the picture and the border. The page could hardly have been decorated more fully or richly. But the freedom to produce what was wanted has once again, I think, revealed very clearly a visual response that may have been much more common than most fifteenth-century English books can show us.

The picture is well known and has often been described,¹⁷⁴ but it remains puzzling. It appears on the verso of the first leaf of a quire, opposite the beginning of Book I of Troilus and was therefore clearly planned for this book. This fact, and what we know about Chaucer's audience, have encouraged modern scholars to give the picture captions such as 'Chaucer entertaining a noble audience' or even 'Chaucer reading "Troilus and Criseyde".' So far as they go, such captions are helpful, and are accepted even by those who do not take the figure in the centre of the picture to be an authentic portrait of Chaucer,¹⁷⁵ but think of it simply as a typical figure representing Chaucer. He stands in a kind of pulpit, and from his gesture appears to

be speaking to an elegant group of men and women arranged around him in the foreground, and apparently intent upon him. Such a reading of the picture is obviously appropriate to a poem which, by its frequent direct addresses to an audience that 'ben here' with the poet as he tells his tale, presupposes some kind of oral performance.

However, this interpretation accounts for only the lower half of a picture which is very clearly divided into two by a landscape of forests and cliffs above the line of heads of the listeners. Above and behind this landscape are other groups of people in another landscape of steep rocks with castles perched on them. In the top right-hand corner is a gateway with crenellated towers, perhaps a part of another palace, or of a city, with other walls and towers visible behind it. One group of figures emerges from this gateway while another group comes down to meet them from the left. Below this is a curious group of three figures. One of them is turned away and another has moved half out of the picture already, but the third looks behind him with some interest at the group coming out of the gate. Foremost of this group are a couple who are the focal point of the upper half of the picture. They are finely dressed, and carefully posed. Both wear crowns (the woman's crown is hardly visible in reproduction, but is in fact tooled in the gold background of the miniature). The two figures stand to receive the welcome, or homage, of the group coming down to meet them. There are other small figures in the picture: two on battlements above the gateway, one of them gazing outwards and one pointing; two seen head and shoulders

at a window; and another in the balcony immediately above the gate.

Attempts have been made to account for this 'background' scene by taking the lower half of the picture as a representation of a court-reading, dominated variously by Richard II's mother, Joan of Kent,¹⁷⁶ or by John of Gaunt,¹⁷⁷ and the upper half of the picture as a 'strip-cartoon' series of scenes from the life of one or other of these protagonists. Such speculations about portraiture are difficult to substantiate, and more recent scholarship has concentrated on the foreground of the miniature, valuing the rest as a guide to stylistic affinities:

The gold tooled background against which a fairy-tale castle is silhouetted, with figures conversing in the open windows and angels fluttering on the topmost turrets, suggests the Calendar pages of the Très Riches Heures of the Duc de Berry,¹⁷⁸

or to general setting:

The scene is merely a court at a royal palace.¹⁷⁹

The more detailed account given by Miss Kean is an extension of this last idea:

Chaucer is seen walking among (his audience) in the background scene, which shows the return to the castle after the reading is over.¹⁸⁰

These brief mentions of the relationship between the two parts of the picture leave a lot still unsaid, and raise some questions. Are they really angels on the two topmost turrets? Where is Chaucer in the background scene? If the background scene shows a return to the castle when the reading is over, why are the two most prominent figures in the scene facing the other way?

I think it is worthwhile to ask whether we are not dealing with two quite separate sets of people in the two parts of the picture. There is no figure in one half who can safely be identified with anyone in the other. Yet the scene in the 'background' seems to be too busy and interesting to be merely a pointer to the courtly setting of the scene in the foreground, and there seem to be features in the picture that point to a more important relationship between its two halves.

If we follow the directions in which the various figures are looking, it is clear that the people in the top half of the picture (except the hook-nosed man) are intent upon themselves and each other in whatever activities they are sharing - they are busily involved in their own meetings and conversations. The people grouped around Chaucer, however, are arranged in ways that draw the reader in among them. Particularly effective in this respect are two of the women in the front row - the one second from the left who looks straight out of the picture, and the one in the bottom right-hand corner who, in a more abstracted way, stares into a middle distance that must be somewhere not far from where the reader is who looks at the picture. Involved in the picture by these means, the reader can then follow the gaze of most of the company who have their eyes on Chaucer. He has his eyes on the one member of the audience whose attention is really wandering - perhaps the young man in blue in the back row is one of those who called forth such lines as Troilus and Criseyde, II, 38-40:

Ek in som lond were al the game shent,
 If that they ferde in love as men don here,
 As thus, in opyn doying or in chere ...

And this line of gaze leads to a man who is dressed in green and wears a red hat and who holds his head back to look upwards, apparently not at Chaucer (unless the artist is less skilful at foreshortening than he appears to be in the rest of the picture), but at the scene in the top half of the picture. Could it be that what he is looking at is the story he is listening to?

If so, then the upper part of the picture may be seen as an illustration focussing upon two stanzas in Book II (lines 1555-1568):

The morwen com, and neighen gan the tyme
 Of meeltide, that the faire queene Bleyne
 Shoop hire to ben, an houre after the prime,
 With Deiphebus, to whom she nolde feyne;
 But as his suster, homly, soth to seyne,
 She com to dyner in hire pleyne entente.
 But God and Pandare wist al what this mente.

Com ek Criseyde, al innocent of this,
 Antigone, hire suster Tarbe also.
 But fle we now prolixite best is,
 For love of God, and lat us faste go
 Right to th'effect, withouten tales mo,
 Whi al this folk assembled in this place;
 And let us of hire saluynges pace.

This would explain the exit from one building (the royal palace) and the welcome to some other castle (the house of Deiphebus). The crowned couple would be Queen Helen and Paris. The furtive glance backwards of Troilus, and our glimpse of Pandarus as he quits the scene he has engineered, would be sufficient pictorial hint of the end of the first stanza: 'But God and Pandare wist al what this mente'. The little crowd and bustle round the gate would require no further explanation than the final two lines of the second stanza, with their reference to the greetings exchanged by 'al this folk' as they came together for dinner.

I confess myself unsure about the small figures in the window and on the gateway - but the sight of Helen of Troy walking out to have dinner 'homly' with her brother-in-law might be expected to draw some interested onlookers.

This small stir of excitement is certainly the atmosphere that Chaucer has been at pains to create in the text. The whole sequence of Pandarus's plan to bring Troilus and Criseyde face to face in private for the first time is something Chaucer has invented independently of Boccaccio,¹⁸¹ and it is interesting that in working out the details of this crucial dinner party he should have taken the opportunity to bring Queen Helen herself onto his stage for a brief but impressive guest appearance - all the more impressive because she has deigned to be present informally and intimately. This in itself could be enough to justify the interest shown by a painter apparently concerned with the courtly setting for Chaucer's poetry. Perhaps we could provide a new caption for the picture - 'Chaucer and his audience looking at the court circle of Troy'.

The dinner party at Deiphebus's house is not itself a climax in the poem, but it was used by Chaucer as a way of heightening the sense of expectancy from this stage of Troilus's courtship to the consummation of his love in Book III. One critic recently called it the beginning of the central episode of the poem.¹⁸² An artist who chose to illustrate Helen of Troy coming to dinner is, in narrative terms, implying all that the narrator implies when he says

lat us faste go
Right to th'effect.

But the artist has, I think, achieved more than a reflection of courtly taste, and a subtle response to the story. He has also captured in his picture the mental image evoked in the audience by Chaucer's words.

It is not unknown for a medieval book illustrator to show both the author and the author's subject in one miniature. The works of Boethius, Boccaccio and Christine de Pisan, particularly in fifteenth-century copies, sometimes have a miniature at the beginning of the manuscript showing the author sitting writing while the matter he is writing about confronts him in his study.¹⁸³ In an English copy of Michael de Massa On the Passion of our Lord dated 1405 (Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Bodley 758), there is a miniature showing Michael sitting at the scene of the Crucifixion, writing at his desk.¹⁸⁴ Early printed editions of the French Danse macabré, which may reflect earlier copies in manuscript or wall-painting, contain a picture series that begins with a picture of the author sitting in his study expounding a book.¹⁸⁵

Nor is it unknown, at least on the Continent, for the reader of a book to be shown at the scene which the book describes. Perhaps the most famous example is the picture of Mary of Burgundy seated at her devotions reading with a view of the Crucifixion seen through the window behind her.¹⁸⁶ A more complex example of an artist exploiting the relationship between author and text and audience is in Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Douce 213. This is a fifteenth-century copy of Laurent de Premierfait's French translation of the Decameron. The picture on fol. i¹⁸⁷ reflects the complexities of the

narrator's role as set up by Boccaccio in the fiction of the Decameron: in a walled garden a group of aristocratic men and women are listening to one of their number telling his tale; outside the garden wall sits Boccaccio, eavesdropping on the proceedings and writing on a scroll.

None of these examples is a complete analogy to the Corpus Troilus miniature. But they do, I think, show sufficient interest in the relationship between a text and what is seen as if it is present, to encourage us to entertain the possibility I have suggested for the Troilus miniature, and to regard the miniature as an expression of one aspect of fifteenth-century readers' visual experience of books.

CHAPTER 3 FOOTNOTES

1. See M.B. Parkes, 'The Influence of the Concepts of Ordinatio and Compilatio on the Development of the Book', Essays in Medieval Literature and Learning presented to R.W. Hunt, ed. J.J.G. Alexander & M.T. Gibson (Oxford, 1975), 115-41.
- 1a. *ibid.*, p. 117.
- 1b. *ibid.*, pp. 121 et seq.
- 1c. *ibid.*, especially pp. 133 et seq.
- 1d. The hierarchy of decorative features, its function in MSS and its importance for the historian, received particular attention in the work of the late Dr L.M.J. Delaissé. See 'The Importance of Books of Hours for the History of the Medieval Book', Gatherings in Honor of Dorothy B. Miner, ed. U.E. McCracken, L.M.C. Randall & R.H. Randall (Baltimore, 1974), 203-21; and 'Towards a History of the Medieval Book', Codicologica, I (1976), 75-83. The fullest account and demonstration of Dr Delaissé's approach to medieval manuscripts will be found in the forthcoming Catalogue of Manuscripts at Waddesdon Manor by L.M.J. Delaissé, J. Marrow and J. de Wit (Fribourg, 1977).
- 1e. On the growth of literacy, see M.B. Parkes, 'The Literacy of the Laity', Literature & Western Civilisation, ii, The Medieval World, ed. D. Daiches & A.K. Thorlby (London, 1973), 555-77.
- 1f. On the Pseudo-Bonaventura text, see C. Fischer, 'Die Meditationes Vitae Christi', Archivum Franciscanum Historicum, XXV (1932), 305 et seq. Various opinions about the date of composition of the text are summarized in M.J. Stallings, Meditationes de Passione Christi (Washington, 1965), 5 et seq.
- 1g. See Fischer (note 1f) for information on the various versions.
- 1h. See Nicholas Love, The Mirrour of the Blessed Lyf of Jesu Christ, ed. L. Powell (Oxford, 1908).
- 1i. Chaucer, Tróilus & Criseyde, II, 78 et seq. See The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer, ed. F.N. Robinson (Oxford, 1957), p. 402.
- 1j. *ibid.*, lines 103-5.
- 1k. Quoted in Parkes (note 1), p. 133.

11. For an account of the text and the forms in which it appears in various manuscripts, see A.C. de la Mare, Catalogue of the Collection of Medieval Manuscripts bequeathed to the Bodleian Library Oxford by James P.R. Lyell (Oxford, 1971), 81-85.
2. See for examples, Oxford, Bodl. Lib., MSS Auct. D.4.10, Bodley 164, Fairfax 13, all made in England in the thirteenth century.
3. I have translated here from the prologue as it is found in Oxford, Bodl. Lib., MS Auct. D.4.10, fol. 586v.
4. See for examples, Oxford, Bodl. Lib., MSS Bodley Rolls 3 (late thirteenth century) and Ashmole Rolls 50 (c. 1300). For reproductions, see Pächt & Alexander, 3, pls. XLVII(483) and XLIX(519); also F. Saxl & R. Wittkower, British Art and the Mediterranean (London, 1948), pl. 34(1).
5. For reproduction of the miniature in this MS compared with the one in MS Lyell 33, see Pächt & Alexander, 3, pl. XCIX (1070, 1072).
6. See de la Mare (note 1), pp. 82 et seq. For another fifteenth-century copy of this text, produced by different workmen, but handsomely illustrated with pictures, plans, maps and tables, see Oxford, Bodl. Lib., MS Barlow 53; one of the pictures is reproduced in Pächt & Alexander, 3, pl. LXXXIV (883).
7. See The Ellesmere Chaucer reproduced in Facsimile (Manchester, 1911). On the date of the MS, see J.M. Manly & E. Rickert, The Text of the Canterbury Tales, Vol. I (Chicago, 1940), p. 148.
8. See The Ellesmere Chaucer (note 7), Vol. II.
9. My account of the decorative features of the Ellesmere MS is indebted to the account of the book's ordinatio in Parkes (note 1), p. 134.
10. Other examples are Oxford, Bodl. Lib. MSS Douce 372 and e. Mus. 35.
11. Reproduced in Pächt & Alexander, 3, pl. XCII (997).
12. Examples may be found in Pächt & Alexander, 3, pl. LXXIV (791), LXXV (792b), LXXVIII (812b).
13. For examples, see Pächt & Alexander, 3, pls. LXXIX (813c), LXXX (815a), LXXXI (835).
14. Examples may be found in Rickert, Painting in Britain, pls. 176 and 177; also Pächt & Alexander, 3, pls. LXXXI (860), XCII (970), XCVI (1036).
15. Matthew Parker's Legacy, Catalogue of an Exhibition held at Corpus Christi College, Cambridge (1975).

17. The example in Pächt & Alexander, 3, pl. XCII (970) is comparatively restrained; but see also pl. XCII (975), XCIII (1006), XCVII (1049).
18. For examples, see Pächt & Alexander, 3, pls. XCIV (1011c), and XCVII (1042).
19. Oxford, Bodl. Lib., MS Digby 227.
20. The page is reproduced in Pächt & Alexander, 3, pl. C (1065c) and in Rickert, Painting in Britain, pl. 186.
21. Rickert, Painting in Britain, p. 185.
22. See the unique copy in the Pierpont Morgan Library of the Sarum Hours printed by Caxton in 1476-8 (E. Gordon Duff, Fifteenth Century English Books, a Bibliography of Books and Documents printed in England and of Books for the English Market printed Abroad (Oxford, 1917), no. 174). The book was recently exhibited in London: see William Caxton, Catalogue of an Exhibition held at the British Library (1976), item 25.
23. London, Lambeth Pal. Lib., MS 265, fol. 1^v, reproduced in N.F. Blake, Caxton and His World (London, 1969), pl. 6. The relationship between this manuscript and the Caxton print is discussed by Blake, pp. 221-2.
24. See C.L. Scofield, The Life and Reign of Edward IV (London, 1923), Vol. II, 451 et seq.
25. See for examples, Pächt & Alexander, 3, pl. CVII (1168, 1170).
26. The Complete Poems of John Skelton Laureate, ed. P. Henderson (London & Toronto, 1948), 385.
27. Among Bedford's books were the Missal made for him in Paris, now London, Brit. Lib., Add. MS 18850 (see Rickert, Painting in Britain, p. 180 and G.F. Warner, Illuminated Manuscripts in the British Museum (London, 1903), pl. 47), and a Psalter and Hours (See Rickert, Painting in Britain, 172 et seq. and pl. 176). See also note 37 below.
28. K.H. Vickers, Humphrey Duke of Gloucester (London, 1907), chs. IX & X. For Duke Humfrey's books and his literary interests, see /; and Duke Humfrey and English Humanism in the Fifteenth Century, Catalogue of an Exhibition held at the Bodleian Library, Oxford (1970). See also R. Weiss, Humanism in England during the Fifteenth Century (Oxford, 1967). On the later decoration of the St Omer Psalter, which was finished for Duke Humfrey, see Rickert, Painting in Britain, 181 et seq.
29. See M.R. James & E.G. Millar, The Bohun Manuscripts, Roxburghe Club (Oxford, 1936). Also Rickert, Painting in Britain, 149 et seq.

