ABSTRACT OF 'ELOQUENCE AS PROFESSION AND ART:
THE USE OF THE ARS DICTAMINIS IN THE LETTERS OF
GILBERT STONE AND HIS CONTEMPORARIES c1300-c1450.

CHARLES EVERITT
BALLIOL COLLEGE

THESIS SUBMITTED FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
MICHAELMAS TERM 1985.

This thesis is a study of the use of the ars dictaminis (the art of letter-writing) in fourteenth and early fifteenth century England. It has three aims: firstly to examine the extent to which the ars was an integral and important part of professional administration, ecclesiastical and secular; secondly to describe the nature of eloquent epistolary composition and compare this to the traditional requirements of the ars; and thirdly to investigate in the context of the preceding discussion the relationship between medieval rhetoric, middle English literature and renaissance humanism. The well documented career of Gilbert Stone, an episcopal chancellor, is used to initiate a wider investigation into those of his secretarial contemporaries. There is no evidence in later medieval England of a highly self conscious secretarial profession nor of a cult of eloquence. Letter collections point however to the importance of form and style, and an examination of their contents suggests that the rules of the ars, and particularly of the cursus, were used, adapted and developed, sometimes in quite routine documents, but more especially in 'eloquent' letters of persuasion. The ars, it is argued, was more vibrant, flexible and appropriate to its context than later critics have imagined. The ars, notably through Thomas Hoccleve, exercised an influence on poetic form and style; and even in a case such as that of Chaucer where there was not such a strong direct influence, it is possible that the ars may be seen as part of a complex conditioning literary environment. Finally the professional-literary structure underlying the use of the ars provided a motive and a means for the introduction of humanism into England.

ABSTRACT OF 'ELOQUENCE AS PROFESSION AND ART: THE USE OF THE ARS DICTAMINIS IN THE LETTERS OF GILBERT STONE AND HIS CONTEMPORARIES c1300-c1450'.

This thesis is a study of the use of the traditional medieval art of letter-writing (the ars dictaminis or ars dictandi) by certain professional letter writers in fourteenth and early fifteenth-century England. The basis of this use is studied in the early development of the profession of eloquent secretary in the ecclesiastical and secular administration of later medieval England, and its most notable consequences are sought in possible influences on middle English literature and in the introduction of renaissance humanism into England. These consequences suggest that later medieval England possessed a professional and administrative structure which to an extent encouraged and influenced literary activity, and they invite further study of this particular form of the complex relationships between rhetoric, literature and humanism.

In terms of its most direct bibliographical context this thesis is a development of the interest shown by a number of scholars in the history and use of the ars dictaminis in England, notably in articles and editions produced mainly in the 1930s. These include works by WA Pantin, N Denholm-Young, EF Jacob and HG Richardson, which were for the most part intended to be introductory discussions into the surviving artes dictaminis (treatises on letter-writing) and dictamina (letter collections) and into certain particular techniques related to the ars dictaminis, such as the form of prose rhythm known as the cursus and the use of euphuistic style, of colores or rhetorical

ornaments. EF Jacob concluded his discussion of the latter by commenting on the work remaining to be done on the letter collections of the period: 'the study of the letter-book is still in its early days, and the more work we can do upon it, the more light are we likely to gain from many different quarters upon the later Middle Ages in England.' Since Jacob wrote there have indeed been a number of further articles and editions, but there has not been any major treatment so that the main conclusions of Jacob and of those others who wrote on the subject have not received any detailed criticism - for the most part they have simply been repeated - nor have their various areas of study been set in any systematic or comprehensive context.

This interest in the ars dictaminis in later medieval England was part of a wider concern with the history and theory of rhetoric which was of particular interest to many English scholars because of the possible connections between medieval rhetoric and middle English poetry; most notably the influence of rhetoric on Geoffrey Chaucer has been keenly debated. This wider study has continued to the present with a number of works appearing on the subject notably those by JJ Murphy. These now provide a clearer and more detailed picture of the development of rhetorical theory in its separate branches such as the ars dictaminis. These studies have however concentrated on the theory of the various traditions rather than on their application. Yet Murphy himself notes at the end of his chapter on the theory of letter-writing that: 'the ars dictaminis is important in the history of the arts of discourse as a rare example of applied rhetoric. Its treatises deserve further study, and the

complex medieval relations between concepts of language and the social uses of language might well be illuminated for us by continued examination of this field.' In terms of its bibliographical context, this thesis is therefore intended to provide a more detailed and comprehensive analysis of the matters first discussed by Jacob and others, and thereby to go some way towards providing the study of applied rhetoric which Murphy has highlighted as a desideratum.

Jacob made particular mention in his article of the career and work of Gilbert Stone, chancellor to Bishops Robert Wyville, Ralph Erghum and Richard Clifford, who compiled towards the end of his career, in about 1408, a collection of some of the letters he had written on behalf of these bishops as well as a number that he had written at the request of various friends and other patrons, and in his own name. Jacob ventured to suggest that 'better examples of composition-books made in the fifteenth century could, no doubt, be found elsewhere.' In fact further study justifies a concentration on the career of Stone, since not only is his letter collection one of the best and, from a literary point of view, one of the most interesting to survive from the period, but he also provides generally the most explicit evidence about the profession and art of eloquence to be found in any of the letter collections or other sources which are examined in this thesis.

The method therefore adopted is to begin with a study of Stone's career and of his letter collection, and then in the light of the conclusions which emerge quite distinctly from this case study, to undertake a broader survey of professional eloquence in the careers and letter collections of his

contemporaries. The major concern is to demonstrate that Stone was not exceptional in the exercise of dictaminal skills, even if he provides more explicit evidence of them and even if the copying of a number of his letters in some other collections in the early fifteenth century suggests that he enjoyed a particular reputation as a skilled letter-writer. Stone's careful selection of his letters at the end of his career, in part at least as a memorial to that career, shows the importance he attached to the composition of these letters of eloquent persuasion. After a survey of letter-writers in ecclesiastical institutions: in episcopal chanceries, monasteries and universities, and in secular institutions: in lay households and in civic and royal government, it may be concluded that, while there was no consolidated, self conscious or well rewarded secretarial profession, and no cult of eloquence in later medieval England, the large number of letter collections which include letters from all these sources, point to the importance of proper epistolary composition and give some indication of the various officials responsible for the composition of these letters. Even the titles of some technical documents in formularies, which are very far removed from letters of persuasion, suggest that they too were composed with some literary or aesthetic standards in mind.

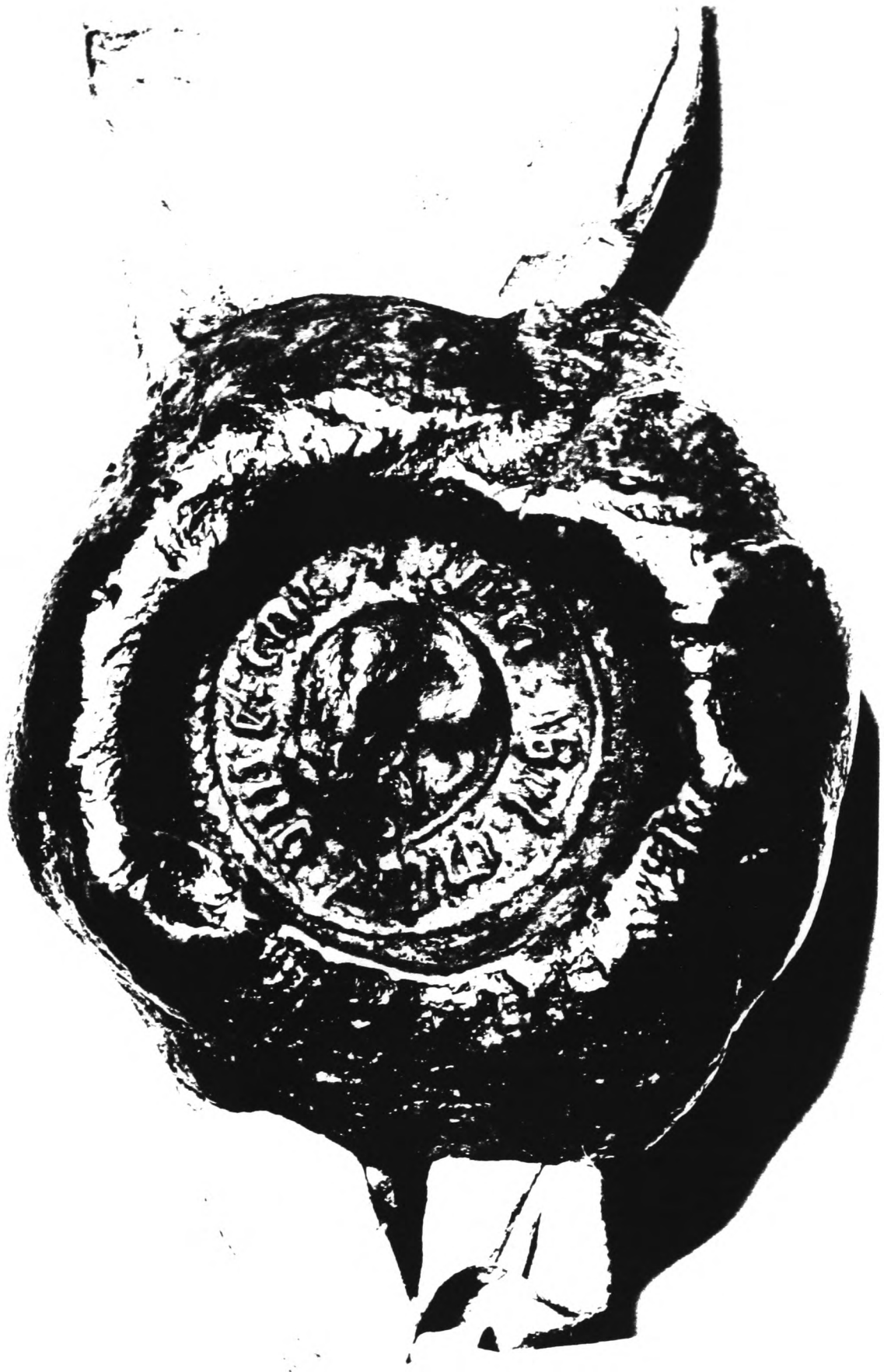
These considerations point to the need for a more detailed examination of the literary principles involved in the composition of these letters and documents, and of the relationship of these literary principles to the traditional requirements of the ars dictaminis. It may be seen thereby to what extent particular contingent necessities affected the

development of the theory of the letter. In the second part of the thesis therefore there is an examination of the ars dictaminis 'proper', that is of the rules concerning the parts of the letter, especially the opening parts, the salutatio and the exordium. This is followed by an investigation into the correlative styles associated with the ars dictaminis, the cursus and colores or rhetorical ornaments. It is concluded that, while most letter-writers seem to have been aware of the traditional five part structure of the letter, in the treatment of the introductory parts there were many signs of pragmatic adaptation and development. There are one or two examples of originality and independence in the construction of letters, but these are exceptions to the general rule. The cursus however, rather than the ars dictaminis proper, provides the most striking evidence of the attempt to observe traditional dictaminal rules; it was used, and on the whole well used. according to its requirements, by all the writers considered, including those responsible for the more technical and routine documents. Although the bulk of potential evidence necessitates the taking of a very small sample, an attempt is made to argue that this is a representative sample. Colores, on the other hand, like the rarer exordia were for the most part only used in the more important letters of persuasion. Their use was also to a very large extent controlled by the relative status of sender and recipient: a letter from a superior to an inferior would appropriately be 'sub mediocri stilo', but from an inferior to a superior it would be 'sub graviori stilo'. It is thus unlikely that the personal taste of the author had a great deal to do with the extent of rhetorical ornamentation.

In development of this point it is argued that Jacob was not in fact correct in his influential detection of a particular euphuistic fashion among Latin writers in the early fifteenth century; there appears rather to be a more steady and consistent use of the ars dictaminis and of its associated styles throughout the fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries. This is taken as support for the argument that the literary skills examined were more than a curious and transient by-way, the occupation of a select few whose tastes ran rather extraordinarily in that direction. It is indeed likely that some writers such as Stone had particular if modest reputations as exponents of eloquent composition, but nevertheless the evidence examined points to literary values firmly grounded and widely spread within the professional and vocational life of the period.

Thus it is argued that to an extent the professional structure of later medieval England was encouraging to literary activity. A proof of this is offered in three concluding chapters which trace the influence of the professional use of the ars dictaminis in Latin works undertaken by a number of officials, in a rather more complex way in some aspects of middle English poetry and in the fitful introduction of humanism into England in the course of the fifteenth century. It is argued that Stone and a number of his secretarial contemporaries composed literary works which emerged more or less directly out of their professional work; it is notable that a considerable number of the histories of the period were written by secretarial or administrative officials, and at least some traces of the ars dictaminis may be detected in

their work. Many of the important middle English poets of the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries also belonged to this secretarial and administrative world; while in most cases (Hoccleve is a possible exception) it may hardly be argued that their poetry issued directly from the skills acquired in their professional work, a number of apparent dictaminal influences of different kinds may be detected in their works; further study is required however before deciding whether, as in the case of Hoccleve, these were direct borrowings or whether, as seems more likely, they constitute a number of elements which poetic discourse held in common with, but not necessarily in dependence upon, the ars dictaminis. Of course even if this common ground between Stone and his contemporaries on the one hand, and Chaucer and his fellow poets on the other is recognized and accepted, it is nevertheless the case that while the former were for the most part the servants of their craft, the latter at their best were the masters of theirs. Lastly it is proposed that Stone and his fellow officials, while on the whole inappropriately described as early humanists, occupy an important place in the origins of humanism, since it was imported from Italy into England primarily because the successors of the patrons who had employed Stone and his fellows required household and administrative officials able to write in the new approved style. Humanism was of course to attempt many more extensive changes in the intellectual and literary horizons of later medieval England, but it was introduced in the first place as a fashionable (and in some ways not always entirely successful) change in established traditions of eloquence.



A copy of Gilbert Stone's seal attached to a grant to the Carthusian charterhouse at Wytham, now PRO E 329/352. I am grateful to the Public Record Office for permission to reproduce this photograph.

ELOQUENCE AS PROFESSION AND ART

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Charles Everitt

Balliol College

Thesis submitted for the degree

of Doctor of Philosophy

Michaelmas Term 1985 [ie 1986] TT

PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This thesis is an interdisciplinary study inasmuch as I have attempted to shed light on the subject of eloquence as profession and art in later medieval England from the different perspectives of historians and of students of rhetoric and literature. I owe much of the initial inspiration for such an approach to my undergraduate tutors of the university of Edinburgh, notably Mr Tony Goodman, Dr Angus Mackay and Professors Alan Harding and Denys Hay, who first encouraged me in the study of history and literature. I have often been aware however that my training is primarily a historical one, and in the course of this research I have often had cause to be grateful for the advice and criticism of specialists in the study of medieval literature, to Mr James Simpson and Dr Hugh White and to other members of the 'informal medieval seminar' in Oxford which brings together those whose interests apparently lie in different areas of study.

I am also grateful for help or advice on particular points to Mrs Judith Atkins, Dr BS Benedikz, Professor AL Brown, Professor Norman Davis, Dr Liz Gue, Fr MB Hackett OSA, Mr Jonathan Hughes, Professor Dominica Legge, Dr PS Lewis, Dr Philippa Maddern, Dr Peter McDonald, Professor JJ Murphy, Professor Emil Polak, Dr David Smith, Professor RL Storey and Dr Philippa Tudor. I gained greatly from the expertise of Mr Ralph Evans and Dr Ros Faith, colleagues on the History of the University of Oxford project, and I gladly acknowledge the use of the project's invaluable computer indexes to Emden's biographical registers. Drs Randall Rogers and Stuart Airlie and Miss Cynthia Stallman, fellow medievalists at Balliol, have shown me, sometimes to my surprise, that medieval history could still be the fount of excitement and illumination.

In the preparation of this thesis I have benefited greatly from the skilled typing of Mrs Tricia Carr, who has transformed a highly annotated and often nearly illegible manuscript into the present typescript, and from the proof reading of Mr Stephen Evans and, especially, of Mrs Kit Everitt. I owe my greatest thanks to three people. In the course of this research I have been continually blessed by the inspiration, advice, criticism and encouragement of my supervisor, Dr Jeremy Catto, who first suggested this subject to me and who has guided it to its conclusion, and I owe more than I can say to the love and very practical support of my parents without whom this thesis could have been neither begun nor completed.