30. Henry V is known to have owned an expensive breviary, presumably richly illuminated, copied by the same scribe who was employed by Henry IV on elaborate copies of the deeds relating to the Duchy of Lancaster. See R. Somerville, 'The Cowcher Books of the Duchy of Lancaster', EHR, LI (1936), especially pp. 599-600, 610-12.
31. Richard II's books are discussed in G. Mathew, The Court of Richard II (London, 1968), 22 et seq., 40 et seq. For reproductions from some of Richard's copies of Statutes of England (London, Brit. Lib., Cotton MS Nero D.vi and Cambridge St John's College, MS A.7), see M. Rickert, The Reconstructed Carmelite Missal (London, 1952), pls. XLd, XLVb. For Oxford, Bodl. Lib., MS Bodley 581, regarded as a presentation copy made for Richard, see above, pp. 63-4.
32. For the Missal commissioned by Abbot Lytlington, see Rickert, Painting in Britain, 151.
33. For Arundel's copy of William of Nottingham's Commentary on the Four Gospels, now Oxford, Bodl. Lib., MS Laud Misc. 165, see Rickert, Painting in Britain, 153 and the reproduction in Pächt & Alexander, 3, pl. LXXIII (739a). For Arundel's copy of Hoccleve's De Regimine Principum, now London, Brit. Lib., Arundel MS 38, see Rickert, Painting in Britain, 174 and pl. 175A.
34. For the Breviary owned by Chichele see Rickert, Painting in Britain, 171 et seq. and pl. 170B.
35. See for example, the portrait of Arundel in his copy of William of Nottingham (note 33).
36. See for example, the coat of arms in Duke Humfrey's Psalter (London, Brit. Lib., MS Royal 2 B.1), reproduced in G.F. Warner & J.P. Gilson, Catalogue of the Western MSS in the Old Royal and King's Collections (London, 1921), Vol. IV, pl. 20; and those in the Bedford Hours and the Abingdon Missal (see Rickert, Painting in Britain, pls. 175A, 176, 186).
37. See La Librairie de Charles V, Catalogue of an Exhibition held at the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris (1968), XIII and 46.
38. Exceptions are Paris, Bibl. Ste-Geneviève, MS 777, sent by Bedford to his brother Humfrey Duke of Gloucester (see La Librairie de Charles V (note 37), No. 189, pl. VII); and London, Brit. Lib., Royal MS 19.c.iv (see Warner & Gilson (note 36), Vol. II, p. 334).
39. See the Lives of Edmund and Fremund, London, Brit. Lib., Harley MS 2278 (Rickert, Painting in Britain, 183 and pl. 183A), and the Psalter of Henry VI, London, Brit. Lib., Cotton MS Dom. A.xvii (Warner (note 27), pl. 48).

40. See Scofield (note 24), p. 452.
41. Indications of the change are to be found in E.G. Millar, English Illuminated Manuscripts of the XIVth and XVth Centuries (Paris and Brussels, 1928), pp. 79-94: 'Handlist of English Illuminated Manuscripts.'
42. See for example, Oxford, Bodl. Lib., MS Fairfax 3. Miniatures are reproduced in Pächt & Alexander 3, pl. LXXI (710).
43. See note 7.
44. Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 61. See above, pp. 37-8 and Plate 1.
45. For a presentation miniature in what does seem to have been a presentation copy of a text see London, British Library, MS Harley 2278, a copy of Lydgate's Lives of Saints Edmund and Fremund. The miniature is reproduced in Rickert, Painting in Britain, pl. 183A.
46. London, Brit. Lib., MS Arundel 38. The miniature and initial are reproduced in Rickert, Painting in Britain, pl. 175A.
47. See Cambridge, Trin. Coll. MS O.5.2 (M.R. James, Western MSS in the Library of Trinity College Cambridge (Cambridge, 1900), Vol. III, no. 1283); also London, Brit. Lib., Cotton MS Aug. A.iv, and Oxford, Bodl. Lib., MSS Digby 232 and Rawl. C.446.
48. Reproduced in Pächt & Alexander, 3, pl. LXXXIII (868a).
49. For a list of books illuminated by Abell, see J. Alexander, 'William Abell "lymnour" and 15th Century English Illumination', Kunsthistorische Forschungen Otto Pächt, ed. A. Rosenhauer & G. Weber (Salzburg, 1972), 166-72.
50. This date was suggested to me first by the evidence of the dated learned MSS in the Bodleian. This evidence seems to be generally corroborated by the history of the library of Merton College, which was receiving sizable bequests from the mid-century onwards, from Fellows whose book-buying careers would not have gone back much further than 1420 at the earliest; and by the history of the Balliol College library, built in 1431. See F.M. Powicke, The Medieval Books of Merton College (Oxford, 1931) and R.A.B. Mynors, Catalogue of the Manuscripts of Balliol College Oxford (Oxford, 1963), xvi et seq.
51. For details of Fitzjames's career, see Powicke (note 50), p. 34 and Emden, BRUO, pp. 691-2.
52. See Powicke (note 50), chronological list, nos. 1113, 1114, 1179-1196.

53. *ibid.*, no. 1181.
54. *ibid.*, no. 1179.
55. *ibid.*, no. 1180.
56. Merton Coll. MS B.3.2 (Powicke (note 50), chronological list, no. 1196).
57. For details of Gray's career, see Mynors (note 50), pp. xxiv et seq.
58. Gray's books made in Cologne include Balliol Coll. MSS 69 and 125; those made in Italy include MSS 78B and 248E (made in Florence in 1445).
59. See for examples, Balliol Coll. MSS 67B, 68, 70, 98, 100.
60. A Dutch scribe copied Balliol Coll. MS 35B. Italian scribes were employed on MSS 78B, 144, 161, and others.
61. Balliol Coll. MSS 238A and 238B were begun by Werken in Cologne c. 1445 and finished by him in Rome in 1448.
62. Reynbold wrote Balliol Coll. MS 202, dated 1460. He was earlier employed on Merton Coll. MSS G.2.4, G.2.5, G.3.1-5 (see below, p. 46 and note 66).
63. Among Fitzjames's books, see Oxford, Bodl. Lib., MSS Bodley 700 and Bodley 751. Among Gray's books, see Balliol Coll. MSS 6, 9 and 10.
64. See Balliol Coll. MSS 166B and 171.
65. See Emden, BRUO, p. 1651.
66. See Merton Coll. MSS G.2.4, G.2.5, G.3.1-4 (Powicke (note 50), ~~chronological~~ list, no. 984).
67. Typical examples are Oxford, Bodl. Lib., MSS Add. C.188, Add. A.228, Bodley, 559, Douce 137, Douce 139.
68. See for examples, Oxford, Bodl. Lib., MSS Douce 27, Hatton 109, Rawl. C.230, Rawl. C.453.
69. See Pächt & Alexander, 3, pl. CVII (1168a-b).
70. See Pächt & Alexander, 3, pl. CVII (1168c-d).
71. For further examples of illuminated fifteenth-century copies of Statutes of England, see Oxford, Bodl. Lib., MSS Add. A.107, Douce 362, Hatton 81.

72. A particularly fine example is the Foundation Charter of King's College, Cambridge, illuminated by William Abell. The beginning of the charter is reproduced in Alexander (note 49), pl. 2.
73. G.R.C. Davis, Medieval Cartularies of Great Britain (London, 1958), no. 1208.
74. Compare also the rentals of Oseney Abbey in Oxford, Bodl. Lib., MS Wood F.10.
76. The list begins on fol. 83.
77. These are discussed in Rickert, Painting in Britain, 163-76. See also Mathew (note 31), pp. 41 et seq.; and G.M. Spriggs, 'Unnoticed Bodleian manuscripts illuminated by Herman Scheerre and his school', BLR, VII (1962-7), 193-203.
78. See K.L. Scott, 'A Mid-Fifteenth-Century Illuminating Shop and its Customers', JWCI, xxi (1968), 170-196.
79. Cambridge, Univ. Lib., MS Dd.14.2. Two pages are reproduced in New Pal Soc. II, Plate 112.
80. On the format of this MS, see M.B. Parkes, 'The Literacy of the Laity', Literature & Western Civilisation, ii, The Medieval World, ed. D. Daiches & A.K. Thorlby (London, 1973), 569 and note.
81. See for examples, the Man of Law's Tale (fols. 63 et seq.), the Wife of Bath's Prologue (fols. 125 et seq.) and the Parson's Tale (fols. 233 et seq.).
82. Reproduced in Pächt & Alexander, 3, pl. LXXX (825b). The artist of this MS has been linked with Herman Scheerre: see G.M. Spriggs, 'Unnoticed Bodleian manuscripts illuminated by Herman Scheerre and his school', BLR, VII (1962-7), 193-9, pl. XIIc, d.
83. Transcribed from MS Bodley 693, fol. 4^v. Cf. The English Works of John Gower, ed. G.C. Macaulay, BETS, E.S. LXXXI-II (1900-1, reprinted 1957), Vol. I, 21, lines 591-63.
84. Macaulay (note 83), p. clxvii.
85. See the early copy in Oxford, Bodl. Lib., MS Fairfax 3 (described by Macaulay (note 83), pp. clvii et seq.).
86. For the nomenclature used here, and for other examples of this script, see M.B. Parkes, English Cursive Book Hands 1250-1500 (Oxford, 1969), pp. xxi-ii and pls. 14-15.

87. For other examples of this layout in copies of the Canterbury Tales, see Manly & Rickert (note 7), pls. II-V.
88. It is of course impossible to know exactly how many illustrated service books and books of hours were destroyed in accordance with the 1550 Act against Superstitious Books and Images (3 and 4 Edward VI, c.10). On the effects of this Act see F. Wormald & C.E. Wright, The English Library before 1700 (London, 1958), 165 et seq. However, those service books and hours that do survive from fifteenth-century England are often unillustrated.
89. Two of these are reproduced in Pächt & Alexander, 3, pl. XCIX (1065a-b).
90. These three are Oxford, New Coll., MS 266, fragments in Mr Frere's collection, and a fragment in Shrewsbury School (see Macaulay (note 83), pp. clx-xi, clxvi, clxvii).
91. See London, Brit. Lib., MSS Harley 1766 (Fall of Princes, 157 miniatures) and Harley 2278 (Edmund and Fremund, 120 miniatures); Manchester, John Rylands Lib., MS Crawford 1 (Troy Book, 69 miniatures); San Marino, California, Huntington Lib., MS HM 268 (Fall of Princes, 56 miniatures). One of the Edmund and Fremund pictures is reproduced in Rickert, Painting in Britain, pl. 183A. Pictures from the Huntington Fall of Princes are reproduced in Aspects of Medieval England - Manuscripts for Research in the Huntington Library, Catalogue of an Exhibition held at the Huntington Library (1972), front cover; and in D. Diringer, The Illuminated Book (London, 1967), pl. V-26.
92. One is reproduced in Pächt & Alexander, 3, pl. XCVIII (1062b) the other in A.G. Little, 'Franciscan history and legend in English medieval art', Brit. Soc. of Franciscan Studies, XIX (1937), pl. 16.
93. See the facsimile of the Ellesmere Chaucer (note 7). The pictures of the pilgrims are also reproduced in E.F. Piper, 'The Miniatures of the Ellesmere Chaucer', Philological Quarterly, III (1924), 241-56.
94. Now Philadelphia, Rosenbach Foundation, MS 1084/1 (formerly Phillipps 8137) and *Manchester, John Rylands Library, M.S. English 63.* The picture of the Miller is reproduced on the front cover of C.E. Driver, A Selection from our Shelves: Books, Manuscripts and Drawings from the Philip H. & A.S.W. Rosenbach Foundation Museum (Philadelphia, 1973).
95. Reproduced in Pächt & Alexander, 3, pl. LXXXV (890).

96. For facsimile see W.O. Hassall, The Holkham Bible Picture Book (London, 1954).
97. A particularly impressive example is the early fourteenth-century Queen Mary's Psalter (London, Brit. Lib., MS Royal 2 B.vii), with 70 folios of pictures before the Calendar, as well as numerous miniatures and marginal illustrations on text pages.
98. See Rickert, Painting in Britain, pls. 115-117, and 128-9. Also Pächt & Alexander, 3, pls. XXXIX-XL (438a-d), XLII, XLIV, XLV.
99. See Cambridge, Trin. Coll., MS B.10.15 (James (note 47), Vol. I, no. 226), and London, Brit. Lib., Royal MSS E.vi-vii.
100. Now Paris, Bibl. Nat. MS fr. 13342.
101. For books on astronomy up to the twelfth century, see Saxl & Wittkower (note 4), 30. For twelfth-century bestiaries and medicine, see Saxl & Wittkower (note 4), 29, and F. Saxl, Lectures (London, 1957), Vol. I, 109-10.
102. Confessio Amantis, VI, 1893-99 (Macaulay (note 83), Vol. II, p. 218).
103. See Kyng Alisaunder, ed. G.V. Smithers, EETS, OS. 227 (1952), 18 and 19.
104. See Pächt & Alexander, 3, no. 673. The book is discussed in Mathew (note 31), pp. 40-1. Mathew suggests that the first miniature is a portrait of the King.
105. See R.W. Pfaff, New Liturgical Feasts in Later Medieval England (Oxford, 1970).
106. For evidence of fifteenth-century ownership of fourteenth-century illustrated books, see Oxford, Bodl. Lib., MS Gough liturg. 18, an early fourteenth-century psalter with a fifteenth-century calendar added; the Madresfield Hours, begun in the early fourteenth century, with names, coats of arms and an Office of the Dead added in the fifteenth century (see J. Backhouse, The Madresfield Hours, Roxburghe Club, (Oxford, 1975), 13, 27); and fifteenth-century names added to a fourteenth-century copy of the Statutes of England, Oxford, Bodl. Lib., MS Rawl. C.454, fol. ii, and to a fourteenth-century copy of historical texts, MS Bodley 712, fols. 226, 302.
107. See above pp. 40-2 and notes 24, 30, 39.
108. Oxford, Bodl. Lib., MS Eng. poet. a.1.

109. The Index is printed in M.S. Serjeantson, 'The Index of the Vernon Manuscript', MLR, XXXII (1937), 222-61.
110. Serjeantson (note 109), p. 234.
111. See Cambridge, Trin. Coll. MS O.5.2 (James (note 47), Vol. III, no. 1283); London, Brit. Lib., Cotton MS Aug.A.iv and Royal MS 18.D.ii. The copy at Helmingham Hall also apparently has a picture of this subject (see Lydgate's Troy Book, ed. H. Bergen, Part IV, EETS, S.S. CXXVI (1935), 23).
112. See for examples, Oxford, Bodl. Lib., MS Bodley 294 and Corpus Christi Coll., MS 67.
113. See Macaulay (note 83), Vol. II, p. 480.
114. Compare Oxford, Bodl. Lib., MSS Digby 232 and MS Rawl. C.446, and London, Brit. Lib., Cotton MS Aug.A.iv.
115. See London, Brit. Lib., Royal MS 18.D.ii.
116. Transcribed from Oxford, Bodl. Lib., MS Digby 232, fol. 3^v.
117. See note 91.
118. Oxford, Bodl. Lib., MS Bodley 263, fol. 7, reproduced in Pächt & Alexander, 3, pl. LXXXV (892).
119. The MS in Mr Frere's collection has a similar series (see Macaulay (note 83), pp. clxvi-vii).
120. The MS is described in Bergen (note 111), pp. 21-5.
- 120a. See H.H. Fisher, 'The Intended Illustrations in Corpus Christi MS 61 of Chaucer's Troilus and Criseyde', Medieval Studies in Honor of Lillian Herlands Hornstein, ed. J. Bessinger and R. Rayner (New York, 1976), 111-9.
121. The text of the Lyf of Our Lady begins on fol. 86.
122. H.E. Bell, 'The Price of Books in Medieval England', The Library, 4th series, xvii (1936-7), 321.
123. *ibid.*, pp. 315-6 and 319.
124. Extracts from the accounts for making this book are given in The Paston Letters, ed. J. Gairdner (London, 1900), Vol. II, 336.
125. See Alexander (note 49).
126. See Oxford, Bodl. Lib., MS Auct. D.inf.2.13, a Sarum Hours with fine grisaille miniatures by a Dutch master (see Pächt & Alexander, 1, no. 221).

127. See Alexander (note 49), p. 170.
128. See for example La Librairie de Philippe le Bon, Catalogue of an Exhibition held at the Bibliothèque Albert 1^{er}, Brussels (1967), pl. 36.
129. See D.J.A. Ross, Alexander Historiatus, A Guide to Medieval Illustrated Alexander Literature, Warburg Institute Surveys, (London, 1963); also A. Bayot, La Légende de Troie à la Cour de Bourgogne (Bruges, 1908).
130. See Rickert, Painting in Britain, pp. 180 et seq. and J. Evans, English Art 1307-1461 (Oxford, 1949), 98 et seq.
131. See for example, Oxford, Bodl. Lib., MS Auct. D. inf. 2.13 (note 126).
132. Notes in some Balliol College MSS suggest that work was divided and paid for by quires. See Oxford, Balliol Coll., MS 238E, fol. 164^v (a flyleaf at the end of the book): 'Ille liber completus set prius illuminentur ij quaterni ultimi et tum ligetur'; and MS 238D, fol. 112 (the beginning of a quire): 'Nota Hic incepti precium donare scriptore'.
133. Details of pictures in Caxton prints are taken from E. Hodnett, English Woodcuts 1480-1535 (Oxford, 1973), but I have followed the dates for editions suggested by N.F. Blake, Caxton and his World (London, 1969), 224-39.
134. Blake (note 133), 69.
135. See for example, the Statutes of Henry VII (1489).
136. This number is suggested by Blake (note 133), p. 61.
137. See Blake (note 133), especially pp. 48 et seq., 80 et seq., 151 et seq.
138. See Blake (note 133), pp. 80-1.
139. See La Librairie de Philippe le Bon (note 128); also P. Durrieu, La miniature flamande au temps de la cour de Bourgogne (Brussels & Paris, 1921).
140. See above, note 24.
141. See Hodnett (note 133), pp. 1 et seq.
142. See E. Gordon Duff, A Century of the English Book Trade (London, 1905), xi et seq.
143. For reproductions of the Zainer prints see A. Schramm, Der Bilderschmuck der Frühdrucke, Vol. V (Leipzig, 1923), pls. 20-44. The question of the relationship with the Caxton cuts is discussed in R.T. Lenaghan, Caxton's Aesop (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1967).

144. See the description of the MS in G.F. Warner & J.P. Gilson, Catalogue of Western MSS in the Old Royal and King's Collections (London, 1921), Vol. III.
145. N.F. Blake (note 133), p. 156.
146. *ibid.*, pp. 155-6.
147. See N.F. Blake, Caxton's Own Prose (London, 1973), 87-8. The Prologue of the first edition may be found on pp. 85-7.
148. See Scofield (note 24), pp. 206-9.
149. *ibid.*, p. 365.
150. See Blake (note 133), pp. 90-1.
151. Blake (note 147), p. 88.
152. See Blake (note 133), pp. 92-97.
153. *ibid.*, p. 92.
154. See Game and playe of the chesse (1483): 16 pictures.
Legenda aurea (1483): 69 pictures.
Fables of Esope (1484): 186 pictures.
Canterbury Tales (1484): 23 pictures.
Speculum vitae Christi (1486): 29 pictures.
Book named ryal (after 13 Sept. 1484, possibly as late as 1487): 7 pictures.
155. Blake (note 147), p. 88.
156. *ibid.*, p. 62.
157. See Duff (note 142), p. 24.
158. See Hodnett (note 133), p. 32.
159. See Hodnett (note 133), pp. 7 et seq.
160. See Hodnett (note 133), p. 32.
161. H.R. Plomer, Wynkyn de Worde and his Contemporaries (London, 1925), 45.
162. Reproduced in facsimile, with introduction by Sir I. Gollancz, EETS, O.S. 162 (1923).
163. See P.R. Robinson, 'The Booklet: a self-contained unit in composite manuscripts', Codicologica, II (forthcoming).
164. fols. 125-6.

165. Mathew (note 31), p. 117, suggests that the MS was 'prepared, written and illuminated professionally and clumsily'.
166. See Oxford, Bodl. Lib., MSS Bodley 257, 241, 413, Digby 158 (see Pächt & Alexander, 3, nos. 140, 144, 145, 146 and Plate XCIII).
167. See fol. 112^v.
168. See Piers the Plowman, the C text, ed. W.W. Skeat, EETS, O.S. 54 (1873), xlvi.
169. *ibid.*, pp. xlv-vi.
170. One very rare exception is on fol. 53, where Fortune is shown with her wheel, rather than with the mirror which the text seems to require (see C text, Passus xii, 168 et seq.)
171. Only the note 'nota de mercy' identifies with certainty the young woman in the picture on fol. 94.
172. A very much cruder example may be found in Oxford, Bodl. Libr., MS Bodley 832.
173. See above, pp. 37-8.
174. See A. Brusendorff, The Chaucer Tradition (London and Copenhagen, 1925), 18-27; M. Galway, 'The "Troilus" frontispiece', MLR, XLIV (1949), 161-77; G. Williams, 'The "Troilus" frontispiece Again', MLR, LVII (1962), 173-8; M. Rickert, Painting in Britain, 176; G. Mathew, The Court of Richard II (London, 1968), Note to Plate 15, pp. 204 et seq.; P.M. Kean, Chaucer and the Making of English Poetry (London, 1972), Vol. I, 25; B. Boyd, Chaucer and the Medieval Book (Huntington Library, California, 1973), 44 et seq.
175. Brusendorff, however (note 174), pp. 19 et seq., argues strongly in favour of this picture as an accurate representation.
176. See Galway (note 174).
177. See Williams (note 174).
178. See Rickert (note 174).
179. See Mathew (note 174), p. 205.
180. See Kean (note 174).
181. See The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer, ed. F.N. Robinson (London, 1957), 821, note on Troilus and Criseyde, II, 1394-1757.

182. See R.P. ap Roberts, 'The Central Episode in Chaucer's Troilus', PMLA, LXXVII (1962), 373-85.
183. See for example, miniatures of Boethius in P. Courcelle, La Consolation de Philosophie dans la Tradition Littéraire (Paris, 1967), pls. 72(3) and 94; the miniature of Boccaccio in Warner & Gilson (note 36), Vol. IV, pl. 87; and the miniature of Christine de Pisan reproduced in M. Meiss, French Painting in the Time of Jean de Berry - The Limbourgs and their Contemporaries (New York & London, 1974), Plates Volume, pl. 38. Cf. also pls. 11, 35, 36, 37.
184. Reproduced in Pächt & Alexander, 3, pl. LXXVI (794a).
185. See the Danse macabré printed by Guyot Marchand at Paris in 1490 (reproduced in facsimile, Washington, 1945). Plate 12.
186. See O. Pächt, The Master of Mary of Burgundy (London, 1948),/
187. Reproduced in Pächt & Alexander, 1, pl. 717.

CHAPTER 4 : SOME FIFTEENTH-CENTURY ENGLISH

TEXTS

Fifteenth-century writers in English frequently demand from their readers a response to a visual image which is either present in visible form or evoked in the memory of readers accustomed to the experience of visual spectacle.

Lydgate's poem on the Dance of Death, for example, was written to accompany wall paintings in a cloister near St Paul's.¹ The preliminary verses in the Ellesmere manuscript of the text suggest that, as in the case of the Pietà illustration which prompted Lydgate's poem on the Joys and Sorrows of the Virgin (see above, pp. 19-20), it was a visual experience that first prompted Lydgate to write, and a visual experience that he hoped to convey to his audience:

Considereth this / ye folkes that ben wyse
 And hit enprenteth / in 3owre memorialle
 Like the exawmple / which that at Parise
 I fownde depicte / ones on a walle
 Ful notabely / as I reherce shal.²

This version of the text appears to be the one made for St Paul's:

3e folke that loken / vpon this purtrature
 Beholdyng here / alle the estates daunce
 Seeth what 3e ben.³

A different version seems to be an adaptation for manuscript copies without illustrations:

Ye folk that loken / vpon this scripture
 Conceyveth heer / that al estatis daunce
 Seth what ze be.⁴

In either case, however, there is a picture, whether real or imagined, and this picture is intended to produce an image that can be remembered:

'haue this myrroure / euer yn remembraunce.⁵

When Lydgate had written the Dance of Death verses he still referred back to the 'Danse Machabe' as a visual experience:

Both high and lough shal go on dethis daunce,
 Renne vnto Powlis, beholde the Machabe.⁶

The fifteenth century was accustomed to verse written as an adjunct to visual spectacle. The verses written for 'sotiltes' at banquets were entirely subordinate to the visual presentation. The guests at the Coronation banquet of Henry VI would have been diverted first by the jeu d'esprit of a representation, perhaps in sugar or pastry, of 'Seint Edward and Seint Lowes armed in cote armours bryngyng yn bitwene hem the Kyng in his cote armour'.⁷ The heraldic devices and the arrangement of the figures would have made the intention clear.⁸ The accompanying 'scripture' only underlines what is already there to be seen:

Loe here two kynges righte perfit and right good,
 Holy Seint Edwarde and Seint Lowes:
 And see the braunch borne of here blessid blode;
 Live, among Cristen most souereigne of price,
 Enheretour of the floure de lice!
 God graunte he may thurgh help of Crist Ihesu
 This sixt Henry to reigne and be as wise
 And hem resemble in knyghthod and vertue.⁹

A similar relationship between words and visual spectacle is found in Lydgate's *Mummings*. The words, though in these cases they may come first, convey a significance that resides in the tableaux. The Mumming at Windsor¹⁰ tells the story of how the fleur de lys and the golden ampulla were given miraculously to the kings of France. The poem ends with a stanza introducing the visual presentation:

Nowe, Royal Braunche, O Blood of Saint Lowys,
 So lyke it nowe to Py Magnyfycence,
 Pat þe story of þe flour delys
 May here be shewed in þyne heghe presence,
 And þat þy noble, royal Excellence
 Lyst to supporte, here sitting in þy see,
 Right as it fell þis myracle to see.¹¹

The Mumming at London¹² was written to introduce to 'þe grete estates of þis lande' five ladies, Fortune, Prudence, Righteousness, Magnificance and Temperance: 'beholdeþe, for it is moral, plesaunt and notable'.¹³ The words clarify the intention implicit in bringing these five ladies into the room together: avoid the 'double varyaunce' of Fortune with the help of the four virtues, who

Shoule abyde here al þis yeer
 In þis housholde at liberte.¹⁴

The Mumming at Hertford¹⁵ is slightly more complex: it begins by introducing some 'poure lieges', 'late e-comen in-to youre castell' to complain to the king of the harsh treatment they receive from their wives. The words explain their situation as they arrive: 'Obbe þe Reeve, þat gooþe heere al to-forne' ... 'Colyn Cobeller, folowing his felawe' ... 'Þis Berthilmewe'.¹⁶ Up to this point the technique of presentation is similar to that in the London Mumming, but when the men's

wives come in, they speak for themselves:

We six wyves beon ful of oon acorde,
Yif worde and chyding may vs not avaylle,
We wol darrein it in chaumpcloos by bataylle.¹⁷

But this was probably part of the joke, for even the king, in giving his judgement on the case, does not speak for himself, but is provided instead with a description of his response:

Pis noble Prynce ...
Pourposibe him in his contynude stryffe
To gif no sentence ber-of diffynytyff,
Til ber beo made examynacyoun
Of ober partye.¹⁸

This tendency to use words primarily as a commentary or gloss on the visual aspects of a dramatic presentation is found also in other forms of fifteenth-century drama. The mystery cycle plays frequently pause so that words may convey the meaning of the visual scene, which is often a close replica of iconography established in painting. In the Chester Play of the Sacrifice of Isaac the Expositor explains what has been happening:

This deed you se done in this place,
In example of Ihesu done yt was,
that for to wyn mankinde grace
was sacrifised on the rode.¹⁹

In the Towneley Peregrini play, Jesus explains to Cleophas and Lucas the meaning of the empty grave which they have 'seen with eye';²⁰ and when the play reaches its visually most impressive moment - 'et sedebit ihesus in medio eorum, tunc benedicet ihesus panem et franget in tribus partibus, et postea euanebit ab oculis eorum'²¹ - the dialogue between the two disciples conveys not only their amazement but also the meaning of what they and the audience have seen:

Lucas: he brake the breed and laide vs som;
 how myght he hens now fro vs go
 At his awne lyst?
 It was oure lorde, I trow right so,
 And we not wyst

.....

Cleophas: Alas, we war full myrk in thoght,
 bot we were both full will of red;
 Man, for shame whi held thou noght
 when he on borde brake vs this breede?²²

Perhaps the most powerful use of words as commentary is in the Crucifixion plays, when Jesus himself provides his own gloss on the meaning of the crucifixion scene on the stage:

I pray you pepyll that passe me by,
 That lede youre lyfe so lykandly,
 heyfe vp youre hartys on hight!
 Behold if euer ye sagh body
 Buffet & bett thus bloody,
 Or yit thus dulfully dight ...

Gytlles thus am I put to pyne,
 Not for my mys, man, bot for thyne,
 Thus am I rent on rode;
 ffor I that tresoure wold not tyne,
 That I markyd & made for myne,
 Thus by I adam blode.²³

Lydgate's poem Death's Warning²⁴ is another powerful exploitation of the possibilities of visual experience, achieved in this case by juxtaposing the poem with an illustration on the page of a book. Two of the three extant copies of this poem are preceded in the manuscript by a picture of a figure of Death carrying bell and spear.²⁵

The poem is a dramatic speech put into the mouth of Death:

Syth that ye lyste to be my costes,
 And in your book to setten myne image,
 Wake and remembre wyth grete auysines,
 Howe my custome and mortall vsage
 Ys for to spare nether olde ne yonge of age,
 But that ye nowe in thys world leuyng,
 Afore be redy or I my belle rynge.

My dredefull spere that ys full sharpe ygrounde
 Doth yow now, lo, here thys manace ...²⁶

The emphasis upon the immediate and visible contact with the reader could hardly be stronger.

Even when a picture is not present to the reader's eyes in the form of a book illustration or wall painting, the poet may rely heavily on a visual spectacle which he describes. There is sometimes an element of literary imitation involved in such cases, based on some notable passages in Chaucer's poetry which seem to have attracted the attention of his fifteenth-century followers.