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ABBREVIATIONS

BL	British Library, London.
Bodl.	Bodleian Library, Oxford.
BRUC	AB Emden, A Biographical Register of the University of Cambridge to 1500 (Cambridge 1963).
BRUO	AB Emden, A Biographical Register of the University of Oxford to A.D. 1500 (3 vols Oxford 1957-9).
DC Ric II	Diplomatic Correspondence of Richard II ed E Perroy (Camden Society 3rd ser xlviii 1933).
Denholm-Young 'Cursus'	N Denholm-Young, 'The cursus in England' in Oxford Essays presented to Herbert Edward Salter (Oxford 1934) repr. in idem, Collected Papers on Medieval Subjects (Oxford 1946); page references here are to the latter.
EAO	Epistolae academicae oxon. ed H Anstey (2 vols Oxford Historical Society xxxv-vi 1898).
Jacob, Florida	EF Jacob, 'Florida verborum venustas: some early examples of euphuism in England', Bulletin of the John Rylands Library xvii (1933) reprinted with a small number of changes and additions as 'Verborum florida venustas' in idem Essays in the Conciliar Epoch (Manchester 1943; 3rd edn 1963). Unless otherwise stated references are to the first edition of the article.
LB	John Lydford's Book, ed DM Owen (Devon and Cornwall Record Society new ser. xx 1974).
ML	John Mason's letter collection; referred to here from the copy in Bodl. MS Rawlinson C 7.
OD	'Letters of the Oxford dictatores', ed HG Richardson in OF ii.
OF	Formularies which bear on the History of Oxford c 1204-1420, ed HE Salter, WA Pantin and HG Richardson (2 vols Oxford Historical Society new ser. iv-v 1942).
Reg. Lacy	The Register of Edmund Lacy, Bishop of Exeter, 1420-1455: registrum commune, ed GR Dunstan (5 vols Canterbury and York Society lx-lxiii, lxvi 1963-72).
Reg. Lang.	The Register of Thomas Langley, Bishop of Durham, 1406-1437, ed RL Storey (6 vols Surtees Society clxiv, clxvi, clxix, clxx, clxxvii, clxxxii 1956-70).

Reg. Mart.	The Registers of Roger Martival, Bishop of Salisbury, 1315-1330 (4 vols) i ed K Edwards (Canterbury and York Society lv-lvi 1959-60) ii pts 1 and 2 ed CR Elrington (Canterbury and York Society lvii-lviii 1963-72) iii ed S Reynolds (Canterbury and York Society lix 1965) iv ed DM Owen (Canterbury and York Society lxviii 1975).
Reg. Melt.	The Register of William Melton, Archbishop of York, 1317-40 (2 vols) i ed RMT Hill (Canterbury and York Society lxx 1977) ii ed DB Robinson (Canterbury and York Society lxxi 1978).
SL	Gilbert Stone's letter collection contained in Bodl. MS Bodley 859, fos 1-42b.
SwL	William Swan's letter collection contained in Bodl. MS Arch. Seld. B 23.
WL	Abbot Whethamstede's letter collection printed from BL Cottonian MS Claudius D i in Annales monasterii S Albani a Johanne Amundesham monacho, ed HT Riley (2 vols Rolls series 1870-1) i.

INTRODUCTION

The aim of this thesis is to study the use of the art of letter-writing (the *ars dictaminis* of *ars dictandi*) in England in the fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries and to examine the implications of this use for both the professional and the cultural history of the period. It has been observed that there were only a small number of theoretical treatises on the *ars dictaminis* produced in later medieval England, whereas collections containing model letters of many various kinds proliferated, and so it has been concluded that these letter collections (*dictamina*) 'probably supplied the needs of Englishmen interested in the matter'.[1] This study will therefore concentrate on the evidence about eloquence as a profession and an art to be found in these collections, most of which were compiled by secretarial officials employed in different kinds of both ecclesiastical and secular administrative service as letter-writers. Given the paucity of original theoretical speculation this is indeed the only way to study the English evidence of the *ars dictaminis*, but this apparent limitation has the advantage of enabling the art to be studied not so much as the continuation of academic rhetorical tradition but as an applied medieval science, as a rhetoric which secured attention primarily because it was a practical necessity of business communication. My chief concerns are to show firstly that from the perspective of administrative history the *ars dictaminis* far from being a rather small and curious element within the professional activity of the period was, in fact, an integral and sometimes an important part of the conduct of business; secondly that from the perspective of rhetorical history the *ars* in later medieval England was more vibrant, flexible and balanced than some subsequent critics have thought; and thirdly that from the perspective of literary history the use of the *ars dictaminis*

[1] James J Murphy, *Rhetoric in the Middle Ages: a history of rhetorical theory from St Augustine to the renaissance* (Berkeley 1974), 239.

may make some contribution to our understanding of the relation of medieval rhetoric to English literature and to the humanism of the renaissance.

This thesis has developed out of a study which was originally intended to be limited to the career and work of Gilbert Stone. Stone, who was successively chancellor to Bishops Robert Wyville, Ralph Erghum and Richard Clifford, from c1375 until c1408, compiled towards the end of his life a collection of some of the letters he had written for his bishops in addition to some that he had composed in his own name and for various friends and other patrons. This collection is one of the best and, from a literary point of view, one of the most interesting to survive from the period. Despite the fact however that Stone has attracted greater notice from some historians on account of his modest literary achievements than most of his fellow officials,[1] it became apparent in the course of this study that the full significance of his career and work could only be properly appreciated in the context of a fuller examination of the use of the ars dictaminis by those who also worked as letter-writers in ecclesiastical and in secular institutions. In attempting to provide this fuller examination, Stone's career nevertheless has still been used to provide a case study, a point of departure and to some extent a control for those of his contemporaries. As will become apparent this central position is justified because Stone at nearly every point provides more explicit and self conscious evidence about the career of an eloquent secretary. Indeed in the light of this fact it will be a primary task of the thesis to demonstrate, by as wide an examination as is possible within the compass, that Stone's career was not in any way a peculiar or original one, but that despite the more explicit evidence he affords he was representative of a common and, therefore, a significant professional and cultural phenomenon in later medieval England.

[1] He was mentioned in T Tanner, Bibliotheca britannico-hibernica (London 1748) and later in the Dictionary of National Biography (article by AF Pollard). There will be a fuller discussion of his biography in the first chapter.

There was a flurry of interest in the ars dictaminis among English scholars in the late 1920s and 1930s; it will be clear from the bibliography that most of the important editions and studies of letter collections, and of such theoretical speculations as were undertaken in the later middle ages, were published during this period.[1] It will be apparent in the course of this thesis that the present study is indebted to the work of WA Pantin, EF Jacob, N Denholm-Young and HG Richardson. Denholm-Young and Richardson are particularly important for their classification of manuscripts and for their discussions of the use of certain dictaminal techniques in the composition of letters; while Jacob's essay on the florida verborum venustas, which has provided evidence for the state of Latin literary activity in the early fifteenth century for a number of major studies,[2] is the chief source of inspiration for the study of the wider literary implications of the ars dictaminis. Jacob was moreover the first to draw attention to the importance, and the first to make a serious study of, Gilbert Stone as a letter-writer. In what follows I make a number of small corrections to Jacob's findings and, more importantly, at the end of the second part I challenge his influential conclusion that there was a particular fashion for the florida verborum venustas in the early fifteenth century, but nevertheless in its perspective and in its inspiration Jacob's article, among the works of modern scholars, represents the fons et origo of my own study. Jacob concluded his article by writing: 'The study of the letter-book is still in its early days, and the more work we can do upon it, the more light are we likely to gain from many different quarters upon the later Middle Ages in

1 Notably WA Pantin, 'A medieval treatise on letter-writing with examples from the Rylands Latin MS 394', Bulletin of the John Rylands Library xiii (1929); Jacob, 'Florida'; DC Ric II; Denholm-Young, 'Cursus'; OF and Anglo-Norman Letters and Petitions: from All Souls MS 182, ed MD Legge (Anglo-Norman text society iii 1941).

2 For example JWH Atkins, English Literary Criticism: the medieval phase (Cambridge 1943); R Weiss, Humanism in England during the Fifteenth Century (Oxford 1941; 2nd edn 1957).

England'. In fact despite the publication of the diplomatic correspondence of Richard II, selections from the formularies associated with the Oxford dictatores, the Liber epistolaris of Richard de Bury and the books of John Lydford and William Asshebourne, as well as a number of articles on the subject, there has not been any substantial, comprehensive and systematic study of the letter collections, or of the evidence contained in them concerning eloquence as profession and art, since those 'early' days.

If however there has been no major study of the English evidence for the use of the ars dictaminis in the last forty years, there has nevertheless been a comparatively recent upsurge in the study of the theory and history of medieval rhetoric on a wider scale, which is of manifest significance both for historians and for students of literature. James J Murphy and those others engaged in this work have understandably concentrated on the overall intellectual and literary framework within which the subdivisions of medieval rhetoric originated and developed, as well as on the possible influence of these forms of rhetoric on medieval literature.[1] Although I concentrate here on the actual use of the ars dictaminis by professional administrators, a subject which has not yet been much explored by these students of rhetoric,[2] it will nonetheless be evident, particularly in the second part of this thesis, that the clarity brought to the medieval theory of the letter by Murphy and others is of substantial assistance.

The order of parts which follows here has been determined by the three major areas into which the subject matter divides: administrative, dictaminal

[1] See for example James J Murphy (ed.), Medieval Eloquence: studies in the theory and practice of medieval rhetoric (Berkeley 1978).

[2] Murphy ends his chapter on the art of the letter in Rhetoric in the Middle Ages with the words: 'Yet the ars dictaminis is important in the history of the arts of discourse as a rare example of applied rhetoric. Its treatises deserve further study, and the complex medieval relations between concepts of language and the social uses of language might well be illuminated for us by continued examination of this field.' (p. 268).

and literary. The thesis is however more than a mere conjunction of three separate areas of study; in fact, the argument of the three parts is intended to hang together interdependently. The first part on the profession of the secretarial official and the need for him to be skilled in the techniques of eloquence begins with an introductory discussion of the career of Gilbert Stone; there follows a more general discussion of the main points which emerge in the course of this introductory examination, designed to show to what extent Stone was representative of a widespread profession based on the use of eloquence, and whether this profession was in any sense a cohesive and self conscious one. This discussion includes writers in both an ecclesiastical setting, in episcopal chanceries, monasteries and in the universities, who wrote mainly in Latin, and in a 'secular' setting, in lay households and in the institutions of civic and royal government, who wrote mainly in French or English. The evidence considered at this stage is almost entirely external to the actual content of the professional letters which survive from the period. The examination into the degree of use of the ars dictaminis which is undertaken in the second part is thus an attempt by consideration of this 'internal' evidence, to demonstrate what is signified by the use of the terms 'eloquent' and 'literary' in the opening discussions, and to show that they are indeed appropriate there. At the same time the examination into the application of the dictaminal art is considerably assisted, and in certain aspects made more comprehensible, by being based upon an understanding of the professional structures within which it functioned and with whose requirements it had to comply. The discussion in this second part has three major divisions: firstly what may be termed the ars dictaminis proper, namely the division of the letter into parts with special instructions, notably about the opening clauses of the letter is discussed; then the correlative styles which may be associated with the ars are examined, namely, the form of prose rhythm known as the cursus and the use of flores, Jacob's florida verborum

venustas, which were often associated with the ars dictaminis as well as with the other branches of medieval rhetoric. Finally, just as the first two parts mutually inform one another, so the third part on eloquence, literature and humanism is intended to investigate the extent of the connection between the use of the term 'literary' in the first two parts and its more normal usage in discussions of the literature of the period. At the same time, as part of a more specialised question, it will be enquired whether the exercise of professional eloquence investigated in the preceding two parts of the thesis could have had any direct influence on the composition of some of the major literary works of the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries. In conclusion the large question of whether there could be any relation between the profession and the art of letter-writing and the importation of renaissance humanism into England in the fifteenth century will be broached.

It remains, before beginning this investigation, to explain some of the technical terms and methods employed and to point to certain necessary limitations of the present study. Throughout I have referred to Stone and his contemporaries in a necessary descriptive circumlocution as 'secretarial officials'. While this phrase, often repeated, may seem rather clumsy it is a suitably neutral term to describe collectively officials who were known by a considerable variety of title. To call them simply 'secretaries' would be begging a question, since as will become apparent this was an expression of rather restricted usage. I have generally referred to my main sources as 'letter collections', letter-books or dictamina, since these too are neutral terms. As will be clear they are used to describe a highly miscellaneous form of composition. Besides these technical terms, I have had recourse in chapter five in the discussion of the cursus to statistical tables: Denholm-Young deliberately eschewed these in his discussion, but it may be argued that it suffered as a result, and despite the difficulties involved in securing a representative sample and

the care that is needed in their interpretation, their inclusion here may be justified on account of the important conclusions that are derived from them.

Inevitably, given the move from an exclusive concentration on the career of Gilbert Stone to the extensive area of late medieval letter-writing I have had to be selective in my use of sources, specifically in the second part. Moreover I have concentrated there on letter-writing in Latin, notably in the section on prose rhythm since it needs specialised skills to discern the use or otherwise of cursus in Anglo-Norman and in middle English. In the final part of the thesis, particularly in the chapters on middle English literature and on humanism, I cannot do more than point in the direction of possible future study by commenting on past scholarship in the light of my findings in earlier chapters and by suggesting certain possible connections; I hope that these may prove fruitful for criticism, or for further elaboration by those who work in these areas.

Part One

PROFESSIONAL ELOQUENCE

Chapter One

GILBERT STONE

Gilbert Stone's career is examined in this chapter as a case study of professional eloquence in fourteenth and early fifteenth-century England. Stone is more explicitly suggestive than most of his contemporaries about the nature of his profession, particularly about the element of literary skill in his work, although even in his case the practice of a professional eloquence in the sense to be proposed here must for the most part be inferred from his letter collection. He provides a clearer professional biography than most of his fellows, which brings together evidence of secretarial duties and of professional literary activity, but the problem involved in the interpretation of his career introduces the wider problem which will run through the study of secretarial careers in the following two chapters. This question - what constitutes proper evidence of a professionai eloquence? - leads to further substantial questions which are also anticipated in a study of Stone's career. If literary skill was an element in his career, how important was this element? And even if it was definitive of him as an official, how important was he in the administrations of his bishops: was literary skill a small and purely decorative addition in administration or was it deeply grounded within the professional and vocational life of the period?

Stone was born in c 1338, and was first educated at the Augustinian house in Stone, Staffordshire, the place from which he took his name.[1] He probably studied at Oxford, becoming a master of arts between 1364 and 1368, and just before this, in 1363, he was created a notary public by a

[1] Brief accounts of his life and career are in the Dictionary of National Biography (article by A F Pollard), in Jacob, Florida, 286-290 and in BRUO iii. 1787-8.

bull of Urban V.[1] During his long career (from c 1360 to c1410) he served Robert Wyville bishop of Salisbury (1330-1375), Ralph Erghum also bishop of Salisbury (1375-1388) and bishop of Bath and Wells (1388-1400), and Richard Clifford bishop of Worcester (1401-1407) and of London (1407-1421).

Only the bare outline of a career, such as survives for most of his contemporaries, could be reconstructed in Stone's case, were it not for the survival of his Copie quarundam epistolarum. He compiled the collection between 1407 and 1410 and included in it, according to his own description, letters written on behalf of his three bishops, for certain friends and in his own name.[2] There are in fact one hundred and twenty three letters covering forty two folios, one in French and all the others in Latin. Just over a half of these are letters written on behalf of his bishops, comprising a wide variety of types and subjects in the general area of ecclesiastical politics and administration. When these business letters are examined in parallel with what is known of Stone's career, a more detailed picture emerges of the life of an official in episcopal administration, and more particularly some hints are given about the nature of his professional skills.

Stone entered Wyville's household in the early 1360s. He was mentioned twice in Wyville's register: in 1368 and again in 1374 his name was entered as a witness to the bishop's acts, on the first occasion to an episcopal visitation of a monastery and on the second to the amalgamation of two churches.[3]

1 Salisbury diocesan registry, the episcopal register of Robert Wyville bishop of Salisbury 1330-1375 ii. fo 308; ibid. the episcopal register of Ralph Erghum bishop of Salisbury 1375-1388, fo 171.

2 SL fo 1 has at the top the title: 'Sequitur copie quarundam epistolarum quas magister Gilbertus de Stone ecclesie cathedralis Wellensis canonicus venerabilium patrum nuper dominorum suorum dominorum Roberti Wyville episcopi Sarisbiriensis, et Radulphi Erghum successoris sui ab ecclesia Sarisbiriensi ad Bathoniensem translati et Ricardi Clyfford Wygorniensis episcopi successive cancellarius nomine dictorum dominorum et aliorum amicorum suorum ac eciam nomine suo proprio nuper scripsit et cet.'

3 Reg. Wyville, fos 216, 219.

Although he was already a notary public he did not append a notarial instrument in either case. It is likely that three of the letters in his collection were originally written for Wyville: on behalf of 'R. Saresburiensis episcopus' they concerned a dispute about the episcopal disciplining of the abbess of Shaftesbury.[1] These few details hardly give an adequate account of Stone's precise position in Wyville's administration. At the beginning of his letter collection he made out in retrospect that he had been chancellor to all three bishops. There is nothing explicitly to contradict this, no other official described as chancellor in the register for example, but it is unlikely for two reasons. It would be natural for Stone first to serve an apprenticeship in Wyville's household rather than entering it immediately in a permanent senior position. Although the fragmentary evidence in the years before 1375 does not clarify this, the more substantial records of his early Erghum years may suggest, as will be seen, a gradual increase in responsibility and seniority within the household. A further complication, more important for the central argument of this chapter, is that the precise meaning of the term 'chancellor' was not fixed. The work of the episcopal chancery as a whole is however easier to determine than Stone's particular official position. Wyville's register, as most episcopal registers, comprises only a fraction of the documents and instruments concerning admissions, institutions and ordinations, which passed through the bishop's secretariat and administration. The composition and execution of this 'technical' business would in terms of its bulk have been Stone's major occupation.[2]

[1] SL fos 3b-4. The bishop could superficially be either Wyville or Erghum, but the officials named in the letters suggest the former; see S E Overton, 'Ralph Erghum with special reference to his tenure of the see of Salisbury, 1375-1388' (Oxford BLitt thesis 1960), 24, 155.

[2] In this and the following chapters there will be no attempt to give any systematic consideration to what is loosely described here as 'technical' business, and this will be examined only in so far as it overlaps with dictaminal concerns; but see for example C R Cheney, Notaries Public in England in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries (Oxford 1972) and works cited at the beginning of the next chapter.

Stone's official position becomes a little clearer from the beginning of Erghum's episcopate in 1375; in 1376 he appended for the first time his notarial instrument to a document, describing himself as 'ego Gilbertus de Stone clericus Lichfeldensis diocesis publicus auctoritate apostolica notarius'.[1] From 1381 he was occasionally given a more specific title; in a commission for the creation of a chantry he was described by the bishop as 'our scribe', in addition to being a notary public,[2] and on two occasions this was amplified to 'registrar and scribe of the acts'.[3] These formal titles were not always used, however, and he was often entered with the simpler title of notary.[4] His position after Erghum's translation to Bath and Wells is complicated by the fact that the bishop's register does not survive. There is some evidence, however, that he was still called 'notary public and bishop's registrar' and was carrying out duties similar to those

1 This was probably the case, although the episcopal register, as in other dioceses, does not give a complete picture of episcopal administration (so, for example, the Shaftesbury letters mentioned above are not entered). He could therefore have composed notarial instruments earlier; but it seems significant that the bull creating Stone a notary in 1363, was not entered in the register until Erghum's time, suggesting perhaps it did not become necessary until then. See Reg. Erghum, fos 171 (creation as notary), 121b (first notarial instrument). His notarial subscription and instrument appeared on several subsequent occasions, see Reg. Erghum, fos 147b, 150b, 173b, 183, 187, 188b, 190, 195 and 198.

2 'In quorum testimonium atque fidem nos Radulphus permissione divina Saresburiensis episcopus antedictus presentes litteras seu presens publicum instrumentum magistri Gilberti de Stone notarii publici scribe nostri publicari mandavimus sigillique nostri appensione fecimus communiri.' Reg. Erghum, fo 168.

3 'Et ego Gilbertus de Stone clericus Lichfeldensis diocesis publicus auctoritate apostolica notarius Reverendi in Christo patris ac domini domini Radulphi dei gratia Saresburiensis episcopi suprascripti Registrarius et actorum scriba...' Reg. Erghum, fos 200b, 201.

4 See above, note 1, for examples of this.

that he had first practised under Wyville.[1] Further in about 1397 Erghum wrote to the Wells Chapter asking them to admit Stone to residence as a canon within the close; in the course of the letter he commended Stone as 'our dear chancellor and brother', and he continued 'for more than twenty two years this most dear clerk and chancery official has worked assiduously in our business with the greatest diligence and faithfulness.'[2] As earlier during his time with Wyville there is no evidence of any official occupying an equal or more senior position in the episcopal secretariat.[3] It seems that Stone could be appropriately described as either registrar or chancellor, contrary to the general tendency of the period already evident in the chancery of the bishop of Salisbury in the early fourteenth century, to divide these two offices between different officials with separate functions.[4]

It is possible that Stone particularly associated the title of 'chancellor'

1 In 1391 he was described as such when attesting the appropriation of the church of Curry Rivell to the prior and canons of Bisham; in the papal registers he was reported to have composed the letters and documents. He was also given the title when he added his notarial subscription to the bishop's inspeximus, renewing letters of dimission to the Augustinian prior and convent of Bruton; Historical Manuscripts Commission: Calendar of the Manuscripts of the Dean and Chapter of Wells (2 vols London 1907-1914) i. 407-8; Calendar of Entries in the Papal Registers relating to Great Britain and Ireland: Papal Letters, 1198-1484, ed. W H Bliss and others (15 vols in 16 London 1893-1960, Dublin 1978) iv. 157, 327.

2 '... pro carissimo clerico cancellario nostro confratre vestro magistro G. de Stone ... ab annis etenim viginti duobus et amplius ... noster clericus predilectus et concurie commensalis, in nostris ministeriis assidue laborans per omnia summe diligens et fidelis...' SL fo 13.

3 Masters John Vowel, William Burton, John Wetton and Thomas Wambergh were all notaries who seem to have had some connection with Erghum's household; likewise Master Richard Thornecombe, who was described by Bishop Wyville as 'notarium nostrum publicum', and who was still with Erghum in 1386; Reg. Wyville i. fo 194; Reg. Erghum, fos 16, 16b, 17, 45b, 65b, 85, 92-93, 95b. Master Thomas Terry seems to have been one of Erghum's closest confidants, and like Stone, moved with the bishop from Salisbury to Bath and Wells. He was also described as a notary public, Reg. Erghum, fo 79. For all the above, see also Overton, 'Ralph Ergum', esp. 36-41.

4 For this see the following chapter, esp. pp. 38-50.

with letter writing, since he used this title at the beginning of his collection. If this surmise is correct then in this too Stone was in tune with the more traditional understanding of the role of the chancellor, seeing it as secretarial rather than executive: more will be said about this below. Whatever his particular title, and whatever his other notarial business in the chancery, it is certainly the case that he was engaged upon drafting the letters missive of his bishops throughout his career.

The authenticity of the official letters in his collection cannot for the most part be checked, although four of the five letters from Erghum's Salisbury episcopate are also to be found in Erghum's register: these comprise an instruction for prayers to be offered for the peace of the realm, an impassioned mandate for the excommunication of the murderers of Archbishop Sudbury in the revolt of 1381, a warning to the bishop of Lincoln about pagan worshippers at a well and a request to pray for the soul of John Harewell late bishop of Bath and Wells. The copies in Stone's collection, apart from a few changes in wording, follow closely those in the episcopal register.[1] In some other cases where there is a series of letters on a particular subject, their authenticity is implied because later letters refer back to earlier ones and appear to make genuine responses to comments made by recipients.[2]

There are too many to describe each letter individually, but it is possible to give an indication of the various types in his collection. A substantial proportion of the business letters were directed to the papal curia; so for example Stone included a number concerning a dispute between the bishop and the dean of Salisbury which had originated in the early years of

[1] Compare SL fos 2, 2b, 3, 5b with Reg. Erghum fos 114, 180b, 181, 187.

[2] While fictitious letters could be inserted into collections, sometimes as in Stone with full names and other details supplied, ingenuity did not generally extend to compiling a complete correspondence which follows the development of a case known to be genuine from other sources.

Wyville's episcopacy, but which came to a head under Erghum's successor John Waltham. Stone and Erghum both retained an interest in the case for the letters were all written after Erghum's translation to Bath and Wells. Stone included eleven letters addressed to the pope, to various cardinals, to English proctors or from Stone to Waltham reporting on his part in the case. Five of these were written in the name of Richard II and one in the name of Queen Anne, their support being thereby solicited; it is likely that the letters were first drafted by Stone and then sent for approval to Waltham who in turn petitioned the king or the queen to send them in their names.[1] Letters were also sent in the king's name against Cardinal Adam Easton in the mid 1390s,[2] and Bishop Clifford hoped that the king would put his name to one concerning his case against certain Lombard merchants, but it seems that this letter was not sent.[3]

Clifford's letters to the curia predominate in the second half of the collection; the early ones before his promotion concern his attempts to secure provision to Bath and Wells, while later ones are mainly about his financial wrangles with the merchants and his wish to avoid paying the first

[1] SL fos 15b-19. For the background to the dispute see Hemingsby's Register, ed H M Chew (Wilts. Nat. and Archaeol. Soc. records xviii 1963), 257-8. For notices of the royal correspondence see DC Ric II, 128-9. A letter on the outcome of the dispute is in SL fo 26.

[2] Erghum originally found himself caught in a dispute between the cardinal and the king, in which he took the king's part appealing to the pope against Easton, SL fos 10-10b, 12b, 24b-25, 25b; DC Ric II, 152-60.

[3] SL fos 35b-36. A royal letter recorded in All Souls MS 182 indicates that the king did not in the end support Clifford; Henry wrote to Archbishop Arundel informing him he had initially intended to send the letter but he had subsequently learnt that the Albertinis brought Clifford bulls from the pope at their own cost; when he saw the bishop's obligation with the episcopal seal to pay them 2000 marks he decided not to write in consequence, Anglo-Norman Letters and Petitions: from All Souls MS 182, ed MD Legge (Anglo-Norman Text Society iii 1941), 350-1.

fruits of Bath and Wells after his translation to Worcester.[1]

Stone's other letters for Erghum and Clifford cover a wide range of subjects. Apologies for absence from parliament occur in the name of both bishops.[2] There are also a number of letters in which the bishops acted as patrons, seeking benefices for various persons or interceding in legal matters,[3] and there is rather a small series of pastoral letters, mainly seeking to correct moral offences.[4] Finally Erghum and Clifford also employed Stone to compose a number of personal letters. So Erghum apologized profusely for a misunderstanding he had had with Clifford over an invitation to stay and over certain comments about the possibility and desirability of his being succeeded by Clifford.[5] Clifford in turn employed Stone to write two letters of friendship, one to an unnamed recipient and the other to John Maydenhithe dean of Chichester, apologizing for not offering him hospitality on a previous occasion. He wrote to a Welsh bishop asking him to lend him some hunting dogs, and in a letter apparently referring to an illness that had kept him from parliament he thanked the abbot of Evesham for sending him some effective medicine with one of his monks.[6] While the curial and business correspondence was no doubt the most crucial, these personal letters

[1] Letters on his provision are in SL fos 7, 23, 23-23b, 23b-24 (two to the cardinal bishop of Bologna, one to the cardinal archbishop of Naples and three to the pope). Letters concerning his financial business addressed to the same recipients and other cardinals and curial officials (although often with the specific details of the business unexpressed) are in SL fos 30b, 31b, 35b-36, 36b, 39, 39-39b, 40-40b, 40b-41, 41-41b. Clifford succeeded in avoiding the payment of the first fruits, but he was still repaying the Lombards in 1406: The Register of Richard Clifford, Bishop of Worcester, 1401-1407, ed W E L Smith (Toronto 1976), 29.

[2] SL fos 14-14b, 25b-26, 26-26b, 26b, 26b-27, 37, 37, 37b.

[3] SL fos 8-8b, 8b-9, 13b-14, 15, 30-30b, 34, 34-34b, 41-41b, 41b.

[4] SL fos 15-15b, 22, 28-28b, 28b, 34, 35, 36-36b, 37b-38.

[5] SL fos 25-25b.

[6] SL fos 29b, 30, 32-32b, 37b.

reveal something of the range of Stone's letter-composition on behalf of his bishops.

Stone occasionally performed services beyond his secretarial duties. One important function related to his letter-composition was the delivery of letters. Erghum recommended him to three recipients as the bearer of the letter, describing him in one as 'our Gilbert who will expound these matters to you more fully' and in another as 'the bearer of this letter, our dear clerk Master G de Stone'.[1] Clifford also employed him as a messenger on three occasions; in one of these, addressed to the Chapter of Wells, the purpose of the letter was unstated, the substance of the message being left to be conveyed orally by Stone, who was to be heard 'on our behalf relating our intention faithfully'.[2] Messengers, particularly if entrusted with a secret message not committed to writing were as, if not more, important than the drafter of the letter.[3]

Stone was also employed in more diverse activities which had less direct contact with his letter-writing. The bishop's chancellor frequently presided in the bishop's audience court by special commission, and this left the registrar increasingly in charge of secretarial activities. There is no indication that Stone performed this function. He was however involved towards the end of his career in formal administrative work. On the death of his career in formal administrative work. On the death of Bishop Erghum

[1] SL fos 13-13b, 26, 26b.

[2] SL fos 29-29b, 30b-31, 34b.

[3] According to G Constable: 'the messenger in the Middle Ages, as in Antiquity, was much more than a delivery boy and acted to some extent as an envoy or ambassador, transmitting orally not only secret messages, or news too dangerous to put in writing, but also the text and message of the letter itself. The persistence of this element in western Latin epistolography has been relatively neglected by scholars.' G Constable, Letters and Letter Collections (Typologie des sources du moyen âge occidental fasc. 17 1976), 53-4. For an example of the misunderstandings which an unreliable and ill-intentioned messenger could effect see SL fos 25-25b.

in 1400, Archbishop Arundel appointed him together with John Maydenhithe to administer the spiritualities of the see of Bath and Wells sede vacante,[1] and in the summer of 1402 he was commissioned to act as Clifford's vicar general in spirituals during the latter's absence abroad on royal business. His commission as vicar general gave him full powers in the city and diocese of Worcester to exercise the bishop's jurisdiction except in such matters as required the action of a consecrated bishop. This empowered him to admit and institute to benefices, to examine elections in religious houses, to hear and decide all cases within the diocesan spiritual jurisdiction, to initiate and conduct probate of estates whether there was a testament or not, to inquire into crimes among his subjects, and to correct or punish canonically. Clifford's register, which is probably an imperfect record of all Stone's business transacted as vicar general, indicates that he carried out a number of admissions, institutions, exchanges, collations and mandates for ordination, while he also summoned the clergy of the archdeaconries of Worcester and Gloucester to present to them the urgent need of a charitable subsidy for the bishop, which Stone and a number of others were to levy and collect.[2] Stone's commission as vicar general ended on the return of Clifford before the close of 1402, and he was not thereafter involved in the administration of the diocese by a similar special commission. This temporary appointment marks him as typical of traditional vicars general compared to the permanent officials who were to become more common in the fifteenth century.[3]

[1] See I J Churchill, Canterbury Administration (2 vols London 1933) ii. 254. The papal letters also record that they granted certain appropriated churches to the prior and convent of Taunton, Cal. Pap. Letters v. 362.

[2] Reg. Clifford, 57-59, 111-112.

[3] See A Hamilton Thompson, The English Clergy and their organisation in the later Middle Ages (Oxford 1947), 46. Stone's commission was granted to him on the condition that he did not prejudice the authority of the bishop's commissary general William Forster. The difference between them is not clear from the point of view of the actual business transacted by them; compare Reg. Clifford, 57-9, 111-112 with 50-1, 115, 117-8, 127-9. The distinction seems to lie not in the nature of the business, so much as in the nature of the authority, since Stone was appointed for a limited period to exercise the authority of the bishop on his own initiative.

Beyond the outline of his career, Stone's letters provide some glimpses into the life of his clerical world. Prominent among the concerns they illustrate are the financial aspects of clerical promotion; so for example Stone wrote to Clifford while still employed by Erghum in an attempt to secure the prebend of Wiveliscombe for himself despite Clifford's rival interest in it. He begged Clifford to spare him some small part of his extensive lordship for he was, as he claimed, sixty years old, rapidly approaching death, and he would spend the last years of his decrepit old age in poverty if Clifford took away from him this benefice.[1] In another letter Erghum petitioned on his behalf that he be excused the full expenses of taking up residence as a canon of Wells claiming that such resources as he possessed, small as they were, had been largely swallowed up by the necessity of paying for ruined buildings. When moreover he had held lucrative offices he had not piled the money away in secret places, holding on to it tenaciously, but what he had lightly acquired he had lightly given away with the improvident liberality of youth.[2] After Bishop Ergum's death in 1400 he wrote complaining to the bishop's executor about the failure to pay him his bequest of ten marks as a beneficed priest of the household, and expressing the hope that the sum would be paid him together with the interest which had accrued over the intervening period.[3]

1 'Parcat ergo domine mi satis poteris et nobilis vestra dominacio reverenda mihi viro modice reputacionis valde debili et grandevo. Iam enim plane preterierant, anni quibus vixeram sexaginta quamque et declinant velociter ad occasum, mee decrepite senectutis residui dies pauci, quas vos domine mi cum paciencia vestra facitis pauciores, si mihi iam invito quod absit auferri feceritis unde vivam.' SL fos 9-9b.

2 'Nam et beneficiorum suorum obvenciones satis exiles in reparacionibus necessariis eorundem pro maiori parte absorbuerant edificia ruinosa. Et ex alio latere si lucri quicquam in officiis acquisitum fuerit aliunde nequaquam manus tenax thesaurum absconditum in occultos loculos recollegit, qui verius leviter adquisita leviter effudit eius liberalitas improvide iuventutis.' SL fo 13.

3 'Et si fortassis magna curialitate vestra mihi gratis offerente tandem veniant cum usuris, ecce domine mi utrasque manus apertas extendo in signum quod vestre devocionis oblata nullatinus recusabo.' SL fos 31b-32.