In Part Three of the Knight's Tale,²⁷ the reader is presented with a lengthy and detailed account of the paintings, sculptures and architectural structure of the stadium built by Theseus for the tournament between Palamon and Arcite. The reader is told the size and shape of the stadium, and how it was steeply raked so that all the spectators should have a clear view of the arena.²⁸ Chaucer describes how Theseus provided accommodation and wages for a large group of engineers and craftsmen to build and adorn this structure.²⁹ On the two main gates, eastward and westward, were built two temples or 'oratories', one dedicated to Venus, the other to Mars. In a turret on the north wall was another, built of alabaster and coral, in honour of Diana.³⁰ This is only the beginning. The following 174 lines describe the artefacts within each temple:

The noble kervyng and the portreitures,
The shap, the contenance and the figures,
That weren in thise oratories thre.³¹

The appeal to the reader's eyes is made in terms of direct confrontation in the present tense:

First in the temple of Venus maystow se
 Wroght on the wal, ful pitous to biholde,³²
 The broken slepes, and the sikes colde ...

and repeatedly in the account that follows the reader is told what there was to see and how it looked: Chaucer even ignores what is plausible if the Knight, or even himself was telling the tale, and frequently says 'I saw', as he tries to evoke paintings and sculptures supposedly produced in ancient Athens, where neither the Knight nor Chaucer had ever been. In the temple of Diana, for instance,

Depeynted been the walles up and doun
 Of huntynge and of shamefast chastitee.
 Ther saugh I how woful Calistopee
 Whan that Diane agreved was with here
 Was turned from a womman til a bere
 And after was she maad the loode-sterre;
 Thus was it peynted, I kan sey yow no ferre ...
 Ther saugh I Dane, yturned til a tree ...
 Ther saugh I Atheon an hert ymaked
 For vengeance that he saugh Diane al naked;
 I saugh how that his houndes have hym caught
 And freten hym ...
 Yet peynted was a litel forther moor
 How Atthalante hunted the wilde boor ...³³

In modern writing on Chaucer, the immediacy of this visual effect is often ignored, and critics emphasize instead the literary antecedents which Chaucer could have used as his sources:

We are familiar (says one) with the principle that any 'pictorial' detail in such works as the Knight's Tale is more likely to have a written source than a visual one. For one thing, it is a conscious evocation of antiquity, and thus relies on verbal description: for another, much of the corresponding visual material has an essentially literary basis, and we turn to it looking not so much for sources for our word-pictures as for illustrations, in a different medium, of themes common to both.³⁴

It is true that there were distinguished precedents for using the description of wall paintings or series of carvings as a way of telling a story or of elaborating one. Perhaps the archetype of all medieval descriptions of this kind was Virgil's account of the carvings representing the fall of Troy, which Aeneas found in the temple of Juno in Carthage.³⁵ Chaucer certainly knew this account, and made use of it in The House of Fame.³⁶ Another famous series was in the Roman de la Rose, where 'ymages and peyntures' of personified vices and misfortunes are ranged on the outside of the high walls of the garden.³⁷

We must also acknowledge Chaucer's direct and fundamental indebtedness throughout the Knight's Tale to Boccaccio's Il Teseida.³⁸ The stadium and its temple are not Chaucer's invention, and there are wall-paintings in Boccaccio which were the starting point for Chaucer's descriptions. Certain other details not found in Boccaccio may plausibly be traced back to the writings of late medieval mythographers,³⁹ and analogies with other passages may be cited from Statius, Ovid and the Roman de la Rose.⁴⁰

But an emphasis upon literary sources obscures two significant aspects of Chaucer's descriptions: one is that such sources will in any case explain only a small part of the descriptions. The other is that Chaucer seems to have been less concerned here to quote any 'auctour' than to impress his readers with the visual quality of the narrator's own experience.

In Chaucer's 174 lines about the temples, Boccaccio has provided a few suggestions that directly affect only 47 lines.⁴¹ And even in a passage which stays close to the words of Boccaccio's description, Chaucer may introduce a significant change of outlook. Boccaccio's description of the temple of Mars mentions a landscape, a forest and a hill, in which the temple was placed.⁴² Inside the temple were wall-paintings representing disasters caused by the influence of Mars. Chaucer includes much of the same detail, but he begins with the wall-paintings, and everything that follows, including the landscape, is painted rather than real:

Why sholde I ^{no}ght as wel eek telle yow al
 The portreiture that was upon the wal
 Withinne the temple of myghty Mars the rede?
 Al peynted was the wal, in lengthe and brede ...
 First on the wal was peynted a forest ...
 In which ther ran a rumbel in a swough,
 As though a storm sholde bresten every bough.
 And downward from an hille, under a bente,
 Ther stood the temple of Mars armypotente ...
 Ther saugh I first the derke ymagynyng
 Of Felonye ...⁴³

and then Chaucer continues with pictorial images of Ire, Drede, the smiling assassin, and the rest of the influences and children of Mars.

In the lines on the temple of Diana, which are entirely Chaucer's own,⁴⁴ the phrase 'Ther saugh I' occurs particularly frequently, and it is clear that Chaucer expected from his readers an appreciative response to what he claimed was visual experience. The description of Theseus's enterprise begins with the words:

I trowe men wolde deme it necligence
 If I foryete to tellen the dispence
 Of Theseus, that gooth so bisily
 To maken up the lystes roially.⁴⁵

And the final couplet is another comment on the style and expense of the colourful spectacle:

Wel koude he peynten lifly that it wroghte;
With many a floryn he the hewes boghte.⁴⁶

Even when Chaucer does acknowledge literary debts, he may present them in pictorial form to his readers. In the Book of the Duchess, part of the dreamer's dream was that the chamber in which he woke was 'ful wel depeynted', both the windows and the walls.⁴⁷ The windows were glazed with painted glass showing 'al the story of Troye' and

alle the walles with colours fyne
Were peynted, bothe text and glose,
Of al the Romaunce of the Rose.⁴⁸

The meaning of these last two lines is debated: Robinson suggests that 'bothe text and glose' may simply be a formula meaning 'the whole story';⁴⁹ or Chaucer may have thought of a text painted on a wall with accompanying pictures.⁵⁰ Whatever the precise nature of the painting, however, the mention of 'colours fyne' does seem to make it clear that there were pictures of both the Troy story and the Roman de la Rose in the dreamer's chamber. Chaucer is acknowledging some of his literary antecedents, but it seems probable that his readers' knowledge of those texts could have been through pictures too.

Chaucer seems to have considered it a function of verbal art to evoke memories of experience of the visual arts, and he probably expected his own poem to be understood in these terms. There are no illustrated copies of the Book of the Duchess extant to prove the point, but there are many copies of the Roman de la Rose which contain miniatures of scenes that are

very similar to the description given by Chaucer of the dreamer waking, rising and setting out.⁵¹ From these, or from painted walls or windows, as well as from real life, Chaucer's readers could have acquired the ability to respond to the visual experience which Chaucer offers.

The fifteenth century's willingness to respond to this aspect of Chaucer's work was probably affected not only by their general admiration of Chaucer, but also by the extent to which visual spectacle was available to them in real life. The 'sotiltes', mummings and plays which we have already mentioned were elements in this spectacle. So too were such public occasions as the triumphal entry of Henry VI into London in 1432. Lydgate's own enthusiasm for such displays is preserved in the poem he wrote after the event,⁵² addressed to the Mayor and citizens of London, a dedication which suggests that his enthusiasm was widely shared. The poem is a kind of versified journalism, giving details of the route taken by the royal procession, the livery of the citizens who went out to meet the king, and the tableaux set up to greet him at points along the route:

The Kyng roode fforth, with sobre contenance,
Towarde a castell bilt off iaspar grene,
Vpon whos toures the sonne shone shene,
Ther clerly shewed, by notable remembraunce,
This kyngis tytle off England and off Fraunce.

Twoo green treen ther grewe vp-ariht,
Fro Seint Edward and ffro Seint Lowys,
The route y-take palpable to the siht,
Conveyed by lynes be kyngis off grete prys;
Some bare leopardes, and some bare fflouredelys,
In nouthar armes ffounde was there no lak,
Which the sixte Herry may now bere on his bak.

. . . .

Vpon this castell on the tothir syde
 There was a tree, which sprange out off Iesse,
 Ordeyned off God fful longe to abyde;
 Dauyd crownyd ffirst ffor his humylite
 The braunches conveyd, as men myhte se,
 Lyneally and in the Genologie,
 To Crist Ihesu, that was born off Marie.⁵³

Such tableaux were important for their significance as well as their visual splendour. The two trees on the green-jaspar castle are self-explanatory: the heraldic devices identify the English and French lines of the king's descent, and this line is honoured by the analogy with the Jesse tree, the line of kings from David to Christ, and the best-known genealogical diagram in medieval iconography.

Other 'noble devyses' needed to be 'Conveyed by scripture':⁵⁴ written words made the intention of a tableau clear and explicit. The 'tabernacle' of Dame Sapience, accompanied by the Seven Liberal Arts, was ready for the King at Cornhill:

And in the ffront of this tabernacle,
 Sapience a scripture ganne devyse
 Able to be redde with-oute a spectakle,
 To yonge kynges seyng in this wyse,
 'Vnderstondith and lernyth off the wyse,
 On riht remembryng the hyh lorde to queme,
 Syth ye be iuges other ffolke to deme.⁵⁵

Such combinations of pictures and words easily passed into dramatic presentations, and some of the tableaux included singing or speaking: in the middle of London Bridge the King passed a tower where he was greeted by three 'emperesses', Nature, Grace and Fortune, and by seven young women, the Gifts of the Holy Ghost, who performed some kind of discreet dance and sang a roundel of welcome.⁵⁶

Readers accustomed to such impressive combinations of words and visual images would have responded vigorously to the

visual possibilities of Chaucer's text. When Lydgate read the Book of the Duchess he chose to imitate the dreamer's encounter with the Knight in Black in his own Complaynte of a Louers Lyfe.⁵⁷ But for his own May morning setting he looked beyond the Book of the Duchess to the descriptions of morning in the Knight's Tale⁵⁸ and the Prologue to the Legend of Good Women;⁵⁹ and for the walled park he looked to the Parliament of Fowls;⁶⁰ and he combined the details he found in Chaucer with minute and explicit visual understanding, expressed in terms of what the dreamer saw as he passed through the fully pictured scene:

I rose anon, and thoght I wolde goon
Vnto the wode, to her the briddes sing,
When that the mysty vapour was agoon,
And clere and feyre was the morowning,
The dewe also lyk syluer in shynyng
Vpon the leues, as eny bavme suete,
Til fiery Titan with hys persaunt hete

Had dried vp the lusty lycour nyw
Vpon the herbes in the grene mede,
And that the floures of mony dyuers hywe
Vpon her stalkes gunne for to sprede,
And for to splayen out her leues on brede
Ageyn the sunne, golde-borned in hys spere,
That down to hem cast hys bemes clere.

And by a ryuer forth I gan costey,
Of water clere as berel or cristal,
Til at the last I founde a lytil wey
Toward a parke, enclosed with a wal
In compas rounde; and by a gate smal,
Who-so that wolde, frely myghte goon
In-to this parke, walled with grene stoon.

.... The soyle was pleyn, smothe, and wonder softe,
Al ouer-sprad wyth tapites that Nature
Had made her-selfe, celured eke a-lofte
With bowys grene, the floures for to cure,

.... The eyre atempre, and the smothe wynde
Of Zepherus, amonge the blosmes whyte,
So holosome was, and so norysshing be kynde,
That smale buddes, and rounde blomes lyte,
In maner gan of her brethe delyte.⁶¹

Lydgate's visual extension of Chaucer's text may be seen also in the list of trees in the Compleynt, imitated from the list in the Parliament of Fowls. Chaucer's rhetorical exercise on the uses and associations of the trees in the garden ('The saylynge fyr, the cipresse, deth to pleyne ...'⁶²) becomes in Lydgate's poem an account in which visible attributes of some of the trees are emphasized:

The cedres high, vpryght as a lyne,
 The philbert eke, that lowe doth enclyne
 Her bowes grene ...
 Ther saw I eke the fresshe hawethorne
 In white motele.⁶³

In Lydgate's Troy Book there is evidence that he was conscious and proud of his ability to outdo Chaucer in the skilled evocation in verse of visual experience. When a new Troy is being planned to replace the city destroyed by the Greeks, Priam

... made seke in euery regioun
 For swiche werkemen as were corious,
 Of wit inventyf, of castyng merveillous;
 Or swyche as coulde crafte of gemetrye,
 Or wer sotyle in her fantasye;
 And for eueryche pat was good devysour,
 Mason, hewer, or crafty quareour;
 For euery wri3t and passyng carpenter,
 Pat may be founde, owper fer or nere;
 For swyche as koude graue, grope or kerue,
 Or swiche as werne able for to serue
 With lym or stoon, for to reise a wal,
 With bataillyng and crestis marcial;
 Or swiche as had konyng in her hed,
 Alabastre, owper white or redde,
 Or marbil graye for to pulsche it pleyn,
 To make it smope of veynes & of greyn.
 He sent also for every ymagour,
 Bope in entaille, & euery purtreyour
 Pat coulde drawe, or with colour peynt
 With hewes fresche, pat be werke nat feynt ...⁶⁵

In subject matter, and in certain details of phrasing, this is clearly derived from Chaucer's account in The Knight's Tale of Theseus's orders for the building of his stadium.⁶⁶ But even while declaring his indebtedness by such direct borrowing, Lydgate is going beyond the Chaucerian passage in length, and in wealth of detail. The details become increasingly visual: mention of building a wall leads to its final decorative crests; there is not only white and red alabaster, comparable with Chaucer's alabaster and coral, but also grey marble; and the reader is asked to admire the polish that brings out the marble's pattern and grain. The further detailed description of the way the town was built and decorated sometimes follows hints from the impressive but not very colourful list of special features given by Guido delle Colonne.⁶⁷ But neither in Guido nor in Chaucer did Lydgate find passages like this:

Pe fresche enbowyng with vergis rizt as linyz
 And pe vowing ful of babewynes,
 Pe riche copurnyng, pe lusty tablementis,
 Vynnettis rennyng in pe casementis
 Pouz pe terms in English wolde ryme
 To rekne hem alle I haue as now no tyme:
 Ne no langage pyked for pe nonys
 Pe sotil ioynyng to tellen of pe stonys.⁶⁸

Lydgate's rhetorical modesty hardly covers his pride in being able to adapt the necessary technical terms to his metre, but the elaborate details of architectural decoration here are devised by a poet who is interested in more than verbal effects. He is using the technique of occupatio to draw attention to a passage in which he seeks to surpass Chaucer by describing the visually dazzling:

bei putten in stede of mortar
 In þe ioynturys copur-gilt ful clere,
 To make hem ioyne by leuel and by lyne,
 Among þe marbil freschly for to schyne
 Agein þe sonne whan his schene lyzt
 Smote in þe gold pat was bornyd brizt 69
 To make þe werke gletere on euery syde.

Ostentatious visual splendour did not always call forth such ostentatious poetic technique. The narrator of the Assembly of ladies⁷⁰ presents the reader with a slowly unfolding pageant: a dream of a maze in which the dreamer and her companions spent their afternoon, an arbour where the dreamer dreamed she slept, and a dream within the dream, in which Perseverance, usher in the household of the lady Loyaltè, invited the dreamer and her friends to attend on Loyaltè, all wearing blue and bearing mottoes on their sleeves. The most distinctive qualities of this poem are its slow pace, its musing character, its intricate structure. The poem points to a meaning still to be fathomed: the reader is invited to enjoy the visual richness, but this involves a further invitation to join the narrator when she wakes up in her search for the significance of what she has seen.

One incident in particular emphasizes the way in which the visual experience of the dreamer within the poem parallels the kind of experience offered to the reader. In the audience chamber of Loyaltè, to which the dreamer and her companions are finally conducted, an intense visual experience awaits them:

We folowed her unto the chambre-dore,
 'Sisters', quod she, 'come ye in after me,'
 But wite ye wel, there was a paved flore,
 The goodliest that any wight might see;
 And furthermore, about than loked we
 On eche corner, and upon every wal,
 The which was mad of berel and cristal;

Wherein was graven of stories many oon;
 First how Phyllis, of womanly pite,
 Deyd pitously, for love of Demophoon.
 Next^e after was the story of Tisbee,
 How she slew her-self under a tree.
 Yet saw I more, how in right pitous cas
 For Antony was slayn Cleopatras.⁷¹

There follows another stanza describing pictures of women who were deceived by their lovers, and then:

bicause the walles shone so bright,
 With fyne umple they were al over-sprad,
 To that intent, folk shuld nat hurte hir sight;
 And thorough it the stories might be rad.⁷²

These stories that may be 'read' in pictures through the finely-woven hangings are there for a purpose: they signify the effects of following Loyaltè. The stories are of women faithful in love and deceived in love by others. 'Reading' these pictures means identifying the stories and catching their significance.

Similarly, reading the poem involves understanding the carefully described events of the dream. There are some verbal clues: the mottoes on the characters' sleeves⁷³ and the written complaints presented to Loyaltè by the dreamer's companions⁷⁴ are related to the maze at the beginning of the poem:

Some went inward, and wend they had gone out,
 Some stode amid, and loked al about.
 And, sooth to say, some were ful fer behind,
 And right anon as ferforth as the best;
 Other ther were, so mased in her mind,
 Al wayes were good for hem.⁷⁵

But neither the maze nor the mottoes and complaints solve the poem's meaning. The dreamer awakes stil 'al amased'.⁷⁶ The total meaning of the poem resides in an elaborate series of pageants that work as a delicate counterpoint to the hopes and disappointments of those who have fixed their affections where broken promises, half-hearted requital, uncertainty and other misfortunes have been their lot. The fact that there is no articulate summary of the meaning of it all is a part of what the poem is about. The words of the poem are not there to explain it. They are like the 'fine umple' covering vivid pictures. The reader's task is to penetrate to the pictures and consider what those are about, and there will be no simple answers to that question:

'Forsothe', quod I, 'and therby lyth a tale
 I let you wite it is no litel thing.'⁷⁷

It may be helpful to reconsider the merits of some fifteenth-century devotional poetry in the light of these ideas. The fifteenth-century lyric called by R.T. Davies, Mary Complains to other Mothers,⁷⁸ receives qualified praise from Miss Woolf.⁷⁹ It is interesting in its 'realistic observation of maternal fondness', and assured in its expression of the antithesis of this with 'the Virgin's actions of grief as she holds the crucified body of her son'. But it is based on 'a conceit only loosely related' to the doctrine of the Redemption; and it combines 'overt didacticism

with strident emotionalism'. Even less satisfactory is the version of the poem found in two of the five extant copies, in which additional stanzas are prefixed to the poem, which introduce the idea of a statue or painting of a Pietà scene:

In a chirche as I gan knele,
 This enders daye to here a masse,
 I sawe a sighte me liked wele,
 I shal you telle what it was.
 I saw a pite in a place,
 Oure lady and her sone in feere:
 Ofte she wepte and sayde, 'Alas.
 Now lith here dede my dere sone dere!'⁸⁰

Miss Woolf regards this as 'a slightly strange variation of the Pietà convention. A secondary image has intruded between the original and its literary re-creation.'⁸¹

But although there are textual inconsistencies in these extra stanzas, which suggest that they were not a part of the poem as it was originally composed, the introduction of a painted or sculpted Pietà only adds a specific reference to what was already implicit in the original text:

Of all wemen that ever were borne,
 That bere childer, abide and see
 How my sone lyeth me beforne,
 Upon my skirte, taken from the Tree.
 Your childer ye daunce upon youre knee,
 With laghing, kissing and mery chere:
 Beholde my childe, beholde wele me,⁸²
 For now lyeth dedd my dere sone, dere.

No fifteenth-century reader had seen this episode in reality. He knew it only through the visual arts, and the poem, even in its original form, assumes a remembered image in the reader's mind. The only way in which the Virgin could appeal to other women to 'abide and see' was in the form of an image confronting them in reality or in memory.

The writer gains certain advantages by exploiting the power of the image. There are certain things he can leave to the image: he does not need to give a formal description, but can concentrate his reader's attention on one aspect at a time, knowing that the image is already unified and coherent in her memory. His own clear visualisation, and his reliance on the same ability in the reader, may be the sources of the 'realistic observation' and 'considerable assurance' that Miss Woolf praises. I think the visual image also ensures that the poem avoids mere 'conceit' and 'emotionalism'. The antitheses in the words only increase the pathos, and the writer can afford to allow the Virgin's words to assume a tone of pleading rather than of demanding:

Therefore, wemen, by town and strete,
 Youre childer handes when ye beholde,
 Ther breste, ther body, and ther fete,
 God were on my sone to thinke, and ye wolde ...⁸³

The reliance upon images also produces its own subtlety. Miss Woolf points out that the poet's invention may have been helped by 'the traditional series of contrasts made between the Nativity and the Crucifixion, and also possibly by the related iconographic form in which a grieving Virgin holds a child-sized, crucified figure in her lap.'⁸⁴ But the reader also could have had access to pictures and sculpture which emphasized visually the pathetic contrast between the Nativity and the Pietà scenes.⁸⁵ The remembered image of the Pietà in the reader's mind therefore does much more than simply 'illustrate' the situation out of which the

poem grows. The poet is able to rely on an image which is iconographically so stable and so well-known that it has already gathered around itself certain emotional responses. The poem is more complex in its emotional reference than it might seem from the words alone.

Another emotive image may be alluded to by some of the poem's opening words. 'Abide and see' is the common opening of the appeals of Christ from the cross based on Lamentations, i, 12: 'attendite, et videte si est dolor sicut dolor meus'. These appeals would have been well-known from their adaptation to the Crucifixion plays in the mystery cycles (see above, p. 115), as well as from English verse. They could also have been found in a semi-dramatic context in the liturgy for Good Friday.⁸⁶ In each of these cases the appeal to 'see' was an invitation to look at a crucifix. The Virgin's words in the Pietà poem thus involve the image of Christ hanging on the cross as well as the image of the Pietà. The image of the Virgin is literally mediating in the reader's devotion to the crucified Christ, putting before the reader the central image of the crucifixion as well as the one more closely linked with the ordinary mother's experience.⁸⁷ The relationship between the poem and the doctrine of the Redemption seems far from 'loose', though it is a relationship that does not reside only in words.

If this poem is in fact an 'unmistakable sign of the decay of the tradition' of meditation,⁸⁸ this is something which was regretted, but also accepted by fifteenth-century

writers too. The thinking they inherited about human responses to the world of the senses included, as we have seen in chapter 2, both a mistrust of the eyes and the imagination and the memory of sensible things, and also a recognition of their usefulness in communication and understanding. At the end of Lydgate's Lyf of Our Lady⁸⁹ we find both attitudes in operation.

Book V of the Lyf of Our Lady is concerned with the Epiphany, and in particular with the Magi's offerings. Throughout this long poem, Lydgate has striven for magnificence of verbal expression, but from Book V, line 631 he begins to admit that there is no truly successful way of approaching the reality of what he is describing. The best way of understanding that is available to him and his readers is not by verbal means at all, but is by 'lykenesse of portrature'.⁹⁰

The 'portrature' is in the first instance a picture of the adoration of the Magi. The existence of such a picture, and the reader's identification with the Magi in the picture, are implied in the title of this final chapter of Book V: 'How we shulde pray to God to do this offryng gostely', or in some copies simply, 'How we shulde do this offryng gostely'.⁹¹ The opening stanzas are a prayer addressed to Christ, asking for

The golde of loue, the franke of Innocence,
And the chast myrre of clene entencion.⁹²

After this the prayer is addressed to Mary by virtue of her earthly experience:

Pou blissful quene of kingis emperesse,
That yaf thy sonne, soukyng in a stalle,
That chast mylke of virgynall clenness,

... gode lady in this sorowefull vale
Of trouble and wo and of hevynesse ...
Towarde that courte the evyn way vs dresse,
... Wher euere is blisse, and loye hath non ende.⁹³

In the next stanza the reader's presence at the scene is made quite explicit:

... certez lady, in this lyfe we lakke
Of sothefast yoye, all the suffysaunce
Save amonge we knele afore the Rakke:
Where with thy sonne was some tyme thy pleasaunce.⁹⁴

And the rest of this stanza admits that the scene around the manger is a painted, rather than a real, one:

vs reyoysyng, as by Remembraunce,
Only by lykenesse to loke on thyne ymage
And on thy sonne with his fayre visage.⁹⁵

Perhaps by this stage the reader has left behind even the Magi picture and is contemplating in imagination a picture of the Virgin and Child.

The rest of the poem frequently harks back to the visual image of the lord and queen of heaven in the poverty of a stable. This image is still dominant at the end of Book VI, in the closing lines of the poem:

And in this exile, where as we sojourne,
Graunt vs lorde while that we ben here
In februarye-as phebus dothe retourne
The circuyt of his golden spere—
Vpon this day, ay fro yere to yere,
With tapres fresshe and bryght torches shene
To kepe and halowe in honour of that quene,

To whome this feste is in speciall
Dedicate, bothe of more and lesse—
Which bare hir childe in a lityll stall
Bitwene an ox and a sely asse.
And blissede quene, this fest of Candelmasse,
To thy seruantez shelde and socoure be,
To kepe and save from all aduersyte.

Rhetorical elaboration is here reduced to a simple reference to the traditional exile theme, a reminiscence (in the fourth line) of the richness of language found earlier in the poem, and a repeated reliance upon simple pairs of words: 'tapres and torches', 'kepe and halowe', 'more and lesse', 'ox and asse', 'shelde and socoure', 'kepe and save'. There are some attractively balanced ideas such as 'kepe and halowe' at the end of the penultimate stanza, and 'kepe and save' at the end of the last. But none of this is obtrusive, and there is nothing to detract from the picture in which the poem has found its resting place.

Some hints of fifteenth-century readers' reactions to this picture may be found in marginal notes in the manuscripts. In the Durham copy the meditation in the last few stanzas of Book V, on the pitiable state in which the Virgin and Child find themselves in the picture, is marked by the scribe with the words Nota bene nota in the margin.⁹⁷ In the manuscript in Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Bodley 596, which we examined in the previous chapter,⁹⁸ there is

no illustration of the adoration of the Magi. But it is clear that this section of the text did attract attention. A Nota bene mark in the margin on fol. 162 draws attention to a stanza which describes the visual experience of the Magi themselves in such a way as to encourage the reader to identify with the Magi in the scene:

And of O thyng . full goode hede they toke
 How that the childe. / demurely cast his sight
 Towarde hem / and goodly ganne to loke
 On her faces / with his eyen bright
 And how that he put his arme right
 Goodly to hem / makyng a manere signe
 And to hem of (sic) thankynge of chere ful benygne.⁹⁹

Though this is 'but a lyknesse Of portrature',
 Lydgate adds that 'it dothe vs ease'.¹⁰⁰ This is a candid
 recognition of the way in which the purpose of words may be
 closely connected with the effect of pictures, whether these
 are present along with the text, or described or assumed in
 it.

CHAPTER 4 FOOTNOTES

1. For the text, see The Dance of Death, ed. F. Warren, EETS, O.S. 181 (1931). The wall paintings and their relation to the poem are discussed on pp. xxi-iv.
2. Warren (note 1), pp. 2-4, lines 17-21.
3. *ibid.*, p. 74, lines 633-5.
4. *ibid.*, p. 75, lines 561-3.
5. *ibid.*, p. 74, line 637.
6. See Lydgate's poem, Tyed with a Lyne, lines 66-7. Printed in The Minor Poems of John Lydgate, ed. H.N. MacCracken, Part II, EETS, O.S. 192 (1934), 834, lines 66-7.
7. See MacCracken (note 6), p. 623.
8. The presentation of a king by patron saints would have been familiar in the visual arts. See for example the Wilton Diptych (discussed by Rickert, Painting in Britain, pp. 157-61; see also pl. 160).
9. See MacCracken (note 6), p. 623, lines 1-8.
10. *ibid.*, pp. 691-4.
11. *ibid.*, p. 694, lines 92-8.
12. *ibid.*, pp. 682-91.
13. *ibid.*, p. 682.
14. *ibid.*, p. 691, lines 334-5.
15. *ibid.*, pp. 675-82.
16. *ibid.*, pp. 676-7, lines 30, 55, 93.
17. *ibid.*, p. 679, lines 164-6.
18. *ibid.*, p. 681, lines 215-26.
19. Quoted here from The Chester Plays, ed. H. Deimling, EETS, E.S. 62 (1892, reprinted 1968), Part I, p. 83, lines 465-8.
20. The Towneley Plays, ed. G. England, EETS, E.S. 71 (1897, reprinted 1973), 331, lines 195 et seq.

21. *ibid.*, p. 334.
22. *ibid.*, pp. 334-6, lines 293-7, 352-5.
23. *ibid.*, pp. 265-6, lines 231-8, 274-9.
24. MacCracken (note 6), pp. 655-7.
25. See Oxford, Bodl. Lib., MS Douce 322, fol. 19^v and London, Brit. Lib., Harley MS 1706, fol. 19^v. The picture in the Douce MS is reproduced in R. Woolf, The English Religious Lyric in the Middle Ages (Oxford, 1968), pl. 3a.
26. MacCracken (note 6), p. 655, lines 1-9.
27. Chaucer, Canterbury Tales, A, 1881-2088, quoted here from The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer, ed. F.N. Robinson (Oxford, 1957), 35-7.
28. *ibid.*, p. 35, lines 1887-92.
29. *ibid.*, p. 35, lines 1897-1901.
30. *ibid.*, p. 35, lines 1902-13.
31. *ibid.*, p. 35, lines 1915-17.
32. *ibid.*, p. 36, lines 1918-20.
33. *ibid.*, p. 37, lines 2056-70.
34. The same writer goes on however to quote one detail in the Knight's Tale passage (lines 2043-5), as being derived from manuscript illustration without any textual intermediary. See M. Twycross, The Medieval Anadyomene - A Study in Chaucer's Mythography, Medium Aevum Monographs, New Series I (Oxford, 1972), 50-51.
35. Virgil, Aeneid, I, 446 et seq.
36. Chaucer, House of Fame, I, 140 et seq. See Robinson (note 27), pp. 283 et seq.
37. In Chaucer's own translation of the Roman de la Rose the account begins at line 136 (Robinson (note 27), p. 566).
38. Indications of the relationship between the two texts are given in the margins of the Knight's Tale in the Six Text Print of Chaucer's Canterbury Tales, ed. F.J. Furnivall, Chaucer Society, Part I (London, 1868), 26-88. Robinson (note 27), p. 670 gives a list of the main correspondences between the two texts.

39. The description of the statue of Venus in particular has attracted scholarly attention. It seems to be based on an allegorical description of Venus which goes back ultimately to Fulgentius and Isidore, though the immediate source through which Chaucer knew it is much debated. See Twycross (note 34), pp. 2-14, for an account of this debate.
40. See Robinson (note 27), notes on the Knight's Tale, pp. 676-8.
41. In lines 1922-28 of the Knight's Tale there is a general resemblance to the allegorical pictures in the temple of Venus as described by Boccaccio. Line 1931 reflects a reference in Boccaccio to feasting, music and dancing associated with Venus. The information that the principal temple of Venus was on Mount Cithaeron (lines 1936-7) seems to be based on Boccaccio. Lines 1938 and 1970 are virtually translations of lines in Boccaccio which make it clear that there are wall-paintings in the temples. Chaucer's reference in line 1943 to a painting of Hercules seems to have been suggested by Boccaccio, and in lines 1971-2004, describing the rest of the temple of Mars, there is some close translation and extended paraphrase of Boccaccio. In the later lines on the temple of Mars, the reference to the town destroyed (line 2016) and the carter run over by his own cart (2022) depend on lines in Boccaccio. Otherwise, the rest of the Martian section, and the whole of the account of Diana's temple, are independent of Boccaccio. See Furnivall (note 38), pp. 55-60.
42. See Furnivall (note 38), p. 57.
43. Robinson (note 27), p. 36, lines 1967-96.
44. *ibid.*, p. 37, lines 2050-88. See Furnivall (note 38), pp. 59-60.
45. Robinson (note 27), p. 35, lines 1881-84.
46. *ibid.*, p. 37, lines 2087-8.
47. Chaucer, Book of the Duchess, lines 321 et seq. See Robinson (note 27), p. 270.
48. *ibid.*, p. 270, lines 332-4.
49. *ibid.*, pp. 774-5, note on Book of the Duchess, line 333.
50. The suggestion that the pictures are themselves the 'gloss' seems far-fetched.