These and similar business matters required a 'network' of influential friends which an official such as Stone could build up in the course of his career. So for example he petitioned an unnamed friend to help him in his dispute with Clifford over Wiveliscombe,[1] and in another letter two canons of Wells wrote on his behalf to a canon of Hereford on business which was not made explicit.[2] On the other hand, Stone could in turn act as the 'influential friend', as in a letter which he drafted on behalf of a friend who begged Bishop Erghum to take his nephew John Luffenham into his writing office, creando in notarium, explaining that he had previously had some experience in the Canterbury 'curia' and that he was a bachelor in civil law.[3]

It is often difficult to know precisely what friendship means in this context, or whether there was anything beyond the convenience or necessity of the rhetorical formula. A striking example of such uncertainty is the letter written by Stone to John Macclesfield master of St Anthony's Hospital exonerating himself from the charge of impeding Macclesfield by defending the rights of the bishop of Bath and Wells in a certain disputed issue; Stone begged Macclesfield whatever the outcome of the business to restore him to the position of friendship which he had occupied before the dispute began and to end the insults and accusations.[4] In many cases of course true friendships could develop in closely knit households. John Maydenhithe, who was appointed together with Stone as sede vacante official of Bath and Wells in 1400-1 and who held several administrative positions in the dioceses of Salisbury, Bath and Wells and Winchester, was apparently a confidant and associate of both Erghum and Clifford.[5] He was also a

1 SL fos 9b-10.

2 SL fos 7-7b.

3 SL fos 14b-15.

4 'Porro qualitercunque vobis scribo domine mi reverende unum inter alia specialiter deprecor et imploro quatinus esse dignemini michi vestro bonus dominus et benevolus amodo sicut ante ...' SL fos 22b-23.

5 See SL fos 26b, 30.

close friend of Stone, who was able at one point to send him a letter teasing him about his gout.[1] When Stone wished to defend the posthumous reputation of Bishop Erghum, he wrote to Maydenhithe to aid him.[2] This incidentally also illustrates the value given to loyalty and explains to some extent the bitterness in bishop's letters condemning unfaithful officials.[3]

Not surprisingly there is little mention of the actual working of the episcopal chancery in Stone's collection; for the most part it is taken for granted. One side comes unexpectedly in a letter for the manumission of two serfs who had served in the bishop's chancery; Erghum praised them remembering that if they had not accompanied him daily to his 'curia', then they had preceded him there, where they had set about his business (the menial work of the chancery presumably) being too old to dig or plough.[4] Stone has also left some indications of his attitude to his own position in Clifford's household at a time when he was already over sixty years old. In one letter he complained that among the youths of the household he alone was debilitated and broken by old age, out of touch with the secular business which was being transacted. He asked to be allowed to live apart from the household to await his approaching death.[5] His age

[1] The letter was entitled: 'Docet Gilbertus de Stone burdando magistrum Johannes Maydenhithe quomodo sanabitur de gutta et refert causam cur illa infirmitate laborat.' Piling too much money into his pockets was one cause of his gout, he should take care in genuflecting only with the comfort of a soft pillow, and his diet was to be reduced although he would be allowed every day the flesh of some young and good smelling fat capons - these were among the pieces of advice in Stone's 'jest'. SL fo 35.

[2] SL fo 34b.

[3] See SL fos 5-5b, 25-25b.

[4] SL fo 15.

[5] 'Inter ceteros namque satis iuvenes honorabilis domus vestre comministros ad laborandum ydoneos et potentes, ego solus multum debilis ac grandevus ac senio plus confractus ... Ecce domine mi ecce ad reddendum in brevi ante tribunal summi iudicis parata iam in iannis cotidie terribiliter mors me vocat.' SL fo 33. Stone commented on the literary pretensions of new men in his first letter; this is discussed in Ch. 5 below.

and experience, despite his protestations to the contrary, probably gave him something of the position of an elder statesman in the bishop's administration. He certainly felt that it was appropriate to send Clifford a letter of advice following his promotion to the episcopacy. He commented on the variability of fortune which had seen Clifford provided to Bath and Wells, and then for political reasons translated before his consecration to Worcester and he cautioned the bishop that he had to exercise his ministry in days of extraordinary turbulence. Above all he hoped that Clifford would direct his pastoral office to the salvation of souls, so that on the day soon to come he would be worthy to plead before the court of the supreme pastor safely and truthfully: 'Behold my God I bring the whole of the flock that you entrusted to me before you safe from the ravening wolf, and I have looked after them from the greatest to the least with a watchful diligence, and those that you gave to me I have not lost.'[1]

While it is undoubtedly the case that the chanceries of his bishops had a close-knit base which perpetuated itself through recommendation and the connections of family and friendship, Stone's contacts partly through the influence of his profession extended outside the limits of his own particular administrative circle. He wrote letters of recommendation and advice to several besides those connected to his bishops, to contemporaries, to monks of his acquaintance and most notably in one instance to Thomas Arundel archbishop of Canterbury, urging him to stand firm in the crisis

[1] 'Sed huius mundi fortuna volubilis omni vento mobilior ac de diebus in dies semper minus stabilis et inconstans hodie plus solito mirabiliter variatur ... utinam ergo solius dei providencia memorata que vos tantum patrem et pastorem tanto dominici gregis regimini disposuit presidere agenda quecunque vestri pastoralis officii sit ad animarum salutem dirigat et gubernet quod in die novissimo coram pastore summo sic allegare valeatis veraciter et secure. Ecce domine deus meus totum gregem mihi commissum huc mecum adduxi quem a morsibus lupinis illesum a maximo usque ad minimum per vigili diligencia custodivi et quos dedisti mihi non perdidi ex eis quemquam.' SL fos 32b-33.

provoked by the execution of Archbishop Scrope. If all other remedies failed, he urged, then the archbishop and other churchmen must not be afraid to suffer death, for nothing was more glorious than to die for the law of the church. Stone ended the letter with an apology for his presumption in writing and hoped that his gesture would be understood as a sincere attempt to defend his lord.[1]

It is clear from all the information examined above that Stone's letters provide a comparatively full and instructive picture of an episcopal official, of his professional work and of the environment in which he worked. There remains however the central question as to the place and importance of literary skill both for Stone and for the bishops in whose administrations he worked. Although he served in administrative positions, notably for a time as vicar-general, the letter-book shows that he did not follow the course of moving from a secretarial to an administrative career. And whatever the nature of his routine business in the chancery the way in which he introduced and selected his collection towards the end of his life suggests that he saw it, reiterated assertions of the stilo rudi modo notwithstanding, as a monument to and summation of his career. In the introductory letter in which he dedicated the collection to his friend John Langrysh prior of the Carthusian charterhouse at Wytham he admitted that men of a new eloquence might in the future mock his efforts and his letters uselessly collected in a pompous memorial, but he trusted himself

[1] 'Pro iusticia vero persecucionem usque ad mortem pati si oporteat, quid aliud esse poterit bone pater nisi vitam perdere temperalem et perpetuam invenire ... Numquid pater benignissime gloriosius moriendi genus est pro iure ecclesie usque ad mortem aggonizare quam aggoniam mortalis egritudinis expectare ... Reverendissime pater et domine mi benignissime ut dominacioni vestre scribentis affectio singularis cercius innotescat suprascripta licet rudi modo concepta scribens transmittit, non cum ut tantum de se presumens, aut sue imitens prudencie, patrem suum peritissimum filius inscius et ignarus informet, seu doctissimum doceat ydiota sed ut servulus humillimus dominum suum benignissimum, quam sicut animam suam summe diligit toto corde, premuneat ad hunc finem, ut premunicione providenciam precedente previsa pericula minus ledant.' SL fo 40.

to the judgment of his friend.[1] He himself recognized that the collection would be understood as a memorial, even if typically he expressed it negatively. At the culmination of his career as has been seen he used his epistolary skill to send letters of spiritual advice to his bishop and his archbishop. The climax of his collection and perhaps of his career as well, is to be found in the final entry in which Stone recorded that Archbishop Arundel asked him to compose a provincial constitution ordering prayers for deceased bishops.[2]

Stone's attitude to his work may thus be convincingly reconstructed, but what about the attitude of those for whom he worked? Jacob and others following him have discerned that the existence of the letters as such testifies not only to their importance for Stone as the epitome of his work but to their more general significance; so of the letters to the curia: 'They point to the need for every bishop to have a registrar who could impetrate in the best curial style, and solicit whatever cardinal was his special protector ... A suit in the Court of Rome was prepared and reinforced by an immense amount of extra-judicial solicitation. Happy was the prelate who had a Gilbert Stone to do it for him.'[3] Explicit references in which his bishops refer to Stone's importance for them are relatively few and generally refer to the commendation of him as a messenger. In any case particular mentions in the collection are suspect since they

1 'Et si plerique futuris temporibus viri facundioris eloquii, de suorum curiositate dictaminum elacius presumentes, meam simplicitatem satis rudem et indoctam depravando subsannent, forsitan inter altera sic dicentes. Ecce quomodo sue innitens prudencie compilator iners iste, papirum denigrans frustra in vanum laboraverat ydeota dum vento glorie volatilis intumescens talia nullius efficacie [illegible]fatoria in unum memoriale pomposum satis inutiliter recollegit ...' SL fo 1.

2 The constitution is entitled 'Constitucio provincialis ad orandum pro episcopis defunctis per G de Stone rudi modo concepta de mandato reverendissimo patris domini Thome Arondell' Archiepiscopi.' SL fos 41b-42.

3 Jacob, Florida, 289-90.

have passed through Stone's editorial hand. But it is indeed clear from the above survey that as well as including some of their normal episcopal business, these letters touch on their central political and ecclesiastical concerns.

Beyond their particular nature and their existence in Stone's collection, the importance and the good reputation of Stone's letters are also suggested by the subsequent history of the manuscript and by the inclusion of some letters in other manuscripts. The copy of the letters now in the Bodleian library was at an early stage in its history the property of Edmund Lacy bishop of Exeter 1420-1455. He later bequested it to Exeter cathedral 'to be chained in the Great Library there', although it is uncertain whether it was in fact put there.[1]

Moreover besides the four letters which overlap with Erghum's Salisbury register, at least thirty letters were reproduced in other letter collections or legal compilations. Two are to be found apparently somewhat out of place in a fifteenth-century collection of works on canon law including provincial constitutions of Langton, Pecham and the collection of Lyndwood, documents from the curia, case reports notably one between God and the devil and forty five questions on the changing of benefices. Among these works the compiler has inserted Bishop Clifford's instruction to the religious of the diocese of Worcester to pray for the soul of John Trefnant bishop of Hereford (who died in 1404) and the following letter in Stone's collection addressed to Trefnant's erstwhile chancellor Reginald de Wolestone inviting him to work for Clifford.[2] It is possible that

[1] Ibid. 286.

[2] Corpus Christi College Oxford MS C 72. Clifford's letters, entered in reverse order from Stone's collection, are at fos 65b and 67 (SL fos 37b-38, 38-38b). See also C R Cheney, English Synodalia of the Thirteenth Century (London 1941), 91 and note 6. The letter concerning Trefnantisprinted from the Corpus Christi MS in D Wilkins, Concilia magnae britanniae et hiberniae (4 vols London 1737) iii. 278.

Wolestone was in fact the compiler of this legal collection, and that he inserted the two letters from the originals in his possession.[1] Another legal collection, a formulary of the court of arches compiled in about 1420, has five Stone letters interspersed among its contents. The formulary comprises for the most part legal forms used in the arches but besidesthe Stone letters it also has a short procedural treatise and a dialogue in French.[2] Stone's letters are apparently copied from his collection since they occur in the same order in the arches formulary and have the same titles there as in his collection. They are all letters written by Stone in his own name; the first two concern the Waltham case, the first to Waltham himself and the second to Andrew Baret papal auditor, another was written to Clifford in the late 1390s enquiring about a case at the curia and about a debt owed to Stone, while the last two were personal letters written to a certain John Bathe urging him not to seek temporal wealth

1 Cheney suggested that the MS belonged to St Augustine's abbey Bristol without giving a reason. It seems likely that this judgment is based on the fact that Clifford's letter to the religious of the diocese in the copies entered both in SL and in the Corpus Christi MS name only St Augustine's (Stone generally entered circular letters with the name of one particular recipient among those addressed in the salutation, but with the general address in the title). But if St Augustine's abbey did compile the work it is difficult to explain how they came by the letter to Wolestone. On the other hand Clifford wrote to Wolestone stressing the importance of praying for Trefnant's soul and in a passage which occurs only in the Corpus Christi version, he mentioned that he had already written to the religious of the diocese and as a courtesy he said that he had included this letter to Wolestone for his perusal. So we know that he had both letters. It is significant that the letter to Wolestone is entered first in the Corpus Christi MS, suggesting that it came first in the mind of the compiler. Since, according to Trefnant's register, Wolestone was a bachelor of canon law, he would have had an obvious interest in making such a collection: Registrum Johannis Trefnant, episcopi herefordensis, 1389-1404 ed W W Capes (Canterbury and York Society xx 1916).

The variations between SL and the Corpus Christi MS are for the most part small, but in compiling his collection Stone evidently excised from Wolestone's letter the explicit reference to the letter to the religious; as a comparison of the letter-book with Erghum's Salisbury register also showed he thus made at least small editorial changes in the letters entered in his collection.

2 Lincolnshire Archives Office, Lincoln Formulary 23.

beyond what was necessary and reprehending him for not visiting Prior John Langrysh as he had promised to do.[1] The first three were probably of interest to the compiler because they offered commentaries on the progress of cases at the curia, but the inclusion of the last two suggests that practical legal considerations may not have been the only motive.[2]

Stone's letter to Archbishop Arundel following Scrope's execution found its way into a mixed collection comprising treatises (including a notarial treatise and a copy of the Libel of English Policy), speeches, sermons and some royal and university letters.[3] Stone's letter was entered with very few changes and the addition of one phrase and one brief clause compared to the copy in his collection. It is preceded by a treatise on the responsibility of kings and princes to defend the church: Quomodo reges et principes ecclesiam defensare debent ex legibus imperialibus, decretis apostolicis etc, and Stone's letter was clearly intended to provide an illustration of the argument of the treatise with reference to a particular case.[4] The fact, however, that the letter to the archbishop stands at the head of a number of letters in a small formulary suggests that here too the style as well as the contents of the composition attracted the notice of the compiler.

A larger number of Stone's letters were included in two substantial dictaminal collections. The first of these is a complicated book composed

1 Lincoln Formulary 23, fos 14b, 15b, 16, 30, 31; SL fos 16b, 18-18b, 19-19b, 21-21b, 21b-22.

2 The problem of how to determine the motives for the compilation of a particular collection will recur in the following chapters.

3 B L Cottonian MS Vitellius E x.

4 Stone's letter is at fos 121-122b (SL fos 39b-40); it is copied in a different hand from the treatise, but in the same hand as the model letters which immediately follow. This hand dates from about 1450 but most of the letters, as Stone's, are from the reign of Henry IV. Two of the letters are also to be found in B L Cottonian MS Faustina C vi and two in Bodl. MS Selden supra 65, collections to be noted again below; see H E Salter in OF i. 181.

of several different formularies written at various dates in the first half of the fifteenth century; among these are three works by the Oxford dictator Thomas Sampson and a treatise on the ars dictaminis in the form of a dialogue between Queen Rhetoric and the Nightingale followed by a collection of model letters. The manuscript also contains some state letters in French, a dictionary of law terms and a tract on law by Johannes Calderinus, and classical works including a translation by Poggio Bracciolini In addition to this material a scribe made eight separate contributions throughout the manuscript all containing the forms of letters and three of which included eleven letters by Stone, apparently derived from his collection. Among a miscellaneous collection of ecclesiastical letters and others written in mythological language about some Twelfth Night revels, the scribe has placed Erghum's letter to the chapter of Wells on Stone's behalf and a personal letter from Stone about the building of a bridge.[2] In a subsequent section he placed alone a letter of Erghum on behalf of Henry Nony who had been unsuccessfully provided to the see of Ardagh, a further letter from Erghum about his absence from parliament, the letter to Erghum petitioning that John Luffenham be admitted to his chancery and the manumission of two serfs.[3] Lastly five Stone letters were placed at the head of a group of seven: King Richard II's letter to the cardinal bishop of Ostia and Erghum's letter to the papal auditor both in the Waltham case, Stone's letter to a friend about the prebend of Wiveliscombe and two letters addressed personally by Stone to Henry Bryan an errant monk of Stone Priory living in sin with a woman of the town.[4]

[1] B L Royal MS 10 B ix. For Sampson's treatises and the other dictaminal works see the comments of H G Richardson in OF ii. 364-5, 431. Sampson will be discussed below, esp. pp. 65-6, 116-7.

[2] Royal MS fos 136-136b, 136b-137; SL fos 13-13b, 13b.

[3] Royal MS fos 175b-176, 176-176b, 176b-177, 177-177b; SL fos 13b-14, 14-14b, 14b-15, 15.

[4] Royal MS fos 195b-196, 196-196b, 196b-197, 197-200, 200-201; SL fos 17-17b, 18, 9b-10, 10b-12b, 12b-13.

With the exception of the last three letters which occur before the others in Stone's collection, the scribe has entered the letters in the same order, apparently taking first the letter now numbered 26 in Stone and continuing with 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 38 and 40, and then returning to 22, 24 and 25.[1] The titles of the letters have been simplified and the specific details omitted in the Royal manuscript, and the names in the text in customary formulary style reduced to initials.[2] On the whole, despite some indications that the letters have been copied in haste without checking and that very occasionally deliberate changes have been made for stylistic reasons,[3] the actual texts of the letters agrees very closely with those in Stone's collection. This together with the similarity in order makes it most likely that the letters were derived from Stone's own letter-book.

[1] This change in order cannot be due simply to a subsequent rearrangement of the folios of the manuscript, although this has taken place at stages in its development, because Erghum's letter to the papal auditor and Stone's letter about Wiveliscombe (nos 40 and 22 in SL respectively) occur on the same folio in the Royal MS.

[2] So for example Stone's title: 'Scribit Radulphus Bathoniensis episcopus capitulo wellensi pro Gilberto de Stone canonico wellensi ut ad residenciam ibidem graciosius acceperetur' was reduced to 'Pro residenciario ad preces episcopi sub facilioribus expensis recipiendis'. Sometimes this abbreviation obscures the contents of the letter; so the title 'Littera episcopo Ardacadensi' does not make it clear that the letter was written on behalf of Nony rather than to him, 'Summo pontifici' stands incorrectly at the head of the letter to the papal auditor and 'Ad amicum' seems a rather uninformative title for a letter from the king to the cardinal bishop of Ostia, although the king does plead consanguinety. On the other hand the description of Stone's letter to Bryan as 'Invectiva super vita dissoluta unius claustralis corrigenda' is apt.

[3] Examples of these are the change from 'eidem secure potestis credere sicut nobis' (SL) to 'eidem sicut nobis credere poteritis confidenter' at the end of Erghum's letter about parliament, and the change from 'clamabitis pulsantes' (SL) to 'clamabitis pulsantes alias pulsabitis clamantes' towards the end of the letter to Bryan. The first of these changes, particularly since it came at the end of the letter, may have been intended to comply with the requirements of the cursus (see ch.5i) and the second to make a pleasing rhetorical figure (see ch.5ii).

There seems to be no specific indication as to the identity of the scribe or the person responsible for having the letters copied, but some speculation is possible. The other letters entered in the Royal MS by the same hand are ecclesiastical letters, several to the curia, and then, for example one on the translation of Bishop Richard Fleming from London to York, a certificate of the official of the bishop of Ely and several model letters reduced to simple titles as in the case of Stone's correspondence. Several documents concern councils, notably Constance and Basle. Significantly one of the letters, dated 1421, is from Pope Martin V to Bishop Richard Clifford (who had been translated from Worcester to London in 1407) enquiring about his health. When this is taken together with the fact that Clifford attended the council of Constance, it seems likely that he was responsible, perhaps only as the first link in the chain, for the transmission of the Stone letters to the Royal MS. It is quite probable that he took a copy of Stone's letter-book with him to London or that he acquired one at a later date and that it then came into the possession of one of his clerks who either made the selection himself or passed it on with some of Clifford's London and Constance documents. The selection of the letters may not have been made until much later, since the hand in the Royal MS selects documents from as late as the 1440s. Whatever the precise origins of the manuscript, however, the motive for the inclusion of Stone's letters on the evidence examined above seems clear. The abbreviation of personal details, the nature of the surrounding material in the same hand and the contents of the manuscript generally show that Stone's letters were primarily included for dictaminal reasons, to serve as model letters.

Lastly perhaps the most interesting letter-book in which letters of Stone were included is the collection associated with John Prophete keeper of the privy seal 1406-15. Its importance in the present context is increased since, in addition to containing some letters also to be found in Stone's collection, it has other letters by Stone which are not to be

found there but which appear to date from after the completion of the collection when Clifford was bishop of London. A L Brown has pointed out that the letter-book is misleadingly referred to as 'John Prophete's letter-book'; it is a collection of documents from the first decade of the fifteenth century mainly referring to the Great Schism and the council of Pisa with additional letters of private and formulary interest. There is no evidence that it actually belonged to Prophete nor are his letters particularly predominant in it. But the book does have a primary connection with Prophete and more especially with Thomas Felde, his nephew, a king's clerk and chancellor to the archbishop of Canterbury in 1418, so it is at least clear that 'the manuscript comes from the Prophete-Felde circle and reflects their interest in ecclesiastical affairs'.[1]

Stone's letters were mostly entered in two blocks in the manuscript although two were used to fill up separate spaces on folios. The first block was attached to the end of a number of letters written in the same hand; of the eight letters included six are apologies for absence from parliament one on behalf of Clifford and the others for Erghum, all of which are to be found in Stone's collection. In addition there are two personal apologies by Stone included in this correspondence one of which is not to be found in his letter-book. Although the Erghum letters all come from the same part of Stone's manuscript, they are not entered in the same order in the Prophete-Felde collection.[2] The same hand entered on separate folios a copy of a letter by Erghum castigating the abbot of Muchelney and a letter by Stone, although not in Stone's letter-book, on

1 B L Harleian MS 431; A L Brown, 'The privy seal clerks in the early fifteenth century', D A Bullough and R L Storey (eds) The Study of Medieval Records: essays in honour of Kathleen Major (Oxford 1971), 278.

2 Harleian MS fos 23-23b, 23b-24, 24-24b, 24b-25, 25, 25-25b, 25b, 25b; SL fos 26b-27, 26-26b, 25b-26, 26b, 37, 37-37b. In terms of the numbering of the letters SL occurs in the Harleian MS in the order 65, 63, 61, 64, 107, 108. 62.

the death of Roger Walden bishop of London.[1] Then finally nine letters were entered in a selection of nineteen, seven together and two in between letters apparently by other writers. Only two of these, the letter from Stone to Macclesfield asking to be restored to his friendship and a further letter from Clifford about his absence from parliament, are also to be found in Stone's collection. The others comprise two written on behalf of Clifford as bishop of London to John Montagu OP, two written by Stone in his own name to Thomas Polton chancellor of the bishop of Lincoln on behalf of the Carthusian house of London, two written to friends of his and one to a Carthusian prior, probably John Langrysh of Wytham.[2] In addition it is possible that some of the other letters in the manuscript by the same hand were also Stone's work; there are notably letters by an unnamed bishop of Worcester to the abbot of Cirencester, to another bishop about an exchange and to an incumbent of his diocese, among the wide range of ecclesiastical letters.

On the whole the overlapping letters show that the scribe of the Prophete-Felde collection has kept closer than the scribe of the Royal manuscript to the text as it is found in Stone's letter-book. He generally worked more carefully and made fewer deliberate alterations.[3] It is

[1] Harleian MS fos 31-31b (SL fo 22), 97b. The letter concerning Walden, entered without title, is almost certainly by Stone since it refers to 'my lord of Worcester', and since two letters at the end of his collection were addressed to Pope Innocent VII on behalf of Walden.

[2] Harleian MS fos 108-108b, 108b-109, 109-109b, 110-110b, 110b, 111,111b-112, (SL fos 22b-23), 112b, 113b (SL fo 37).

[3] While six of the overlapping letters have reduced titles such as 'Littera excusatoria a parliamento' four reproduce precisely the same title as in Stone's collection. Occasionally he made a change in word order, for example from 'suos gressus' in Stone to 'gressus suos', for stylistic reasons and at the end of another letter he has changed Stone's simple 'In domino valete' to 'In augmentum honoris vestri adaugeat vobis altissimus ad laudem sui nominis dies prosperos et longevos.' The most substantial change came at the end of the last letter from Clifford to the king's secretary about his absence from parliament: three sentences have been added in the Harleian manuscript (or subtracted from Stone's letter-book?) containing a testimonial to the trustworthiness of the bearer of the letter.

however very difficult to tell whether he took the letters which overlap from the letter-book or from a different source.[1] As in the case of the Royal manuscript there are only a few hints as to how Stone's letters came to be included in the collection. A consideration of the numerous other letters entered in the same hand shows that they are mainly on ecclesiastical affairs with a significant number of documents concerning Prophete and Felde: for example there is a letter by Felde concerning a rectory in Bedford, a petition from Prophete to the king, and interestingly an appeal to Prophete from the bishop of Coventry and Lichfield to present his apologies for absence from parliament among others on similar subjects. Such personal letters do not occur in any other hand in the manuscript. It is plausible that the professional letters, bulls, processes and other such material which occurs particularly at the beginning has been undertaken first, perhaps under Prophete's direction, and that the collection has subsequently been broadened out with other letters including personal ones, perhaps by Felde. There is an obvious link between CLifford and Prophete datable to the time in the late 1390s when Prophete was secondary in the office of the privy seal and Clifford the keeper, which makes possible an association between the Clifford and the Prophete circles in the second decade of the following century. The most likely explanation is that Stone or someone in possession of his work, perhaps by invitation

[1] The arbitrary disarrangement of the order in which the letters were taken in the Harleian MS compared to Stone's letter-book is not significant either way: while similarity in order does suggest the letter-book as source (as in the case of the Royal MS), dissimilarity does not necessarily imply the contrary. Likewise the fact that other letters by Stone were included is not significant, since it is not impossible that the letter-book was supplemented by another source. On the other hand while the close textual similarity, including the wording of some titles, seems persuasive for the use of the letter-book for overlapping letters, this could be due to the close following of prototypes in the letter-book which may have had the titles written on them. It remains curious however that a scribe should have added three sentences of no stylistic interest to a letter particularly when he does not appear to have been inventive. This makes it marginally more likely that the letter-book was not the source.

or else by suggestion on hearing of the compilation furnished Felde or whoever was the compiler with copies of his letters.

The Harleian manuscript does not have so clearly apparent a dictaminal purpose as the royal manuscript; while the titles and personal details are not as full as in Stone's collection, there is not the extensive reduction to the form of the letter evident in the Royal manuscript. Moreover, the compiler of the Prophete-Felde collection had greater interest in the contents of the letter or at least in the general subject: the letters about absence from parliament obviously had a particular appeal for him. Nevertheless his intention was basically the same, namely to provide examples of model letters.

Looking back over the collections in which Stone's letters were included, it is possible to see different motives or in some cases a blending of motives for their inclusion. But in the end the knowledge of what to say (based on political, legal, or moral training) and the knowledge of how to say it (based on linguistic and literary or notarial training) were two sides of the same professional coin. In this chapter an attempt has been made to highlight the literary element in Stone's skill. But as the concluding section has already shown the attempt to assess the importance of this skill must move beyond the particular confines of Stone's life and work to consider the context in which he worked and then the actual nature of the skill that he employed.

Chapter Two

LETTER-WRITERS IN EPISCOPAL CHANCERIES, MONASTERIES AND UNIVERSITIES

Since Gilbert Stone worked in episcopal administration it is appropriate to begin this assessment of the wider environment of professional eloquence with a consideration of letter-writing in the episcopal chancery. This chapter will then continue with a study of the arrangements for letter-writing in monastic communities and in the universities of Oxford and Cambridge. These may all be characterized as varieties of ecclesiastical letter-writing with certain features in common such as Latin as the language of most of their letters. Under this uniting feature it will be clear that there are considerable differences in the institutions considered, and so the major point of this chapter will be to see whether, such differences notwithstanding, a common professional skill may be detected and described.

i

There are only a few writers whose careers are to be discerned as clearly as Stone's and who bring together as he did evidence of professional status and of epistolary composition. For the most part the evidence of the profession and of the art have to be laid side by side and the connection between them inferred. This necessitates first a study of the official generally responsible for the drafting of episcopal letters and so a consideration of the offices of chancellor, secretary and registrar. Then the evidence of the type of letter-writing in episcopal registers and more particularly in formularies and letter collections will be examined.

It has already been suggested that as an episcopal chancellor in the

late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries Stone's apparent primary concern with the secretarial work of his bishop was an anomaly. In the early fourteenth century however there are still some traces of episcopal chancellors understood essentially as secretarial officials. At Canterbury it is possible that the chancellor was at this period still thought of as the bishop's secretary and as the keeper of the seals.[1] In Salisbury diocese Robert de Worth was explicitly described as Bishop Roger Martival's chancellor and sigillifer (keeper of the seal) in 1320.[2] Correspondence, as under Martival's fourteenth century successors was said to 'emanate' from the chancery, and it is interesting to note the model exercise, probably of about 1309, included in the register of divers letters, headed 'A good letter on behalf of a rector not ordained as a priest ...' and signed 'Per R de Worth'.[3] As chancellor, Worth was the head of the episcopal secretariat, but as later with Stone, the skills acquired in the writing, supervision and registration of letters and documents, also made him a useful administrator for the bishop. He was one of the bishop's jurisperiti acting, for example, as examiner in elections of heads of religious houses, and advising him in difficult cases, and also presiding, though never with the title of chancellor, over the court of audience during the bishop's absence.[4]

In the diocese of Worcester likewise the chancellor was primarily the keeper of the bishop's seals and he was appointed by the transference to him

1 Churchill, Canterbury Administration i. 16. For the early development of the episcopal chancery in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries see C R Cheney English Bishop's Chanceries, 1100-1250 (Manchester 1950); K Edwards, The English Secular Cathedrals in the Middle Ages (Manchester 1949; 2nd edn Manchester 1967), 205-6.

2 BRUO iii. 2090; Reg. Mart. iv. pp. xv-xvi.

3 This title and signature were probably in Worth's own hand, ibid. p.xv. The terminology of 'emanating' from the chancery was retained during Erghum's episcopate, perhaps due to Stone's conservative instincts. Stone also introduced it into the Worcester chancery; see D M Smith, Guide to Bishop's Registers of England and Wales: a survey from the middle ages to the abolition of episcopacy in 1646 (London 1981), 223.

4 Ibid. p. xvii.

of the seals proper to his office. Bishop Gainsburgh's register reveals that Master Walter de Wooton on 30 September 1303 received the seals of the bishop as his chancellor and similar, if less clear, entries can be found for subsequent chancellors.[1] There is also evidence, though less complete and convincing than for Salisbury, of the connection between the chancellor and letter-writing; on one occasion Bishop Maidstone wrote of letters of institution which had emanated from his chancery, but apart from this the word cancellaria is seldom to be found.[2] At the same time there are indiciations that the chancellor fulfilled executive functions even if not ex officio. Walter de Wooton, while Gainsburgh's chancellor, also acted as vicar-general and was prominent in the bishop's service until his death in 1306; likewise John Renham, described as Bishop Cobham's chancellor in 1326, and Robert de Worth, who served Bishop Montacute, were among the most active of their bishops' clerks.[3] In the audience court at this time the chancellor's status was apparently the same as that of other commissaries appointed to hear causes. John de Severleye, chancellor to Bishop Wolstan de Bransford of Worcester, was described as president of the court on the one occasion in which its meetings were recorded in the bishop's register, but he presided not ex officio but by virtue of a general commission in omnibus causis et

[1] Robert de Worth, Martival's chancellor, was subsequently appointed chancellor to Bishop Montacute of Worcester; at the time of the 1338/9 vacancy, the seals were said to be in the keeping of Andrew Offord, Bishop Hemenhale's chancellor. See R M Haines, The Administration of the Diocese of Worcester in the first half of the Fourteenth Century (London 1965), 124-5; The Register of William de Geynesburgh, Bishop of Worcester, 1302-1307, ed J W Willis Bund (Worcestershire Historical Society xxii 1907-29), 75.

[2] Haines, 124-5. Haines compares this with the Salisbury evidence and he gives an example from York of some letters of institution duplicated 'ad preceptum cancellarii', ibid. 126.

[3] Ibid. 126. Haines gives examples from other dioceses: John Martel, Bishop Drokensford's chancellor at Bath and Wells, was often engaged in episcopal business, while John de Esse, chancellor of Bishop Walter Bronescombe of Exeter, was also the bishop's official principal. See also Cheney, Chanceries, 41: Calendar of the Register of John de Drokensford, Bishop of Bath and Wells, 1309-1329, ed E Hobhouse (Somerset Record Society i 1887), index; The Registers of Walter Bronescombe (1257-80) and Peter Quivil (1280-1291)... ed F C Hingeston-Randolph (London and Exeter 1889), 12,15.

negotiis.[1]

This evidence, although it suggests obvious parallels with Stone's career is, unlike his not very illuminating as to the practical extent of the chancellor's professional letter-writing. Haines indeed concludes for Worcester: 'It must be admitted that it is impossible to be precise about the functions of the Worcester chancellors. For long periods we do not even know the names and can only presume that appointments were made. When they took part in diocesan affairs, it was not, so it would appear, primarily by reason of their chancellorship.'[2] It obviously requires close study to make comparable judgments for all English dioceses, but brief examinations of printed episcopal registers tend to underline these points.[3] There was however a gradual development in the role of the chancellor taking place in different dioceses at different rates, which broadly emphasized the legal and administrative duties, previously marginal to his office, at the expense of the headship of the secretariat. These duties became the effective essence of his chancellorship, even when, as in the case of John Bonour, chancellor of Bishop Thomas Langley of Durham, the keeping of the bishop's seal ad causas was still said in 1433 to pertain to his office.[4] From the

[1] Haines, in editing the register, comments that these suits usually lay within the competence of the archdeacon in which case it is significant that Severleye was at the time archdeacon of Worcester as well as chancellor. He might therefore for convenience have drawn archidiaconal suits into the audience court. A Calendar of the Register of Wolstan de Bransford, Bishop of Worcester, 1339-1349, ed. R M Haines (Worcestershire Historical Society new ser. iv and Historical Manuscripts Commission joint publications ix 19-6), p. xx.