51. See for example Oxford, Bodl. Lib., MS e. Mus. 65, fol. 1, reproduced in Pächt & Alexander, 1, pl. XLVII (612). This manuscript was made c. 1390.
52. See MacCracken (note 7), pp. 630-48.
53. *ibid.*, pp. 643-4, lines 393-418.
54. *ibid.*, p. 632, line 67.
55. *ibid.*, p. 639, lines 265-71.
56. *ibid.*, pp. 634-38, lines 99-222.
57. Called by MacCracken The Complaint of the Black Night, MacCracken (note 6), pp. 382-410.
58. Chaucer, Knight's Tale, lines 1491-6. See Robinson (note 27), p. 31.
59. Chaucer, Legend of Good Women, Prologue, lines 45-9. See Robinson (note 27), p. 483.
60. Chaucer, Parliament of Fowls, lines 121-2. See Robinson (note 27), p. 312.
61. MacCracken (note 6), pp. 383-5, lines 22-61.
62. Chaucer, Parliament of Fowls, line 179 (Robinson (note 27), p. 312).
63. MacCracken (note 6), p. 385, lines 67-72.
65. Lydgate, Troy Book, II, lines 490-510. See Lydgate's Troy Book, ed. H. Bergen, Vol. I, EETS, E.S. 97 (1906), 158-9.
66. See above, pp. 116-20.
67. See the extracts and summary of the passage in Guido in Lydgate's Troy Book, ed. H. Bergen, Vol. IV, EETS, E.S. CXXVI (1935), 118 et seq.
68. Bergen (note 65), p. 163, lines 653-60.
69. *ibid.*, p. 163, lines 661-7. The description of bright, shining light is a favourite device of Lydgate's: see also Troy Book, II, 6730-4 (Bergen (note 65), p. 337).
70. Printed in Chaucerian and other Pieces, ed. W.W. Skeat (Oxford, 1897), Supplement, Vol. VII, to his Complete Works of Geoffrey Chaucer (Oxford, 1894), No. XXI, pp. 380-404.

71. *ibid.*, pp. 394-5, lines 449-62.
72. *ibid.*, p. 395, lines 470-3.
73. *ibid.*, pp. 399-402, lines 582-676 and cf. p. 384, lines 115-9.
74. *ibid.*, pp. 399-402, lines 584-679.
75. *ibid.*, p. 381, lines 34-9.
76. *ibid.*, p. 404, line 739.
77. *ibid.*, pp. 380-1, lines 21, 25.
78. Medieval English Lyrics, A Critical Anthology, ed. R.T. Davies (London, 1963), no. 112, pp. 210-11, (Brown & Robbins, Index, 2619). The poem is printed from another MS in Religious Lyrics of the XVth Century, ed. C. Brown (Oxford, 1939, reprinted 1962), no. 7, pp. 13-16. Brown includes four stanzas at the end which are omitted by Davies.
79. R. Woolf, The English Religious Lyric in the Middle Ages (Oxford, 1968), 256-7.
80. Printed from Oxford, Bodl. Lib. MSS Ashmole 61 and Rawl. C.86 by H.E. Sandison, The Chanson d'Aventure in Middle English (Bryn Mawr College Monographs, 1913), 104 et seq.
81. Woolf (note 79), p. 257.
82. Davies (note 78), p. 210, lines 1-8.
83. *ibid.*, p. 211, lines 49-52.
84. Woolf (note 79), pp. 256-7.
85. Cf. the early fifteenth-century French miniature reproduced in E. Mâle, L'Art religieux de la fin du moyen âge en France (Paris, 1949), fig. 68. Cf. also the painting of the Body of Christ Mourned by the Virgin in the Ashmolean Museum (no. A 297 in the forthcoming Catalogue of Paintings). It belongs to the second half of the fifteenth century and to the Franco-Flemish school. By analogy with pictures of the Nativity belonging to the same school, in which the infant Christ lies on the ground while Mary kneels to adore him, the body of Christ in this picture is placed on the ground in front of the mourning Virgin. Similar iconographic types may have been known in England: Flemish and French miniaturists were employed on English books (see above, p. 73).

86. They were used in the First Lections at Matins on Good Friday (see Breviarum ad Usum Sarum, ed. F. Procter and C. Wordsworth, Fasc. I (Cambridge, 1882), dcclxxxvii-viii). In the Towneley Plays (note 20), pp. 265-6, these appeals are linked with a version of the Improperia or Reproaches from the Cross, which would also have been used in the Good Friday liturgy. This text, beginning 'Popule meus quid feci tibi', was sung during the Mass (see The Sarum Missal, ed. J. Wickham Legg (Oxford, 1916), 112-3).
87. In fifteenth-century French art there is an example of a similar combination of ideas: the Pietà de Villeneuve, painted c. 1460, includes the verse from Lamentations tooled in gold in the background of the picture. See G. Ring, A Century of French Painting 1400-1500 (London, 1949), frontispiece and Plate 108.
88. Woolf (note 79), p. 257.
89. See A Critical Edition of John Lydgate's Life of Our Lady, ed. J.A. Lauritis, R.A. Klinefelter & V.F. Gallagher, Duquesne Studies, Philological Series 2 (Louvain, 1961).
90. *ibid.*, p. 632, lines 638-9.
91. See Lauritis (note 89), p. 630.
92. Lauritis (note 89), p. 630, lines 607-8.
93. *ibid.*, p. 631, lines 618-30.
94. *ibid.*, p. 632, lines 631-4.
95. *ibid.*, p. 632, lines 635-7.
96. *ibid.*, p. 669, lines 449-62.
97. *ibid.*, p. 633.
98. See above, p. 69.
99. Transcribed from MS Bodley 596, fol. 162.
100. Lauritis (note 89), p. 635, line 680.

CHAPTER 5 : CONCLUSIONS

Books as Visual Experience

It was pointed out in Chapter 1 that fifteenth-century English books were parts of a culture in which visual experience in general played an important part. In later chapters we have explored the nature and extent of the visual appeal of the books themselves, and we have seen that their visual attraction was also closely related to their function in communicating ideas.

We have seen in Chapter 2 how academic ideas about images formed in the mind impinged upon a wide public through the methods of preachers and through images in churches, designed to promote understanding by appealing to the imagination. In Lydgate's devotional poetry we found a number of passages that demonstrate a conscious awareness of ways in which visual images perceived by the senses may be linked with phantasms formed and retained in the mind. In Chapter 3 we saw how images evoked by texts are sometimes reflected in fifteenth-century book illustration, and in Chapter 4 we have examined ways in which the writers of the texts worked in

relation to such images, whether they wrote verse to accompany visual images, or whether they appealed to images in their readers' minds.

Our discussion of fifteenth-century books also included other links between books, knowledge, and visual perception. These are links achieved by the ways in which the organisation of thought in the text is made visually manifest by the layout and decoration of the page. Such visual features are often not pictorial, but it is possible to detect in them a kind of image of a text's meaning. The writer of the prologue to the genealogical text in MS Lyell 33 considered that his book would help his readers 'myndely to holde that they se in the stori'. What they 'saw' would have been conveyed and memorised by means of a composite 'image' - a picture, several diagrams, coloured lines of descent, gold crowns, and various minor features of decoration, all of them varying in density and arrangement according to the ideas conveyed by the different pages of the text. We have considered some of the varied influences upon styles and standards of English book production in the fifteenth century, but one aspect was found to be recurrent in spite of other variations: there was a generally influential idea, affecting a wider range of texts and a wider readership than hitherto, of the kind of visual impact which a book should have. There was evidence of a consciousness of overall design and of the links between that design and the text. Where pictures were present they were usually incorporated into the visual scheme of the whole book.

With these ideas in mind I should like to return once more to Lydgate's poem on The Fifteen Joys and Sorrows of Mary. At the end of Chapter 2 we considered part of Lydgate's account in this poem of how he responded as reader both to the picture in a book, and to the book's rubrication and decoration. Two other passages from the poem may be considered at this point.

When Lydgate has described the Pietà picture and the rubrics and paraphs in the manuscript he was reading, he adds these details:

Off ech of hem the noumbre was Fiftene,
 Bothe of hir Ioyes and her adversitees,
 Ech after othir, and to that hevenlie queene
 I sauh Oon kneele deuoutly on his knees;
A Pater-noster and ten tyme Auees
 In ordre he sayde at thende of ech ballade
 Cessyd nat, tyl he an eende made.

Folowyng the Ordre, as the picture stood,
 By and by in that hooly place,¹
 To beholde it did myn herte good.

When all the Joys have been rehearsed, Lydgate introduces the Sorrows:

Folwyng in ordre were set his hevynessys ...
 As heer-to-forn is put in remembraunce.

Off Paternostres and aves seid betweene
 The same noumbre with good devocioun,
 The hevenessys rehersyd ful ffifteene
 At eende of everich, as maad is mencion,
 By a maner pitous compassioun
 With our lady, hir sorwys to complayne,²
 Lik as the picture in ordre did ordeyne.

What is particularly interesting in the light of the conclusions already suggested, is that in these two passages we have a fifteenth-century expression of the importance to a

fifteenth-century reader of the close links between a text and all the visual features of the book containing it. It is rare to find this articulated, and Lydgate's forms of expression are in many ways alien to our own. His understanding of 'the Ordre' and of 'ordeyning' may owe something to the use of the word ordo to mean either the written 'order of service' of the liturgy or the due performance of the rites themselves: written words and responsive action are evidently closely linked. But his response as a reader to the words of the text are also governed by the visual features of its pages: 'Folowyng the Ordre, as the picture stood'. It is difficult to be sure whether this describes the action of the devotee in the picture or Lydgate the reader. In one sense it hardly matters: Lydgate interprets the picture as a representation of someone reciting the Paternosters and Aves indicated in the book; in the course of reading the verses on the Joys and Sorrows in the light of this response to the picture, Lydgate himself becomes the devotee who recites the prayers. When the picture is described as 'ordeyning' the reader's compassion, this means much more than providing a devotional object so as to induce an emotional response. There is a link also to the form which the reader's compassion is to take: he is 'to complayne ... in ordre', as indicated by the rubrics and paraphs in the text.

Lydgate assumes that all the book's visual features will direct the reader's response to the text. He also assumes that the reader's responses to picture, decoration and text are all interconnected. It is difficult for us to penetrate the assumptions that lie behind the words 'Like as the picture in ordre did ordeyne', but the evidence presented in previous chapters of this thesis suggests that Lydgate is not being idiosyncratic when he describes his responses as a reader to a book's visual features. In important ways, many fifteenth-century English books were things to be seen. A small but significant reflection of this is the fact that it becomes common for fifteenth-century English authors and copyists to enjoin their readers to 'see and read'. The tag is found in Shirley's 'bookplate':

... Whanne yee this boke / haue ouer-redde and seyne /
To Johan Shirley / restore yee hit agayne.³

It is also used by Caxton, addressing the prologue of his King Arthur to

al noble lordes and ladyes with al other estates
of what estate or degree they been of that shal
see and rede in this sayd book and werke.⁴

Our own attitude to books is very different. Although many of the visual features of medieval manuscripts have become part of what we now take for granted in the organisation and apparatus of printed books, much has also changed. The uniformity of print, its generally monochrome quality, its emphasis on verbal content have altered our estimate of books. Our estimate of literature is related to our estimate of books.

For the literary critic, the precedents established by classical literature and approached via rhetorical theory provide the main thread of literary development. A 'literary' public is one that understands these norms, and books convey verbal traditions. We have to admit that visual images are a powerful element in modern culture, and that publishers of books are increasingly aware of the appeal of pictures, colour and attractive layout. But the literary critic is only the more likely to react against the potential vulgarity of these features, and to become entrenched in the separate verbal tradition, considered to be more articulate, more sensitive, more cultured than the easy spectacle provided by other media.

Our approach to fifteenth-century English literature is not made easier by the fact that some of that is also inarticulate or vulgarly spectacular. But I have tried to show that these undesirable qualities are not the only ones that were linked with fifteenth-century visual taste. Books themselves, including the most learned, were likely to be seen as legitimate opportunities for visual display. Visual splendour could induce verbal ingenuity in Lydgate, and delicacy of feeling in the author of the Assembly of Ladies. Where a writer was concerned to use words as a medium for conveying pictures rather than for their own artistic value, he could nonetheless remain sensitive to the subtleties of his subject and the complexity of his readers' responses.

The full discussion of the implications of fifteenth-century readers' visual experience of books for fifteenth-century English literature is a subject for another thesis. I hope I have been able to convey the idea that during the fifteenth century things available to the mind in visible form could be respected, and that these things included books that were available to an increasing readership of English texts whose verbal traditions were only just beginning.

CHAPTER 5 FOOTNOTES

1. See The Minor Poems of John Lydgate, ed. H.N. MacCracken, Part I, EETS, E.S. 107 (1911, reprinted 1961), 269, lines 22-31.
2. *ibid.*, p. 274, lines 157-68.
3. Quoted from H.S. Bennett, 'The Author and his Public in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries', Essays & Studies, XXIII (1938), 20.
4. See N.F. Blake, Caxton's Own Prose (London, 1973), 109, lines 104-6.

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PLATE 2

Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Rawl. A. 387 B, fols. 68^v-69.

Second quarter of 15th century.

Nicholas Love, The Mirroure of the Blessed Lyf of Jesu Christ,
a fifteenth-century English translation of the Pseudo-
Bonaventura Meditationes Vitae Christi.

The Meditationes is a text which may have helped to convey visual features originally designed for scholarly books into copies of texts made for lay readers. In this fifteenth-century copy of a vernacular translation, these visual features are designed to draw attention to what is edifying.

The text is divided into sections for daily reading. The Plate shows on the verso page the end of the Tercia pars, for Wednesday. There is also a rubric announcing the Fourth Part, for Thursday (Die Iouis), which begins at the top of the recto page, marked by a large gold initial on a coloured ground with sprays of leaves. Running titles also indicate these major divisions. Chapter numbers are in the margin, written in red with a blue paraph mark. Later chapters within the daily section begin with a blue initial, two lines high and flourished conspicuously in red. Within the chapter, noteworthy passages are indicated by paraph marks, alternately blue and red. On fol. 68^v they mark off the opinion of Saint Augustine, and the example of the disciples, as regards abstinence from gluttony. On fol. 69 they draw attention to the mercy and kindness of Jesus in multiplying loaves to feed thousands of followers; these two points are also marked by marginal notes with red or blue paraph marks, underlined in red. Red underlining also marks quotations from Scripture and references to other authorities, and the name ihesu wherever it occurs.

For further discussion of this manuscript, see above,
p.28.

feare of all venues. This is the first touching abstracte
 and feelinge of peevy feare greatly in this world as sent
 Austyn saith in his booke of confession. thaton man take
 of mete & drinke to susteine of peevy covetyse as he
 dothe take of medecyne for he le his infirmitie. After
 feare right as in takinge of medecyne man feare no re-
 ceive to mee us laste. as to the peevy. or covetyse
 or covetousse. or bitternesse. But covetyse as was most
 newe and yfiable to hille the soor or covetyse. For as
 muche as hunger and thurst ben infirmities of mankinde
 though the first covetyse of man mete and drinke that ben as me-
 dicine to this infirmitie. whiche he take covetyse for he le his
 as sent. Austyn saith. This muche is covetyse. covetyse
 of abstynence & glorioure. by occasion of the hunger and
 the simple feare that cometh of the sustenance of. As it
 is alsove seide. for as muche as heve curiety the chere parte
 of this booke. that stant in contemplation of cyfres
 lesse. by feare the covetyse. Upon the desche day.
 to our example he began the fight against glorioure. specially
 by his fastinge in deserte as it is seide before. The desche
 via of glorioure he comite of his gracie for to shewe
 and feare the vertu of covetyse abstynence to hille and
 to feare. that it is blessed. Substantia circa. Amen.
 Amen. Sec[un]d[um] de Abstynencia in ep[ist]ola ad fratres de
 monte dei quantu[m] ad Pelagos. Item in oratione
 tertio de transmissio[n]e domini. **Explicit Conte[n]t[us]**
placio pro die overay et terra parte. Junip[er] gra
parto. Of the feelinge of the grete peevy. Such booke
 be multiplied. Cap[itu]l[um] 22.