[2] Haines, Administration, 127-8.

[3] In general the names of chancellors appear in registers as witnesses or when they were appointed to special commissions, and often their specific office is not designated. So, for example, Reginald de Wolestone, to whom Stone wrote, was not described as the holder of a particular office in his bishop's register: Compare Reg. Trefnant passim with SL fos 38-38b.

[4] Langley's other chancellors Richard Holme and Thomas Hebbeden are not so described. Reg. Lang. i. pp. xiv-xvi.

middle of the fourteenth century, if not before, the Canterbury chancellor's office was hardly to be distinguished from that of an auditor of causes in the court of audience; he was essentially a lawyer and it has been suggested that from this time his commission was primarily to hear and determine the suits which previously the archbishop had heard in the audience court.[1] At Salisbury in the fifteenth century the chancellor was apparently no longer responsible for the bishop's secretariat; he had more extensive legal and administrative functions, and was the bishop's 'leading jurisperitus.[2] R L Storey has written generally of the fifteenth-century chancellor that: 'he was the most important member of the household. In earlier times, it was the chancellor who had charge of the bishop's secretarial business, and as a relic of this former function, the seal ad causas was said to be committed to his keeping in formal records of appointment. In the fifteenth century, however, the chancellor was the foremost of the bishop's jurisperiti, a graduate if not a doctor in law, who was always at hand to advise the bishop on questions of canonical procedure... the chancellor had taken the place in the familia once held by the archdeacon.'[3]

1 Cheney, Chanceries, 40; Churchill, Canterbury Administration i. 16.

2 William Lyndwood for example was called Bishop Hallum's chancellor in June 1410: he worked as a commissary in the audience court on at least three occasions. Lyndwood was succeeded by Thomas Teynton in 1412 who appeared as a witness and examiner. Apart from these references it is the case, as frequently in the fifteenth century, that the register does not illustrate very fully the activities of the chancellor; J M Wilkinson, 'The register of Robert Hallum, bishop of Salisbury, 1407-1417, (Oxford BLitt thesis 1960) pp. xl-xlii. In some dioceses it is much more difficult to be precise about the bishop's chancellor; at Norwich, for example, only four chancellors have been found in the registers before 1500. There is no indication that they were ever presidents of the court of audience, nor do the registers give much indication of other functions of the office. It is probable according to B Burnham in a thesis on the diocese that the office was not very important. B Burnham, 'The episcopal administration of the diocese of Norwich in the later middle ages' (Oxford BLitt thesis 1971), 62-64.

3 R L Storey, Diocesan Administration in Fifteenth-Century England (St Anthony's Hall publications xvi London 1959; 2nd edn York 1972), 4-5.

In searching for those who were generally responsible for drafting episcopal letters it is appropriate to consider next the small number of clerks actually described as bishop's secretary. L B Dibben, in an article on secretaries in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, noted that as early as 1267 Peter of Aigueblance bishop of Hereford had two secretaries who attested his will.[1] Dibben also notes bishops' secretaries in the papal registers between 1340 and 1377. Nicholas de Caerwent was described as secretary to Bishop Adam Orleton of Winchester in 1343,[2] John de Carleton likewise to Bishop John Gynewell of Lincoln in 1348,[3] Roger de Inkepen to Bishop John Grandisson of Exeter in 1357,[4] Walter de Skirlawe to Archbishop John Thoresby of York in 1359,[5] and Walter Potyn to Archbishop Simon Islip of Canterbury also in 1359.[6] It is possible that Cardinal Adam Easton first accompanied Cardinal Simon Langham to the curia as his secretary, but there

1 L B Dibben, 'Secretaries in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries', English Historical Review xxv (1910), 433, citing F Mugnier, Les Savoyards en Angleterre au XIIIsiècle et Pierre d'Aigueblanche eveque d'Hereford (Memoires de la Société Sarasienne d'Histoire xxix 1890), 314.

2 Calendar of Entries in the Papal Registers relating to Great Britain and Ireland: Petitions to the Pope, 1342-1419 i. ed W H Bliss (London 1896), 57; see also Registrum Johannis Trillek, episcopi herefordensis, AD MCCCXXVII-MCCCXLIV, ed J H Parry (Cantilupe Society 1910 and Canterbury and York Society ix 1913) p. i; R M Haines, The Church and Politics in Fourteenth-Century England: the career of Adam Orleton, c 1275-1345 (Cambridge 1978), 96; there are other mentions of him here as sequestrator in Worcester diocese, and as treasurer of Orleton's household at Winchester, 77. 83, 90.

3 Papal Petitions, 163; in 1350 he was appointed chancellor to the archbishop of Canterbury, a position he still held in 1352, and in 1356 he was advocate of the court of arches, BRUO i. 356.

4 Papal Petitions, 302; BRUO ii. 1002; he is referred to as a witness or as a familiar clerk on several occasions in Grandisson's register, but is not in any of them described as secretary, The Register of John de Grandisson, Bishop of Exeter, AD 1327-1369, ed F C Hingeston-Randolph, (London 1894-99) ii. 1106, 1144, 1167, 1207; iii. 1217, 1220, 1448.

5 Papal Petitions, 349; he was later official of the court of York in 1374, chancery clerk in 1377 and keeper of the privy seal 1382-86. He was successively bishop of Coventry and Lichfield, bishop of Bath and Wells, and bishop of Durham from 1385 to 1406; BRUO iii. 1708-10.

6 Papal Petitions, 338.

does not seem to be documentary proof of this.[1] In all these cases, however, no indication is given of the precise function performed by the officials described as secretary, and the fact that they are all so described only in the papal registers suggests that the title was not at this time used in England for the bishop's writing official. There is at least one exception to this; in 1384 John Prophete was appointed 'secretarius' to Archbishop William Courtenay, but there is no further reference to the archbishop's secretary until a century later in 1476.[2] It seems to have been mainly in a lay context that from the mid fourteenth century the term 'secretary' was used, and this particularly in the royal secretariat. This will be examined more fully below, but here it appears that it was the bishop's registrar who inherited the secretarial duties of the chancellor, in some diocesses as early as the fourteenth century and generally in the fifteenth.[3]

On the whole the scribes, the notaries and more particularly the registrars of the period provide the more precise parallel to Stone's career; indeed it is worth remembering that Stone was himself occasionally described as registrar during the late Salisbury and early Bath and Wells years, even though the title chancellor was subsequently used in the letter-book of his whole career. In Lincoln diocese there is early and clear evidence of the activity of the registrar. John de Schalby held the registrarship for eighteen years of Bishop Oliver Sutton's episcopate at the end of the thirteenth

[1] BRUO i. 620-1; citing, Dictionary of National Biography and Documents illustrating the general and provincial chapters of the English Black Monks, 1215-1540, ed W A Pantin (3 vols Camden Society third series xiv, xivii, liv, 1931-7) iii. 76-7.

[2] BRUO iii. 1521-23; Churchill, Canterbury Administration i. 23. Prophete, mentioned above in the context of the dissemination of Stone's letters, will be discussed again in connection with the privy seal.

[3] 'Maybe in some dioceses where a registrarius or scriba appears in the course of the later Middle Ages, this officer took over the original secretarial duties of the chancellor' Cheney, Chanceries, 43; 'it may be that the true descendant of the 'cancellarius' is to be sought in those styled scribe or registrar of the Archbishop or 'secretarius'', Churchill, Canterbury Administration i. 16.

century, and he probably held the same position for eight years during the time of Sutton's successor, Bishop John Dalderby before retiring about 1308, probably to live as a residentiary canon at Lincoln. Sutton's register reveals that Schalby was in constant attendance upon the bishop accompanied usually by two other clerks of the household; wherever they went he would take the rolls and quires which comprised the bishop's register as well as the rolls of the bishop's four immediate predecessors. It was largely thanks to him, and his methodical work, that the general system by which the archives were kept is still so clear, and the editor of the register has accounted him 'one of the ablest registrars who ever served a bishop'.[1] In the register, memoranda - the bishop's official correspondence - comprised the first half, while the remainder was composed of such matter as institutions, collations and ordinations. The letters which are from the period 1290-9 vary from short forms of business, for example letters dimissory, to the more important non-recurrent correspondence, almost entirely concerned with pastoral subjects particularly correction.[2] There are none of the business non-pastoral letters, such as the letters of persuasion to the curia, to the king and to fellow prelates which form such a substantial part of the Stone letter collection. There is no explicit indication in the register of the part played by Schalby in the drafting of these letters, although as an active registrar he was presumably connected in some way with their composition.[3] It is however interesting to

1 The Rolls and Register of Bishop Oliver Sutton, 1280-1299 ed R M T Hill (7 vols Lincoln Record Society xxxix, xliii, xlviii, lii, lx, lxiv, lxix 1948-75); pp. xiii-xviii; iii pp. xiii-lxxxvi. See also The Registrum Antiquissimum of the Cathedral Church of Lincoln, ed C W Foster and Kathleen Major (10 vols Lincoln Record Society xxvii, xxviii, xxix, xxxii, xxxiv, xli, xlvi, li, lxii, lxvii, 1931-73) i p. xxx.

2 For the letters see Reg. Sutton esp. vols iii-vi.

3 Bishop Sutton was served by other clerks: Jocelyn of Kirmington was described as the keeper of the bishop's seal (but not chancellor), although his practical connection with the chancery, if it existed, was not made clear. His name usually appears among those of witnesses to official acts and documents, and he was archdeacon of Stow from 1392. William of Anlaby, notary public, acted as the bishop's legal adviser and drew up some official documents for him. Reg. Sutton iii p. xxvi.

note that about 1315 he compiled a book entitled Liber Johannis de Schalby ecclesie lincolniensis canonici de episcopis lincolniensis, which contains short memoirs of the bishops of Lincoln from Remigius to Burghersh; the greatest part of Schalby's book is in fact concerned with a dispute between the dean and the chapter which took place in 1312 and was settled finally by a decision of Bishop Dalderby.[1] This book was thus primarily concerned with a legal issue and any dictaminal interest or importance was secondary. This also applies to another collection attributed to Schalby, a vetus repertorium for the diocese of Lincoln which comprises a variety of materials including a series of episcopal documents of the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries.[2]

William de Doune, registrar to Bishop Grandisson of Exeter, provides another example of an early official whose career is to a certain extent open to inspection. He was registrar in 1335, and still in 1343; in 1340 he was appointed a notary public, and by the end of the decade he had become a doctor of civil law. Subsequently, in the 1350s, he was official of Worcester and of Lincoln; he was archdeacon of Leicester from 1354 until his death in 1361. As one of Bishop Grandisson's clerks, he frequently acted as a witness and added his notarial instrument before his appointment as registrar. Some of his activities in this office may be deduced from the description in his Will of a 'quire of paper' which he left to the notary Thomas Pepir; it was, he wrote, 'covered outside with white leather containing commissions made out in the court of Rome, letters apostolic, the procedure and terms used in causes in the court of Rome, propositions, articles and much other useful matter

1 Reg. Antiq. i p. xxxi; the work is described in Statutes of Lincoln Cathedral, ed H Bradsham and C Wordsworth (2 vols Cambridge 1892-7) i. 90-5, 241. It has been printed in ibid. ii pp. lxiii-cxx.

2 Dorothy M Owen, 'A Lincoln diocesan book in the Cambridge university library', Lincolnshire Architectural and Archaeological Society: reports and papers x (1964), esp. 138 and idem, 'Vetus repertorium, an early memorandum book of the diocese of Lincoln', Transactions of the Cambridge Bibliographical Society vii (1965).

written almost entirely with my own hand, and containing in part a membrane of parchment wherein are written letters of bishops, and certain other things which I got together in the days of my youth, when I was in the service of my lord bishop of Exeter.'[1] This is an interesting account although it is unclear whether his final reference is to letters he himself composed or whether he collected good examples from various scattered sources for his own use and instruction. Whichever is the case Doune's comprehensive description sharpens the impression of the range of business transacted by the registrar.

Not all those styled registrar however emerge as clearly into the light as Schalby and Doune. Ralph of Shrewsbury bishop of Bath and Wells from 1329 to 1363 was apparently served by Robert de Chigwelle, described as registrar in 1330, 1332 and 1343 and on one occasion cited as setting his seal to a document; but Chigwelle is not mentioned towards the end of the register, while other scribes and notaries appear whose positions, suggested principally by phrases such as 'And I...' at the end of witness lists, remain rather shadowy. In fact on one occasion in 1335 Stephen Trippe, notary public, 'saw the above written by the lord bishop', suggesting as one might expect that the bishop himself would, at least on occasion, draft a document.[2] In some other dioceses it is even more difficult to identify the bishop's registrarial clerks; at Worcester for example the title of registrar was very rarely used in the official records during the fourteenth century. John of Barnby was on one occasion described as such in the register of Bishop Cobham, but apart from this one relies on those styled 'scribae' who performed the same function

[1] BRUO i. 587-8. His Will is one of the fullest and most revealing for this period; it includes a section on his guilt concerning the neglect of various benefices; A Hamilton Thompson, 'The Will of Master William Doune, archdeacon of Leicester', Archaeological Journal lxxii (1915).

[2] The Register of Ralph of Shrewsbury, bishop of Bath and Wells, 1329-1363, ed T S Holmes (2 vols Somerset Record Society ix-x 1896), esp. 56, 139. The other principal clerks seem to have numbered among them Masters Roger de Scardeclif, Stephen Trippe, John de Risingdone, Roger Tybrighton, and Robert Sloo.

as Barnby in the registers of Bishops Reynolds, Orleton, Hemenhale and Bransford.[1] There is in fact no mention of a scribe at all until the very end of Bransford's register, and the work of the two main scribes Robert Marny, notary public, who wrote most of the entries prior to 1342 and William Ateyn, not specifically mentioned until 1349, has to be inferred.[2] On one occasion a clearer indication of the connection between a scribe and the register is given, for on 22 August 1338 Bishop Hemenhale in the presence of Andrew Offord, John Botoner, John de Redyng and many others produced a register and handed it to his scribe Henry called de Playforde.[3] In Hereford diocese, with its complete series of registers, the secretariat is if anything more anonymous. Richard de Eastner appeared as a notary public in the first half of the register of the Bishop Adam Orleton and by implication he was on several occasions the scribe,[4] while Nicholas de Caerwent, also a notary, seems to have been one of Orleton's intimate clerks at Winchester, and to have been attached perhaps as notary to John Trillek bishop of Hereford from 1344 to 1361.[5]

This vagueness was still apparent in some places at the end of the fourteenth century; John de Wenden, notary public, and Master John Halle, another

1 Haines, Administration of the Diocese of Worcester, 133-4.

2 Reg. Bransford, pp. iv-v.

3 Henry de Playforde, a notary public, apparently wrote the entry himself. It is to be found not in the bishop's register, but on the dorse of the inside cover of Bishop Morgan's register (1419-26) so it has survived by chance. Similar documents, if treated in the same way, are not surprisingly lost, Haines, Administration of the Diocese of Worcester, 134-5.

4 Registrum Ade de Orleton episcopi herefordensis, AD MCCCXVII-MCCCXXVII, ed A T Bannister (Cantilupe Society 1907 and Canterbury and York Society v 1908) index. For occasions on which he was the scribe and appears in the list of witnesses as 'et me' or 'et ego Ricardo de Estenore clerico publico apostolica auctoritate notario', see 92, 110, 149 and 153.

5 Reg. Trillek, p. i and index. He appeared both as commissary, proctor and witness. On one occasion a document was described as having been drawn up, witnessed, and sealed by him, p. 100. It may be more accurate to place him as one of the bishop's jurisperiti; he was also bishop's auditor on one occasion, p. 114. It is difficult to draw a dividing line when offices are not specified.

notary, were probably scribes to Bishop Henry Wakefield of Worcester, but apart from their hands, there is no means of identifying those of nine others also to be found in the register.[1] Bishop John Trefnant of Hereford seems to have had two scribes Benedict Comme and David ap Kynwrit, both notaries of the diocese of St Asaph, whose office is inferred from the words 'Et ego...' before their notarial subscriptions.[2] John de Blounham B C L, to take a last example, is thought to have been registrar to Bishop Robert Rede of Chichester, in the early years of the fifteenth century, although this is unclear from the register. If it is indeed his hand which predominates, then according to the editor,

> he must have been a painstaking and accurate man of business, for one may follow him down the long and tortuous process of an exchange, or through the mazes of an episcopal letter or a Papal bull or a commission of enquiry, without detecting many slips. His Latinity is that of his class, sufficient for Registrarial purposes and generally grammatical, if stilted. When towards the end of the Register the Registrarial duties fell into other hands, things are not quite so satisfactory.[3]

Even in the fifteenth century, it is sometimes the case that despite detailed examination of the register little is to be discovered of a bishop's secretarial clerks. There is for example no mention of the names of the seven clerks who make significant contributions to Robert Hallum's Salisbury register, nor of the registrars who probably supervised them.[4]

Towards the end of the fourteenth century however there are in some places more specific details of the registrar and of his function either evidence of a new departure or else of more explicit recording of past

[1] It is very difficult to find out anything about the staff of this bishop, and of his administrative personnel in the diocese; A Calendar of the Register of Henry Wakefield, Bishop of Worcester 1375-1395, ed W P Marett (Worcester Historical Society new ser. vii 1972), pp. xii, xxix.

[2] Reg. Trefnant, esp. 52, 67, 70, 102, 123, 125, 152, 285.

[3] The Episcopal Register of Robert Rede, ordinis predicatorum, Lord Bishop of Chichester, 1397-1415, ed C Deedes (2 vols Sussex Record Society viii, x 1908-10) i. 67.

[4] Wenceslas Swisiko of Brandenburg and William de Dunham, notaries public, appear drawing up instruments, but they are given no more detailed identification; Wilkinson, 'Reg. Hallum', pp. xliv-xlvii.

practice. On folio 65 of Bishop Simon Sudbury's London register for example were written the words: 'Hic incipit Registrum Reverendi in Christo patris domini Simonis de Sudbiria dei gratia Londoniensis episcopi, de collacionibus et institucionibus ... de tempore Thome Marc de Bruyton, Registrarii patris ejusdem.'[1] There was a similar description at the beginning of the register of ordinations. William Bryan, another London registrar, was appointed on 5 January 1382, the day of Robert Braybrooke's consecration as bishop of London, to be the bishop's registrar, scribe and notary, and he continued in that position until 12 February 1387, if not slightly later, keeping in constant attendance upon the bishop. He was also on three occasions a special commissary of the bishop.[2] Bryan was succeeded by Thomas Horstone, notary public, who was appointed registrar by 18 December 1387 and remained in office possibly until the end of Braybrooke's life; he was sometimes termed registrar and sometimes 'bishop's scribe'. He is known to have

1 Apart from these references Thomas Marks does not occur more frequently with the title of registrar than some of those clerks already considered, Registrum Simonis de Sudbiria diocesis londoniensis, AD 1362-1375 ed R C Fowler and C Jenkins (2 vols Canterbury and York Society xxxiv, xxxviii 1927-38) i. 31-32, ii. 8 and index. Sudbury's household as bishop of London and later as archbishop of Canterbury is fully examined in W L Warren, 'Simon Sudbury: bishop of London and archbishop of Canterbury' (Oxford DPhil thesis 1956), esp. 289-290.

2 L H Butler 'Robert Braybrooke, bishop of London (1381-1404), and his kinsmen', (Oxford DPhil thesis 1952), 287-292. There are several examples of fifteenth-century registrars who like Bryan were employed as diocesan administrators due to their technical expertise either in addition or subsequent to their secretarial position. For example John Storthwayte registrar of Henry Bowet bishop of Bath and Wells was later a commisary-general and was official of Bath and Wells in 1422, 1425 and still in 1443: BRUO iii. 1792-3; The Registers of Walter Giffard, Bishop of Bath and Wells, 1265-6 and of Henry Bowett, Bishop of Bath and Wells, 1401-1407, ed T S Holmes (Somerset Record Society xiii 1899), 59. Thomas Lyes was Bishop Langley's first registrar; later he was vicar-general and continued in this position for nearly seventeen years being in this office the bishop's most valued diocesan minister; Reg. Lang. i. pp. xviii-xix. This evidence repeats the combination of secretarial and executive roles already noted above.

attended the bishop constantly between 1392 and 1402, drawing up his notarial instruments, witnessing his acta and functioning as his proctor.[1] These explicit descriptions given on occasion to Sudbury's and Braybrooke's registrars are also to be found in the case of another late fourteenth-century registrar, William Hornby, who served Archbishop William Courtenay, he stated at the head of the register that: 'he had written [it for] the same lord Archbishop at different times and places for the greater part with my own hand and had it written by others and so made it public [publicavi]'.[2] Such modes of address may be compared with the Salisbury form and those others which described letters emanating from the episcopal chancery; this contrast puts in formal terms the secretarial change from chancellor to registrar so that, despite variation between dioceses and frequent vagueness in registers besides those considered,[3] it is generally to be presumed that professional episcopal letter-writing was at least by the fifteenth century most often the concern of the registrar or 'the bishop's scribe'.

The increase in the importance of the registrar means that in some cases he is described as having an assistant registrar or clerk to do some of the writing and registration for him. Such junior clerks had nearly always been a feature of the bishop's writing office, but in the early fifteenth century, some of them emerge into a clearer light. William Milton, registrar of Archbishop Arundel by 1401 and of Archbishop Chichele till 1419 or 1420,

1 Butler, loc. cit.

2 E F Jacob, The Medieval Registers of Canterbury and York (St Anthony's Hall publication iv York 1953), 11.

3 Most of the printed registers from the period contain simply the name of the bishop and the date of the beginning of his episcopate, if they have any title at all. Among all registers, printed and unprinted, there is nothing quite comparable to the registrum emanancium de cancellaria of the fourteenth-century Salisbury registers and Clifford's Worcester register; in none is there any comparable formula for the registry. See Smith, Guide to Bishop's Registers which gives descriptive lists of all surviving registers.

employed John Stevens, notary public, as clerk to assist him.[1] Stevens is particularly interesting as he is thought to have been responsible in some way for a collection of Anglo-Norman letters and petitions of both ecclesiastical and royal provenance.[2] Other such junior clerks are explicitly mentioned in the registers of, for example, Bishops Repingdon, Langley and Lacy.[3] These assistants could be humble men at the beginning of their careers but this was not necessarily the case. William Swan was appointed registrar of the court of audience by Henry Bowet archbishop of York in 1408 at a time when he had already been active in the papal chancery. Swan, who was to become a papal secretary, kept a letter-book, partly as a register of his business in the chancery and as an English proctor, which provides a substantial insight into the importance of the possession of a legal representative in the curia for the successful prosecution of a case.[4] Richard Caudray,

[1] For Milton BRUO ii. 1283-4; and Stevens BRUO iii. 1774.

[2] All Souls College Oxford MS 182; the MS comprises inter alia a collection of Latin letters mainly of Archbishop Pecham: Jacob, Florida, 282-6 but see also A L Brown, 'The Latin letters in MS All Souls 182', English Historical Review lxxxvii (1972), 565-8. This collection has been associated with Roger Walden archbishop of Canterbury and bishop of London. There is also in the MS a collection of letters in French which has been associated with Stevens; see Anglo-Norman Letters and Petitions, esp. pp. xiii-xviii. This collection will be discussed below.

[3] Thomas Colston, registrar to Bishop Repingdon and then to six successive bishops, seems to have entered most of the memoranda in the register himself, although some were entered by one or more assistant registrars and by scribes under his direction such as Robert Scarle, Edmund Langford, and John Clifton: BRUO i. 470-1; The Register of Bishop Philip Repingdon, 1405-1419, ed M Archer (3 vols Lincoln Record Society lvii, lviii, lxxiv 1963-82) esp. i. p. xvi. Several notaries perhaps junior registrars, for example Robert Calle, Robert Frende and Laurence Stafford appear under Bishop Langley's four successive registrars: Reg. Lang. esp. i. p. xx and on one occasion twelve were created, i. pp. 167-9. Bishop Lacy's four principal registrars had such assistants as Andrew Chalvedon, Roger Keys and John Sutton: Reg. Lacy, passim.

[4] BRUO iii. 1829-30; E F Jacob, 'To and from the court of Rome in the early fifteenth century', Studies in French Language and Medieval Literature presented to M K Pope (Manchester 1939) reprinted in Jacob, Essays in Later Medieval History (Manchester 1968). Swan's letter-book is now Bodl. MS Arch. Seld. B23 and there are also letters associated with him in B L Cottonian MS Cleopatra C iv.

scribe of the audience of the archbishop of Canterbury in 1414 and 1415, was king's secretary in 1420, warden of King's Hall Cambridge from 1431 to 1448 and chancellor of Cambridge in 1433 until at least 1435.[1]

On the evidence cited above it is likely that secretarial developments were by no means uniform. In the dioceses with complicated bureaucracies such as Canterbury, London or Durham for example, it is possible by the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries to distinguish a legal and executive chancellor from a secretarial registrar. But it seems most probable that in many dioceses the episcopal chancery and registry were not so well or so clearly developed. Stone's maintenance of or perhaps reversion to traditional Salisbury practice and his translation of this practice to the Worcester chancery also suggests in this context the possibility of individual initiative and influence. In some cases such as that of Schalby cited above the importance of particular officials in shaping practice is likewise evident.

Turning from the staff of the secretariat to its work the most immediate sources are obviously the episcopal registers. They have been described as 'a deliberately created working record of certain administrative acts of the bishop or his officials' and to some extent as a record of incoming business. The 'staple diet' of the register is the record of the institutions of clergy to benefices and related material, although the register may also include lists of ordination of clergy and the confirmation of the heads of religious houses, business relating to church fabric and property, visitations, royal and papal letters, indulgences, commissions, licences, dispensations and financial and estate administration.[2] In addition most of the registers contain at least some 'divers' episcopal letters mainly on pastoral and diocesan affairs, but not on the whole the letters of persuasion to the curia, the king, fellow prelates and others which comprised the 'staple' of Stone's

[1] BRUC, 126.

[2] This is taken from Smith, Guide to Bishops' Registers, p. ix.

collection. Although the episcopal register was primarily a record of business transacted, it could nevertheless also be used as a formulary for clerks in the episcopal registry. In at least one case this intention had a marked effect on the composition of the register. The title of an entry in Martival's Salisbury register: 'A good letter on behalf of a rector not ordained as a priest' has already been noted, and besides this title there are further indications that the register was partly meant to provide models for imitation. The register of divers letters seldom has two letters on the same subject except those to the king and the archbishop, in a few cases names were reduced to initials, some entries were altered to suit later circumstances and the composition of some others, with captions and dates as later additions, suggests that they may have been intended as drafts for actual letters as well as forms for future use.[1] Occasionally 'nota bene' or simply 'nota' was placed in the margin and beside the record of the appointment of a coadjutor for an incapacitated vicar was written 'Quere meliorem formam in medio secundi quaterni subsequentis ad talem signum' followed by a sign with a pointing hand. The subsequent entry on the same subject with the sign indicated has had several changes made in it such as the alteration of the bad precedent 'et continuo furore laboret' to the more suitable 'usuque racionis careat in presenti'. Since this does not fit grammatically into the letter it is evident that the corrector was concerned with the legal issue rather than the dictaminal effect.[2]

Besides the registers the work of episcopal secretarial clerks also survives in a number of formularies and letter collections, some of which have already been mentioned. Of these the most clearly organized are the collections concerned with canon law. These illustrate to some extent the

[1] C R Elrington in Reg. Mart. ii pt 1 p.v and K Edwards in ibid. iv p.xxv.

[2] See ibid. ii pt 1 79, 149. For examples of 'nota bene' see for example 175, 341.

business of the episcopal secretariat although in several cases they were the work of executive and legal officials. Schalby's compositions for the diocese of Lincoln have been cited. In addition there survives for example a Salisbury formulary mainly from the late thirteenth century probably compiled by John de Burthon precentor of Salisbury cathedral (1278-87).[1] About a century later legal collections were made by John Lydford official of William of Wykeham bishop of Winchester,[2] and by John Snappe commissary at Oxford from 1397 to 1400 and advocate of the court of arches in 1398[3], while collections were made of documents from the diocese of Worcester[4] and the archdiocese of York.[5] From later in the fifteenth century collections survive from, for example, Exeter[6] and Oxford[7] and in one manuscript forms

[1] B L Royal MS 12 D xi, fos 69-89; entries are given general titles such as 'modus incipiendi testamentorum' and often an 'alia forma' of the same kind of document is supplied. Towards the end of the formulary there are a number of private letters 'de amico ad amicum'. The manuscript also contains a formulary including university and royal letters, and a formulary for use in the chancellors' court at Oxford (c 1336-40).

[2] See the introduction by Dorothy Owen to LB.

[3] See Snappe's Formulary and other Records, ed H E Salter (Oxford Historical Society lxxx 1924). Most of the documents concern Snappe's practice in the court of the arches. See also BRUO iii. 1723.

[4] Worcester County Record Office, Register Brian 2; see R M Haines, 'The compilation of a late fourteenth-century precedent book', Derek Baker (ed), The Materials Sources and Methods of Ecclesiastical History (Studies in church history xi Oxford 1975).

[5] Borthwick Institute York, Register Nevill 2; see D M Smith, A Guide to the Archive Collections in the Borthwick Institute of Historical Research (York 1973) 10 note 13. The book has a large section on the archiepiscopal visitation of Beverley Minster in 1381; it was apparently collected in the first place as a register, but names have been omitted. It is incomplete. It is possibly to be linked with B L Cottonian MS Galba E x for which see below p.54. I am grateful to Dr D M Smith for these details.

[6] B L Harleian MS 3300.

[7] B L Harleian MS 670, fos 37-198. Originally this constituted a separate paper volume. Most of the documents refer to the administration of the archdeaconry of Oxford in the first half of the fifteenth century. William Symond official of the archdeacon of Oxford, commissary-general of the bishop of Lincoln in the archdeaconries of Oxford, and Buckingham and on occasion commissary of the archbishop of Canterbury appears to have been responsible for the volume given the frequent occurrence of his name. The MS is now bound together with an Oxford ars dictaminis and with an incomplete copy of the cartuarium of William Kingsmill. See Richardson in OF ii, 440-1, 453-4.

from Canterbury, Exeter, Lincoln, Bath and Wells, Worcester and Salisbury were included dating from the mid-fourteenth to the late-fifteenth centuries.[1] The formulary of the court of arches and the book probably compiled by Reginald Wolestone in which letters of Stone were included were also collections primarily concerned with canonical procedure.[2] In some of these works annotations give an indication of the value attached to the forms. In the late thirteenth-century Salisbury formulary one entry was headed 'Item alia litera bene concepta'.[3] John Lydford likewise occasionally described entries as 'bona' in the titles as in the examples 'Bona et notabilis forma' or 'Bona littera et formalis pro dimissione rectoris in visitacione episcopi.' It is most likely that the 'bona' refers to the legal accuracy of the documents, but some of Lydford's examples will be considered below in case the evaluation could include a dictaminal aspect. The book came subsequently to belong to a fifteenth-century clerk of the Exeter chapter who used it as a formulary for some of his current business.[4]

Collections of episcopal letters for literary and dictaminal purposes are apparently less common or at least less immediately connected with officials. In the book owned by William Doune there were as already noted 'letters of bishops' and among the Anglo-Norman letters of All Souls MS 182 there were included some private letters of Bishop Roger Walden, Archbishop Thomas Arundel and Bishop Henry Despencer. In one Despencer congratulated Lady Botiller on the birth of a son while in others he commented on riots at Lynn, sent condolences to Lady Despencer on her husband's execution, exonerated himself from any connection with rebellion, wrote concerning a lawsuit and informed Queen Philippa of Portugal that he had been ill but that the arrival of her letters had cured him[5]. In both these collections

1 B L Harleian MS 862.
2 See above pp. 25-7.
3 Royal MS 12 D xi, fo 87b.
4 Owen in LB.
5 Anglo-Norman Letters, 92, 103, 106, 110-15, 360-2, 383-4.

particularly in the latter episcopal letters survived among a wide range of models, and the Anglo-Norman letters were not intended to serve primarily as a formulary of episcopal or even of ecclesiastical dictamen. For the most part episcopal letters have survived in letter collections of varied contents. One of the best known examples is the Liber epistolaris of Richard de Bury keeper of the privy seal (1329-34) chancellor (1334) and bishop of Durham (1333-45). Bury collected the letters in 1324-5, none being by himself or with one exception being addressed to him; a number are by Richard de Kellawe bishop of Durham (1311-16) besides other diocesan material including letters by Thomas of Abberbury, chancellor of Walter Langton bishop of Coventry and Lichfield 1296-1321.[1] A late fourteenth-century manuscript including material from Romsey Abbey and a number of legal works relating to the chapter of York Minster also contained a collection of letters some of which bear the name of John archbishop of York, presumably John Thoresby archbishop 1353-73. Many of the letters have marginal annotations drawing attention to good pieces of composition.[2]

In addition to these episcopal letters found their way into model collections which accompanied treatises on the ars dictaminis. A volume containing treatises by Geoffrey de Vinsauf, Thomas Merke and Reginald Alcock has a small section of eighteen letters entered in the same hand some of which are from unnamed bishops to the pope.[3] Another treatise by the dictator known as Simon O is followed by a collection of miscellaneous letters a number of which appear to be to and from the archbishop of

[1] The Liber epistolaris of Richard de Bury, ed N Denholm-Young (Roxburghe Club 1950) esp. pp. xi-xii. The Durham documents comprise nos 370-387 and fifty eight letters at no 398. There are forty six Lichfield letters, associated apparently with Abberbury, which would not have been included in the episcopal register at no 417, and letters of Bishop Oliver Sutton of Lincoln at no 485.