1	2	3	4	5
BODLEIAN LIBRARY				

Devyn tymes the gospel telleth that our lord
 he multiplied a feede lous of loaves. and
 that such feare many thousands of men to
 the full. In whiche p[er]fesse takinge here
 to the doores & doores of our lord as the gospel expou[n]deth
 lath. Se may be to our sustenance gospel may good for
 p[er]p[et]u[is] to love him & shoulde him. and so shoulde him come
 truly. And specially Se may be in this p[er]fesse. that our lord the
 doore merciful & curiety. Forde. & s[an]ct[us] & ar[chi]f[er]re. Just
 that he doore merciful. shoulde his doore. Se he eare.
 thus. I have pyre and mercy upon the peple. so that mercy
 shoulde him & doore him to hille him & feare him at feare
 nes. for as sent. Specially. All the world is full of
 his mercy. Also he shoulde his grete curiety & s[an]ct[us].
 ful p[er]fences. in the deute that he assigues of our susten-
 this. For. In these these days the abedent & susten-
 and ben fastinge. and thus have not desche of eare.
 as though he Seare bounden to hem for he fastes soon
 unto hem. in that they aboden to Seare him. And in-
 thales in fastinge. it Seare for he Seare good & fast
 and not for his. But pat is his souerayne p[er]fences
 and curiety. & credeles p[er]fences. that he faste hille
 to dwell Seare as covetyse for our profit and our
 saluacion. though that he there thurgh to hem noon en-
 terte of his goodnesse. Se he for all the that fo-
 luen him by good fastinge. and glady heven hille doore
 tunc. and sepeu his fastes. he loush & faste hille
 to dwell Seare hem covetyse. and faste hille
 hem att sear nes. **Explicit** our lord the
 takinge here that many of the peple Seare come to

De misericordie
De curia

Ms. Rawl. A. 387 v. f. 68 v. 67 r

PLATE 3

Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Lyell 33. c. 1469-70.

Genealogy from Adam to Edward IV and his children.

a) fols. 1^v-2

The Prologue of this text speaks of providing 'comforte and solace to the bodely eye'. The visual clarity and appeal of this copy are remarkable.

This Plate shows the attractive arrangement of the preliminary material and of the genealogy and its accompanying commentary. On the left of fol. 1^v the Prologue begins, marked by an initial eight lines high on a gold ground with coloured leaf sprays extending into the margin. In the centre is the beginning of the Commentary, with a gold initial five lines high on a coloured ground. On the right a smaller gold initial flourished in brown marks the beginning of an account of the ages of the world. Below this is space for a diagrammatic representation of the division of the world into Asia, Europe and Africa.

The genealogy starts from a highly-coloured roundel of Adam and Eve and the Tree of Knowledge with the Serpent. The book is made from a long roll of parchment folded concertina-wise before binding, and the writing is parallel to the binding, so that the lines of descent run on continuously through the book. The gold line edged with blue in the centre of the page will trace the genealogy of Christ through the great men of the Old Testament. The thin red line to the right will lead to Noah's sons Ham and Japhet, and from Japhet will be traced the line leading to Brutus, 'first king' of England.

See also Plate 3b overleaf.

BOOLEIAN LIBRARY 2

Ms. A. 11. 33 fol. 1-2r

Considering the length and the hardnesse of holy scripture and unaided of the ground of the letter histo- rial. the negligence also of some that unright labour and vniuersal. some for lack of booke. seeking to gete solace to haue synephele. Wilking as in alder boke myn- dely to haue that the is in the tou: I haue put the names and the werkes of the holy old fathers by order and by verbe. the hystories bothe of pre- cetye and of kynges and har werkes. of Whou- out came after the fleshye. to bring it in to thys litle werke. to take alway length fro ham that ben vney and of litle velle: comforte and solace in foume and figure to the bodely eye: greet. plet and comforte to the soules of ham that ben velle willed and lit by studie to labour: as compendi- only: vnder felbe wordis: as god vnl send me grace I shal sette to my labour. no thyn- gyttinge vnto: nor cuttinge abay- thynge to suche werke accordyng. beginning at adam and descending by patryarches. iuges. kynges. prophetes. and preetes. and some order in har tyme vnto rest the ende of alle salbe and prophetes and by hys grace to be ended. for the tyme I beholde that many men desire greatly to haue knowlege of cronycles of kynges that atore tyme regned in thys londe. therefore I haue put the names of ham to the last werke. fro japhet the son of noe lynneth descending to vnto the first



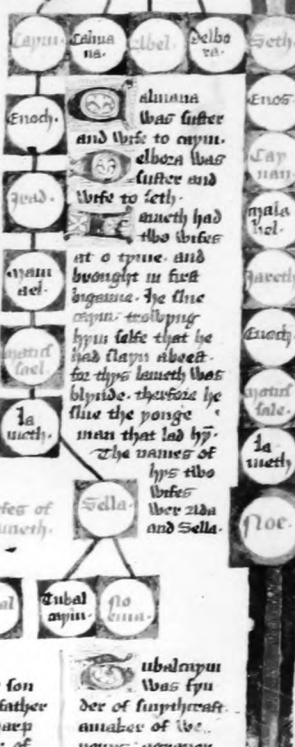
Adam was made in damascene field by the hand of god. and put in a place of delites called paradys. fro the which place come foure flodes. and when adam was in aslepe: god made of arabe of hys lide albanian and brought hys to adam. and adam gate hys auame as he had don to alle odee thynge. and called hys eua. After bothe adam and eua ete of the frute of life that the lord had forbode ham. wherfore bothe naked: cauered ham with fige lebes. For the disobediens god put ham bothe oute of para- dise. and sette cherynyn with alsharp beawnyng- fliered to kepe it fro adam and eua. and adenyed ham to gete har luyng vorth labour and swe- tyng of the erthe. that for the tyme of adam was acutted. Adam at thretye yere old after hys makinge gate capu. and at threty yere gate Abel. and when he was two hundred and threty yere old he gate seth. In hundred yere he vailed for Abel. the which moyses spake not of. and when he had luyed upie hundred yere and threty he died and is buried in ebron.

After the greet flode that was in the dayes of noe the foure principal kyngdomes had har beginning. The assyrians in the est: where belus was first kyng. The sithonites in the west: where egealus was first kyng. The scythes in the north: where sumus was first kyng. The egyp- tians in the south: where amens was first kyng. To belus kyng of assyrie succeeded hys wyfe semiramis

the first age of the world was fro noe to floe. The secunde fro floe to abraham. The thrid fro abraham to dauid. The fourth fro dauid to the tynnyngation of babilon. The chylder of noe were take in to thraldome for synne fro the londe of hebet that is ierusalem and the an- teri aboute by synngodans loz and brought to babilon and there there i captiuitie or thraldome thretye yere and ten. and that is called the tynnyngation. The fiftie age was fro the tynnyngation of babilon to crist. The last fro crist to the ende of the world. There were ten of ham that ben luyng. The seuenth is of ham that veytu and ben deed. that began fro the passion of oure lord: and that last to the day of dome. The eight that be of ham: that shal vnto. that shal beginne at the day of dome and that last vnto the ende. It is to knowe this ben not called ages for the number of yeres. as a thousand child be an age: but for meruelous thynge

kyng in the said land. and fro hys to edwarde the fourth kyng of the name after the conquest of england. Eua was an erthe tyler. and Abel shephered. In aday of sacrifice en- yn salbe hys brother gites receyved and not hys. Alse hys bro- ther Abel and receyved for hys made the cur- se of god. and atolyn there vnto to be alway deue and anyther alle hys life after.

Abel the first son of luyeth by hys wyte brought fure the first tentys and taber- nacles for shepheredis. and disposed flockes and dobes of bectis. and after har age and bynde departed ham. ubal the secunde son of luyeth was father of alle mannyng in haep and orgone: the hynder of



that adenyed babilon for the hed rite of the ve- anime. To semiramis succeeded sumus that was first maker of ydoles or mannyng. that made an ymage of hys father belus. to the which ymage if any dooe veynyng allid vnto: he shuld hane it. After sardanapallus had the same kyngdom. and after hys tynnyng the same kyng- dom to the medes and perles. upon whom reg- ned after thretynges: the which had adoughter. of which daughter came cyrus kyng of perle. Thys cyrus gate babilon by freyght by the way as the ryuer eufrat. upon the same babilon regned after cyrus: and hys colyn darus as ye may se in har place beneath.

Hys enoch pleid god and was translated in to paradys. and such with helia. and vnto abel that iudas the apolde brother to iames the lalle spocher of. and in hys tyme tyme lay that adam died.

So was charged of god to make thynge. which he made in the space of an hundred yere and threty yere. After the shype of the arke was made: it rayned foure dayes and foure nyghtes. God commaunded noe than of age lere hundred yere: and hys wyte and har louse. Sau. than. and japhet. and har wyte. eight saules in alle to entee in to the arke. And the greet flode was of height fiftene cubites above the mountaynes. When noe had with hys of alle bectis and foules: he sent oute arkon to se if the water with deolve. and after adolue thretynges. and at the secunde tyme: he brought abrauche of an olyne tre with grene leues in hys monthe. than vnto noe the water was restid. and went oute of the shype and hys people vnto hys ayere after that he entred in. the shype restid on the mountaynes of

that belid at the beginning of eney age. As in the beginning of the first age the world was made. In the beginning of the secunde was the world chaced by the greet flode. In the beginning of the thrid was ordeynde anichon: agayn original synne. In the beginning of the fourth was the tynnyngation of babilon. In the beginning of the fifth: the tynnyngation in to babilon. In the beginning of the sixth: the tynnyngation of the lye: the tynnyngation. that is that goddis son toke fleshye and blood and became man. In the beginning of the seventh: the aparyng of the pestes of hencu. In the begin- ning of the eight: that be- eadyng of alle that ben deed. and arward to good and pnel.

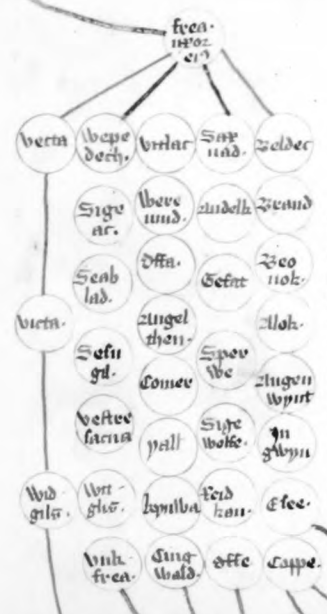


b) fols. 47^v-48

These spectacular pages represent the point in history at which the British kings were superseded by the Saxons. The line of Brutus has occupied the centre of the page since fol. 42, where the line of Christ ended at his Ascension. Gold crowns surmounting red or blue circles are used to indicate Brutus and his descendants. On fol. 48 gold crowns are given to the kings of all the seven kingdoms of the Saxon Heptarchy. On the left is indicated their descent from Woden, whose line travels back through the book to Japhet again. On the right the British line continues.

For full discussion of this manuscript, see above, pp. 29-35.

Woden **D**alga was aman of greet bearti and myght in chynale. and dehted hys self in lecheri and bit of hys bodi. he made suggest to hys donuacion five ples in the ocean. thes ben the names: yrlonde. yllonde. Gothlonde. Zkenep. slozway. and demuarke.



adwalla whan he was put one of the londe he went to the kyng of hrel bretain and through helpe of hys he had the reaultie ageyn. and after that he slue kyng Edwyme that was kyng of sloz humberlond. and my the peple with hys. and at hys coman demant pende the kyng of aorthelond slue kyng adwalde. and whan thys had walla had regned fourn and eight pece he died.



and slue the puple and wold haue dehtored the londe. but whan the kyng herd thereof he gathered hys peple and fanght with ham and slue many of ham. sume in the londe and sume in the water. And whan he had regned foure pece he died.

Careticus for hys wickednesse was behated of god and of alle the peple. he lost alle bretain through weere. and the saylons sent in to yrlond to haue helpe of Gormonde that was kyng of affricus. And Careticus was put out of the londe. and the bretons wev depnen out. and thys Gormonde dehtored careis and tolbnes and churches. and gafe the londe to the saylons that wev alle paynemes. and thei had no contendoune ne sacrauntis to luche tyme as leprt Gregoz was of roma. and in the tyme of Ethelberte that was kyng of kent he sent in to englond thustyn and odev mo to terte the fath and the lawe of god. and so the fath and contendoune come in to thys londe ageyn.

Adwaladu was kyng after hys fadir. In hys daies was greet pestilence and deht among the peple and greet distorde and debate betwee the lordes. and he was warned by an ungel to go to roma. and there he was made amonke. and than the saylons inhabit thys londe.

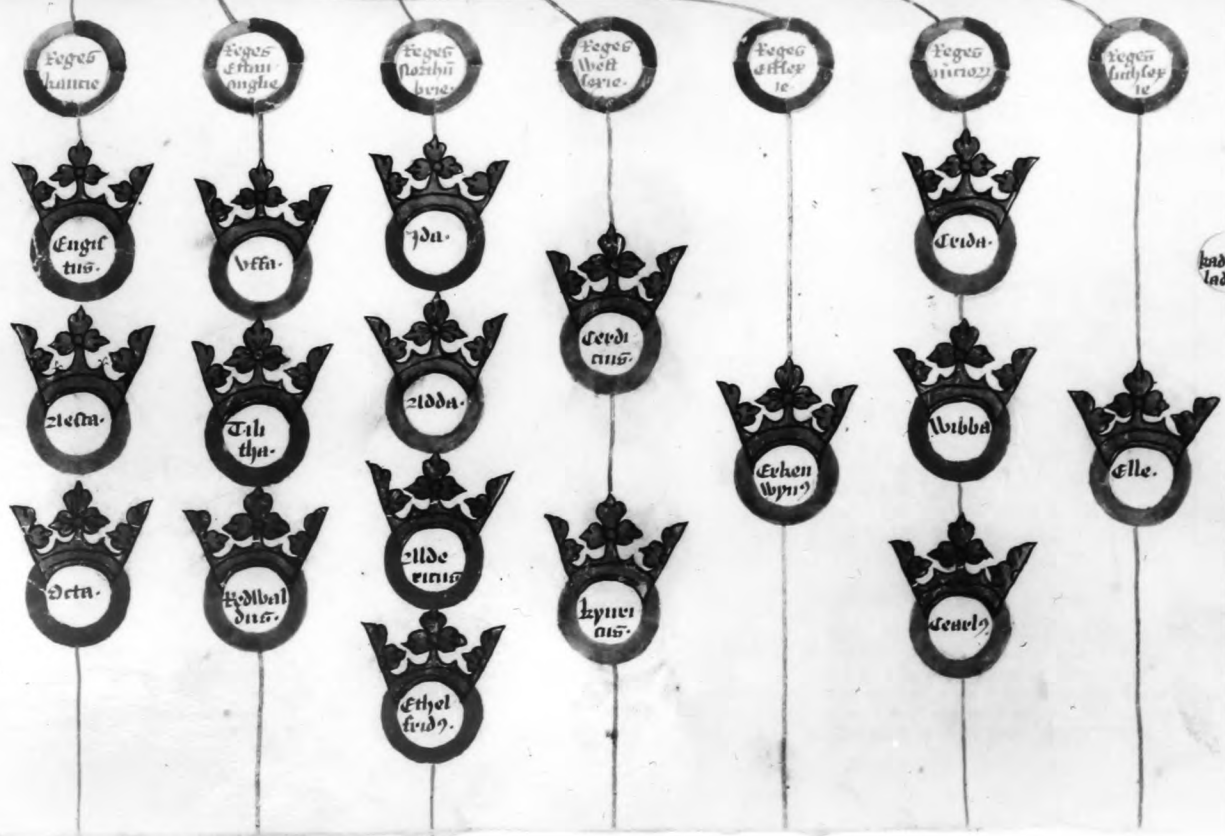


PLATE 4

Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Ashmole 61, fols. 16^v-17.

Early 16th century.

Verse compilation copied by Rate. (On these pages: the end of the romance of Sir Isumbras, and a metrical version of the Ten Commandments.)

The manuscript is written and decorated entirely in black ink, and lacks many of the decorative features and techniques that contributed to the visual impact of the manuscripts in Plates 2 and 3. It does have a visual impact nonetheless.

The most flamboyant features are the large fishes used to mark off one text from another, and the circular motif with the six-petalled design on fol. 17. The way this motif is introduced suggests a desire to fill space decoratively. Note also the larger and more formal script used for 'Amen quod Rate' at the end of each item, and the large initial at the beginning of a new item on fol. 16^v; and the diagrammatic indication of the rhyme schemes, which is itself a visual expression of one of the patterns in the text.

This manuscript is written on single paper sheets folded lengthwise to make a long, narrow book. A horizontal fold is also to be seen across the middle of the page - the sheets were probably kept folded together before binding, perhaps while the compilation was being put together for the personal use of the scribe who calls himself 'Rate'.

For full discussion, see above, pp. 50-51.

PLATE 5

Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Bodley 693, fols. 8^v-9.

Early 15th century.

John Gower, Confessio Amantis (first recension).

Note how the kind of apparatus appropriate to a learned book is here exploited as an opportunity for visual display: the running title liber primus is written in red and preceded by a blue paraph mark, flourished in red where there is space on fol. 9; initials marking off sections of the text are alternately gold flourished with dark purple and blue flourished with red; titles of sections, and Latin verse passages and prose summaries incorporated into the columns of text, provide frequent patches of red ink among the black used for the English verse. The double columns, fully ruled in ink, are set off against wide margins. Fol. 8^v coincides with the end of a quire; on this occasion, opportunity has been taken to decorate even the catchword with a sketchy leaf design washed with green. See above, pp. 54-5 for full discussion of the visual appearance of these pages.

On fol. 8^v, at the turning-point in Book I where the Lover meets the priest of Venus and begins his confession to him, is a historiated initial of the Confession, in the style of Herman Scheerre. The initial is linked with lavish marginal decoration. See above, pp. 55-6 for discussion of the subject and the placing of this picture.

for certis ludy amalyd.
As i nous hane a long hane had
It mayt make a wifdom and
It yet it schuld long wadure
D. wovius queue of lousz are
I us y lust y wanes hede
withode up caule a up querele
And zue me sou part of y gre
So yat i mayt fude in yis place
If you be gracions of woue
And why yat abord i foush anone
pekung of louse a queue boye
Zot he yet hung thy when abop
his chier alweibard fro me onte
And why he partid arte lastre
Dint nasyeles at he say wene
And yreue et poygh wpa hene rote
In him fonde i woue of lone
fey long luff hru naxt to dwelle
Zint chee yet is ye to gaur a welle
Of welle of of abo y schal beue
To he y lonen at yat the
Abor forto welle here. but
Ache caule on me us godly chier
yis wpyles to me tedje teze
Abat artow come a i abpote
Kyt as amau toy our of fleze
And yot wioe chee vix good hope
And had we wothung ten adpate
Zut for at yat i was not stidre
fey i ue foush no caule why
And ehe chee althey abhat abas
Abhat abozt ye why me up lody ten
Schal i be holic of elles dye
Ache teze telle me y malady
Abhat is y foz of abych y piteuast
fle huz at naxt for et y fenech
I can to ye no mediane
adamo i am amau of yue
yet in y court hane lousz fued
And alle yet i hane veduz
Zon abde abor my lousz abo
And chee ligan to loutre po
And tane y is many of lousc
ffantoz it to mayt ye yet yozb.

Alle plemidich it is brafic
And why y abozt i gan ton faile
On knes i why deuadon
And why ful gret contrauon.
I fide yanne toumuis
ayn lousz fadir Gennus
So as y hest ogyence
Of lousz for abozs reuene
y schal me schreuen at yis tume
I ye ye ter me uot wifkume
why schreue for jam redourted
In al myn hert a la contourted
yat iuc may up abozs gre
So schal i wode yuz fozere
Zot if y abozt up schreue opafe
fey jout to jout yanne i fupole
yet schal wathing be teze be hude
Zut woz up abozs beu to blund
yet i ue can up schreue
And why hys abozs redourte
he fide to me teze a fure
ye schreue to opafe a here
ay one i am assigned here. S iud genu fa
adus up mediane ad amau.
whos yet i am touchend of lone
Zut wathes foz conpofa fule
I want algate a medus abel
Zot only wath up schreue a
Of lone bot of oyr rnyges.
yat touchend to ye caule of use
fey yet blougey to poficie
Of pzet abozs adre yet i here
So yat i abozt wathing fozere
ye schal ye schreuen conchouit
Abhat y wath tale eulgent
So teze why y conforure
Zot of conchouit fual
Zouduz abozt au fcedal
fey lousz abozs fuzat i am
And why ye alle is yet i am
So yeule i to dme boye rto
fret y why odde lousgey to
ye wates foz teze amebc.

Al. pin?

Welle plemidic

MS Bodley 678 fol. 8v. 9r

5

PLATE 6

Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Digby 232, fols. 2^v-3.

c. 1420-1450.

John Lydgate, Troy Book.

Compare this Plate with Plates 5 and 7. There is comparatively little apparatus here, but note the attempt to make the book visually striking, even to the point of placing flourished paraph marks rather arbitrarily at various stages of the text. A more important opportunity for decoration is provided by the end of the Prologue and the beginning of Book I on fol. 3, and this has been boldly seized. Note the rubric 'Explicit prologus', with flourished paraph mark and blue line-filling; and the miniature and large initial linked with the marginal decoration. The line-filling and the extension of the sprays in the top and bottom margins suggest a wish to fill the decorated spaces as richly as possible. See above, pp. 57-9 for detailed discussion.

The miniature is a composite picture depicting several stages in the narrative of Book I: the destruction of the Myrmidons, the prayer of King Pelleus, and the transformation of ants into men to replace the destroyed race. See above, pp. 68 for further discussion.

PLATE 7

Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Rawl. poet. 223, fols. 43^v-44.

c. 1450-1460

Geoffrey Chaucer, Canterbury Tales.

Several of the features of these pages are characteristic of manuscripts of this date. Note the enormous initial with its strange stylised plant form (perhaps intended as the middle stroke of a W); the leaf sprays filling the whole width of the margins; the size and decorative quality of the running title; the heading written in an idiosyncratic and calligraphic version of Textura; the calligraphic tendencies of even the less formal Bastard Secretary script used for the text. Gold leaf is used lavishly. Ruling is in mauve ink.

But note also the basic arrangement of the pages: it is quite distinct from that in the previous two Plates, and is typical of Chaucer manuscripts by contrast with copies of Gower or Lydgate. The features that determine this difference are the single column of text, the use of running titles, and the elaborate heading for a new tale. See above, pp. 59-60.

PLATE 8

Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Douce 104, fol. 33^b recto.

Dated 1427

William Langland, Piers Plowman (C text).

This manuscript like the one in Plate 4, was not produced for the commercial market. It was not intended for display, and materials were not used lavishly. The page is cramped and the coloured drawing is rough. Nevertheless, visual features are important. It is argued above (pp. 84-8) that the manuscript was written, illustrated and annotated by one man for his own use, and that the visual features of the page were guides for his own reading.

Each line begins with an initial shaded in yellow. Latin is underlined in red. In the left-hand margin is a paraph mark in brown ink, with a red mark beside it, against the line

apparaillet as a palmer: in pilgrym wyse.

There is also a picture of a pilgrim in the right-hand margin, boldly coloured in yellow, orange and blue-green. As required by the text (C text, Passus VIII, lines 164-9 and 180), he carries a staff and wears a purse and a bell, and his hat is full of badges. His eyes are directed at the same line of text that is indicated by the paraph mark. The picture was painted after the text was written: note how the pilgrim's staff is painted round the text. The accompanying marginal note was written on top of the picture. The note is in a slightly smaller and more current script than the text, but appears to be by the same hand. Lower down the page is another note, 'nota ploughman'.

The running title ('Passus 7 P. 5') is in the handwriting of Francis Douce. It was probably he who added the folio number, and the line numbers in the left-hand margin. But the first owner of the book seems to have relied on different kinds of signals to mark the place in the text where it is discovered that it is the ploughman, not the pilgrim, who knows how to find Saint Truth.

horois + iumenta saluabitur quemadmodum multiplicasti

A thousand of men is: yungren to gydy
 quid vplward to qist: and to his deue medy
 fo haue grace to go to trowth: god leue pat we mote
 ac ye ne llyar no llye none so llyse: yat ye llye yed compe
 but blosted for ad bester: oney boches & hillyo
 go late llyar and tong: yat per a lede mett
 apparilet as a pakney: in p llyar llyse ^{no de}
 he bare a boude bonide: llye a boche llye
 in a llye llye llye: llye al a boue
 a bet and a bag: he bare by his syde
 an hondeyed of ampolled: on his hatt sete
 signes of syfle: and scholdes of galys
 and many a gouche on his clobe: bayes of ronne
 and ye veynate be for: for men schuld kuoll
 and se by ye signes whom he souyth had
 his folk prayned hym first: fro when he come
 from synay he soude: & fro ye sepulche of our lord
 in bethlem and babilon: I haue ten in dape
 in ymmony in all samudy: I haue bene etc
 ye may se by my signes: yat sitty on my capp
 I haue gode seyntes: for my soules helthe
 and walke ful wyde: in wete and in dry
 kuollst you orth a corseyut: qd he y me callly treme
 bondist llye vo ye llye: llye treme bouey
 nay so me god help: soude ye goune yan
 I saugh nene palney: llye pite ne llye scypp
 ayen afty hym but noll: in his place
 Petre qd a ploughman: and put forse his hede ^{no ploughman}
 I kuoll hym as byudely: as clerkes dop in boke
 Coufawer and kynd llye: taught me to his place
 and made me sikke sepen: to seme hym for eney
 wope to solke and to sett: ye while I llye myrth
 and solken his sedio: and sue his bestuo
 llye in and llye out: to wouten his pfitte



1	2	3	4	5
BODLEIAN 1		LIBRARY 2		

Ms. Douce. 104 fol. 33. r

The Visual Experience of

Fifteenth Century

English Readers

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ABSTRACT

This Thesis offers an examination of fifteenth-century English books, chiefly from Oxford collections, in terms of the visual experience of their readers.

An introductory account of fifteenth-century visual experience seeks to place English books and readers in a social context in which visual things were highly rated. For many people, visually attractive objects were part of everyday life. Public processions and pageants, and the pictorial inheritance of the church made visual experience available to many more.

Medieval ideas about visual responses in relation to mental processes are discussed as they impinged on the fifteenth century. Two major traditions of thought are considered. The Aristotelian idea, 'nunquam sine phantasmate intelligit anima', reached the West before 1235 through the translation into Latin of the De Anima with the commentary of Averroes. The discussion this provoked contributed to medieval faculty psychology, which explained how phantasms formed in the mind in response to stimuli received by the senses are dealt with by imagination and the ratio sensibilis and are stored by the memory. This theory was applied by thirteenth-century preachers to questions of effective communication, and was used to explain the appeal of exempla to the audience's imagination.

There was also a tradition of pastoral thinking about images in churches, which began with Gregory the Great. Pictures were regarded as books for the illiterate laity, an idea incorporated into thirteenth-century formulations of a ratio triplex for the use of images in churches. In this form the idea was known in late medieval England and was translated into the vernacular. The Aristotelian tradition seems to have reinforced this pastoral thinking: other clauses in the ratio triplex speak of images as aiding the memory and encouraging devotion. By the fifteenth century, the laity were no longer all illiterate. Evidence that images placed in churches could be directly linked with phantasms formed in the mind is to be found in vernacular devotional poetry.

Features of books originally developed to meet the needs of twelfth- and thirteenth-century scholars became in the later Middle Ages part of the general expectations of all readers. The ordering of thought in a text was reflected in its divisions which were marked by a hierarchy of decorative features in the manuscript copy. In the fifteenth century, there was a pervasive consciousness of the visual appeal of books, reflected in a proliferation of new decorative motifs, a rich palette, and a sense of the overall design of the page. There were certain changes of style in the second half of the century, but a continued admiration for 'enlumined' books.

Examples are presented to show how, by contrast with the fourteenth century, these developments affected all levels of production, in all kinds of books, and for all kinds of readers. It is suggested that a powerful awareness of books as things 'to behold' was a part of the experience of reading in the fifteenth century, and that the reader's

contact with the text and his understanding of it were often intimately connected with the visual appearance of the book in which it was written.

In spite of the strong visual appeal of many fifteenth-century books, they contain very few pictures. In this respect they are less colourful and elaborate than fourteenth-century books. This problem is discussed and some solutions offered. It is suggested that the fifteenth century's visual interest in books did extend to pictures, but that for financial reasons this interest could be expressed only sporadically or incompletely.

This suggestion is strengthened by the evidence of fifteenth-century printed books. Caxton produced only nineteen illustrated editions, many of them having no more than a handful of pictures. But on occasion, if skilled craftsmen or an existing pictorial model were available, he found it possible to produce a fully illustrated book for safe markets.

The fifteenth century's interest in pictures in books is demonstrated from some cases where there were no financial constraints. It is also suggested that in one of these cases, the Troilus 'frontispiece' in Cambridge, Corpus Christi College MS. 61, a miniature portrays the visual response of an audience to a text.

In a discussion of some fifteenth-century English texts it is pointed out that writers frequently demand from the reader a response to a visual image present in visible form or evoked in the reader's memory. Texts discussed include Lydgate's poem on the Dance of Death, his 'Sotiltes' and Mummings, and his poem Death's Warning; and some of the mystery cycle plays.

An element of literary imitation of Chaucer is recognised, and the visual appeal of passages in the Knights Tale and the Book of the Duchess is emphasized. It is suggested that real-life visual experience would have helped to determine fifteenth-century readers' response to Chaucer.

Lydgate's own response is shown to include attempts to outdo Chaucer in the visual appeal of the Complaynte of a Lovers Lyfe and the account of the rebuilding of Troy in Troy Book, II.

The Assembly of Ladies demands a more delicate response to ostentatious visual display. The meaning of the poem is not articulated by the words themselves, but resides in an elaborate series of pageants slowly unfolded by the words.

Some fifteenth-century devotional poetry is considered in similar terms. The lyric Mary Complains to other Mothers is shown to rely on a Pietà image to convey the full complexity of its meaning. In Books V and VI of Lydgate's Lyf of Our Lady the poet relies on a suggested picture of the Virgin, recognising both the limitations of the eyes, imagination and memory, and also their usefulness for communication and understanding.

The fifteenth-century reader's experience of all the visual features of a book, and the connection of this experience with his response to the text, are shown to be articulated in Lydgate's poem on The Fifteen Joys and Sorrows of Mary. The same experience is implied also in the common tag 'see and read' used by fifteenth-century writers addressing their readers.

Our estimate of literature is related to our estimate of books, and it is suggested that these conclusions about fifteenth-century books may have implications for our understanding of fifteenth-century English literature.