[2] B L Cottonian MS Galba E x, fos 59-90. Besides John archbishop of York the manuscript also mentions Popes Innocent and Clement and E king of England, presumably Clement VI, Innocent VI and Edward III.

[3] Bodl. MS Selden supra 65 fos 73-85. The name Dalton has been written at the end

Canterbury and other unnamed bishops.[1] It is difficult to know however whether letters are genuine when entered together with dictaminal treatises. Both these collections were probably compiled at Oxford given the concern with university business in the majority of the letters and it is possible that common forms for letters between for example bishops and the king or the pope, particularly when not immediately concerned with the university, were the creation of the dictator.[2] Whether the letters are fictitious or not however they are of interest in this context as witnessing to the importance of episcopal dictamen and as giving some opportunity for its study.

Lastly some letters of bishops as is already evident from the copying of Stone's letters found their way into complex and hybrid compilations which combined different features of the collections examined here. In the Royal manuscript for example the same hand that copied Stone's letters entered for example a model or an extract of a letter from a bishop to the pope complaining about the excesses of the mendicants, another from a bishop at the council of Basle, several to bishops from the pope and others concerning Bishop Robert Hallum.[3] In the Prophete-Felde collection likewise the hand responsible for the Stone letters entered among others a letter of the bishop of Coventry and Lichfield, correspondence of an unnamed bishop petitioning the curia and some letters of a bishop of Worcester (possibly Clifford).[4] Interestingly Thomas Felde bequeathed a quire 'de litteris missivis in latinis' to Henry Penwortham registrar to the archbishop of

[1] W A Pantin, 'A medieval treatise on letter-writing, with examples from the Rylands Latin MS 394', Bulletin of the John Rylands Library xiii (1929), for episcopal letters see for example pp. 345, 346, 347, 347-9, 351, 352, 352-3, 355-6 and a description of the first part of the military exploits of Henry Despencer bishop of Norwich in Flanders in 1383, 359-61.

[2] Pantin argued for the genuineness of some of the letters, see ibid. 330-3.

[3] Royal MS 10 B ix, see fos 11b-12b, 57-61 inter alia.

[4] Harleian MS 461, see fos 13-13b, 20b, 39, 40b.

Canterbury.[1] If this was the Harleian manuscript then this would increase the number of particular episcopal officials who may be associated with letter collections.

On the whole however the connection between the officials examined in the first part of this section and the type of correspondence found in Stone's book must be inferred. The nature of the surviving formularies, particularly those most directly linked with episcopal administration, suggests as one might expect a primary concern with legal business and apparently leaves the art of eloquent persuation and dictaminal skill in a secondary position.

ii

Monastic letter-writers are found both in the general administration of their houses, and in the particular service of the abbot or prior. In both cases there are certain marked similarities between these writers and their episcopal counterparts despite institutional differences.

The chancery was usually the secretarial department of the monastery and it was there that minutes would be recorded of, for example, chapter meetings in the case of cathedral priories; there also the registers would be compiled and the correspondence of the house conducted. Such was certainly the case at Canterbury cathedral priory, where the chancery was presided over by two chancellors who devoted themselves full time to the secretarial work.[2] In some places however the precentor or librarian might be ultimately responsible for the letters sent out under the common

[1] Brown, 'Privy-seal clerks', 278.

[2] R A L Smith, Canterbury Cathedral Priory (Cambridge 1943), 64.

seal of the house.[1] The work of the chancery at Christ Church Canterbury may be illustrated from the conventual register of the early fifteenth century which, in the way of some contemporary episcopal registers, supplies the names of the men in charge of its compilation. It is entitled:

> Registrum in cancellaria ecclesie christi cantuariensis per fratres Will. Elmore et Thomam Bungeye cancellarios factum ibidem anno dommini CCCmo nonagesimo quarto. In quo continentur litterae patentes et clausae et alia subsigillo communi dominorum prioris et capituli emanancia a principio et tempore reverendi patris et domini Thome Chyllyndenn.[2]

Such explicit titles seem to mark a contrast with earlier Canterbury practice.[3] At Durham also in the early fifteenth century the chancellor had the custody of the official seal of the prior and chapter.[4] Robert de Langchester for example was chancellor from 1381 to 1391 and feretrar (sacristan) until 1397. He made a collection of formulary letters, apparently

1 This was the situation at St Augustine's Canterbury, where the precentor also kept one of the keys of the common seal and was responsible for the library: W A Pantin, 'The letters of John Mason: a fourteenth-century formulary from St Augustine's Canterbury', T A Sandquist and M R Powicke (eds), Essays in Medieval History presented to Bertie Wilkinson (Toronto 1969), 194. At Westminster the register was also in the charge of the precentor, W A Pantin, 'English monastic letter-books', J G Edwards, V H Galbraith and E F Jacob (eds) Historical Essays in honour of James Tait (Manchester 1933), 207. At Durham however the official in charge of the great registers was the 'librarius', acting as librarian and registrar until c 1395, and only subsequently being known as 'cancellarius', Pantin, loc. cit.

2 The register comprises 450 folios and contains documents dating from 1390 to 1500. This title is followed by others in the register; for example in 1411 Thomas Bungay again and Alexander London were cited as the two chancellors. Most of the entries concerned such matters as presentations to benefices, citations, powers of attorney, letters of confraternity and formal communications with the archbishop on matters of diocesan and conventual business. Smith, 65; Ninth Report of the Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts (London 1883), 110-119.

3 A late thirteenth, early fourteenth-century register now Cambridge University Library MS Ee v 31 is simply entitled: 'Registrum veterum cartarum et aliarum litterarum patentium et clausarum conventus tempore Henrici prioris', Smith, loc. cit.

4 R B Dobson, Durham Priory, 1400-1450 (Cambridge 1973), 117.

real, and treatises on dictamen and preaching which went under the title: 'Registrum papireum diversarum litterarum de officio cancellarie monachorum dunelmie quondam Roberti de Langchestre cancellarii et postea ferestrarii dunelmie'.[1] Later in the century a series of Durham chancellors compiled the repertorium magnum, and a generation later the supplementary class of locelli, which all preserved a large number of chancery documents.[2]

In addition to monks in official positions monasteries often needed the services of notaries public. The prior of Christ Church Canterbury had to employ several notaries.[3] It is clear that at Durham the prior regularly employed clerks serving chapels and chantries in the cathedral and neighbouring churches to transcribe and witness documents. At the same time, and in the same way as at Canterbury, notaries were indispensable for the running of the monastic secretariat. In 1445 and 1446 the notary John Berehalgh was employed to produce ten public instruments ratifying appeals, proxies, oaths and compurgations, as well as a detailed inventory of the possessions of the priory. Berehalgh, and other notaries such as Thomas Ryhale, were members of Durham families who specialised in clerical work, and who staffed the upper ranks of the monastery's secretariat.[4] These

1 Now Durham Cathedral Library MS c iv 25. The letters which mainly occupy fos 24-83b, are arranged in classes such as 'supplicatoria', 'deprecatoria', 'preceptoria', 'excusatoria'. Identification of the letters is difficult, due to the omission of names and dates. See also, Durham Cathedral Library Treasury Muniments Register N. This is a paper book of c 1400, with a few later additions, called 'Registrum papireum diversarum litterarum cancellarie dunelm.' There is a treatise on dictamen at the beginning, and the letters are from various sources; some are taken from the register of Bishop Thomas de Cobham of Worcester (1317-27), while there are also state letters (some of them fictitious) between the king and the pope, and a number of letters concerning Durham, the cell of Coldingham and Oxford; see OF i. 219-239.

2 Dobson, 4.

3 Smith, 64-5.

4 Dobson, 140-1. Durham cathedral priory occasionally made use of an episcopal official such as Robert Bertram, registrar of Bishop Neville's consistory court.

notaries seem to have been particularly important in early fifteenth-century Durham, although their demand in other large monasteries, for example St Albans, was also considerable.[1]

The work of these monk-officials and notaries, as in the case of most episcopal registrars, was no doubt primarily concerned with the clerical enactment and registration of the legal and other business of the monastery. Dictaminal skills are at least in the first instance more clearly evidenced in the secretarial work carried out specifically for the head of the house. At Christ Church Canterbury for example the prior was accustomed to transact his official correspondence in the chancery, but his private correspondence was conducted in camera.[2] There is more detailed evidence of these arrangements at St Augustine's Canterbury in the fourteenth-century. It was the duty there of the monk who acted as the abbot's chamberlain to compose and write the letters which were sent out under the abbot's seal. John Mason, whose letters are a very important source, was probably a chamberlain since the collections of correspondence which circulated under his name were not formal chapter documents. They are particularly interesting because of their similarity to the letters Stone included in his collection. A great number of the letters concern a lawsuit between the monastery and the archbishop of Canterbury over the monastery's exemption from archiepiscopal jurisdiction, and like many of Stone's letters on his bishops' behalf they are addressed to the pope, cardinals, curial officials or to the king. There are however a considerable number of letters on other subjects, about a monk who has deserted the cloister, on entering the

1 Walter Bedlow and John Bevile occurred frequently among mentions of other notaries in the register of John Whethamstede abbot of St Albans, Registrum abbatiae Johannis Whethamstede, ed H T Riley (2 vols Rolls Series 1872-3) ii. 27, 29, 31, 39, 40, 51, 57, 81, 144, 145, 146, 149, 150, 151, 193, 195, 201, 215, 216, 275, 276, 277.

2 Smith, 66.

religious life, to monks at Oxford, about a subsidy for the war against the Scots, on recent bereavements (including one apparently on the death of the Black Prince in 1376), concerning parishes and on various aspects of business and friendship. The copies in the Rawlinson manuscript are entered with decorated initials, an unusual adornment in letter collections of this period, but names are omitted or reduced to initials, and the lack of the salutation at the beginning or of a descriptive title often makes the letters difficult to identify. As in Stone's letters to the curia, the purpose of Mason's letters was not to give the arguments but to smooth a path for the case by eloquent persuasion.[1]

At Durham priory, and in some other monasteries, the prior or abbot's chaplain was his confidential secretary rather than the chamberlain as at St Augustine's. The chaplain kept the prior's letter-book at Durham, in the titles of which he might often insert his own name; so for example 'Registrum de tempore Ricardi Parke capellani'.[2] William Wyntershulle, a monk of Wallingford Priory and then of St Albans from 1369 till after 1430, was the chaplain and cross-bearer of four successive abbots of St Albans. He compiled in 1382 an important formulary and register as abbot's chaplain

1 Pantin commented that 'the prosecution of a great lawsuit needed rhetoricians as well as lawyers. These letters are interesting for they illustrate the barrage of persuasive letters (the masterpieces of John Mason's art) addressed to useful people, from pope and king downwards, which would accompany the formal, basic legal documents, the proxies, articles, sentences and appeals.' Pantin, 'Letters of Mason', 194, 197-8. Mason's letters circulated under the title 'Epistole fratris Iohannis Mason' or simply 'Epistole Mason'. The late fifteenth century catalogue of St Augustine's mentions two copies. Three copies survive: Bodl. M S Rawlinson C 7 (which has been consulted for the description given here), Merton College Oxford MS 112, Worcester Cathedral Library MS F 80.

2 Registrum parvum ii (prior's letter-book 1407-45), fo 104, also fo 172. Prior Wessington's usual choice for the office of chaplain was a young monk, often one just returned from a few years at Durham College Oxford, Dobson, 117. At Worcester the chaplains were also cited in the registers; for example 'Hec sequencia tempore fratris Iohannis de Hodynton' domini ... Iohannis de Evesham prioris capellani acta sunt usque ad tale signum'. Pantin, 'Letter-books', 208-9.

which contains commissions, mandates and other such important official documents as well as some letters.[1] This suggests that sometimes chaplains might also have the charge of the institutional registers; such was in fact the case at Gloucester and Worcester, and was probably so at Peterborough and perhaps at Bury St Edmunds.[2] This shows that a sharp distinction between institutional and private secretarial activity is misleading.

Indeed as in the episcopal secretariat there appears to have been room for variation from place to place, and in some cases for informality or for ad hoc arrangements. Heads of religious houses might for example ask outside acquaintances or renowned letter-writers to draft particular correspondence for them. Gilbert Stone himself provides us with evidence of this. He included six letters in his collection written on behalf of John Langrysh prior of the Carthusian Charterhouse at Wytham. These were probably composed during certain periods Stone spent at the priory.[3] He also wrote at least one letter on behalf of the prior and canons of Stone Priory, with whom he maintained a strong connection.[4] A further complication is introduced by the possibility that some abbots or priors might write their own letters. Abbot John Whethamstede of St Albans for example wrote letters

1 Now Cambridge University Library MS Ee iv 20; see BRUO iii. 2127.

2 Pantin, 'Letter-books', 207.

3 One letter was addressed to the prior of the London charterhouse urging him to seek a new spirituality, and another to a fellow brother of the Hull charterhouse who wished to give up the office of procurator. There are also at different places in the collection four letters from Langrysh to Carthusians overseas, three concerning his continuing office as prior. SL fos 5b-6, 6-6b, 7b, 7b-8, 19b-20, 20-20b. Jacob commenting on these letters thought that they were written by Langrysh and then included in the collection by Stone as a compliment to his friend (Florida, 287), but Stone not only had the opportunity to write these letters while he was staying at the charterhouse (see SL fos 19, 21b-22), he also claimed at the beginning of the collection that he had written the letters on behalf of his bishops, for certain friends, and in his own name.

4 He petitioned the bishop of Coventry and Lichfield to release the priory from the burden of collecting the tenth because of certain misfortunes which had recently affected the house, SL fos 27-27b.

which were subsequently collected under the title: 'Epistolae venerabilis patris Johannis Whethamstede abbatis quae ipse misit aliis scripsitque pro diversis temporibus suae praelationis'.[1]

As 'the first exponent of composition in his day' Whethamstede was understandably distinctive, although of course he also employed a secretariat. Other abbots endowed with fewer literary gifts relied either on friends such as Stone or more usually on their own staff for their compositions. Pantin considering the secretarial work of the monastery as a whole emphasized the importance of the monastic secretariat and of the office of cancellarius in particular, arguing that at Durham and Canterbury 'it was a responsible office, held at times by those Olympian persons, the monk-graduates'.[2] Some of these secretarial officials can be personally associated with letter collections which illustrate some of the skills expected of their profession. Besides the collection of the letters of John Mason there are a number of monastic formularies, and a greater number of registers with some similarities to a formulary which resemble the collections already described compiled by Wyntershulle and Langchester. A tract on letter-writing for example composed by a monk of Christ Church Canterbury in the thirteenth or early fourteenth centuries was followed by a number of model letters concerning the priory.[3] A formulary compiled in about 1340 for Combe abbey, a Cistercian house in Warwickshire, contained 171 letters arranged in four divisions: from the abbot, from monks to the abbot, between monks and to laymen.[4] And a book which belonged to John Wessington prior of Durham

[1] Annales monasterii S Albani a Johanne Amundesham monacho, ed H T Riley (2 vols Rolls Series 1870-1), 365; Jacob, Florida, 269.

[2] It is interesting that Wessington at Durham and Selling at Canterbury were both promoted direct from cancellarius to prior. Pantin, 'Letter-books', 208

[3] B L Arundel MS 52, fos 108-111b. The letters are entered without titles and the names are reduced to initials for the most part.

[4] Now Longleat MS 37, fos 89-116b. The compiler described himself as Nicholas de W and dedicated the work to John de Bredon monk of Combe. In the course of the dedication he commented 'Quasdam usuales litterarum formulas non solum vestra set quamplurimum confratrum vestrorum devictus instancia sub diversarum rerum materiis licet stilo rudi leni tamen et intelligibili compositas gratanter vobis mitto ...'. The MS also contains works on conveyancing by Thomas Sampson, dictaminal works by Sampson and a dictaminal work by Guido Faba. See Richardson in OF ii. 282-3, 392, 398, 404.

included model letters on such various themes as the absence of a monk from the abbey, the absolution of heretics, the defence of the faith, an indulgence for bridge building, the restitution of goods and consolation after the death of a friend.[1] Although of late date there is an interesting late-fifteenth century collection made by William Ingram monk of Christ Church Canterbury who was responsible for the education of boys in the almonry; part of the book includes business letters as writing exercises.[2]

Just however as the work of the episcopal secretariat is most fully revealed in the series of episcopal registers, so the work of the monastic secretariat is most frequently found in the monastic register. Some of those in which the keeper of the register entered his name have already been mentioned. They appeared as a permanent institution about the end of the thirteenth century and continued to be kept until the dissolution. On occasion they reflect the heightened degree of organisation in some monasteries: besides the entering of the name of the official in charge of the secretariat, Durham registers for example were divided into 'great' and 'small'. They were kept by the chancellor and chaplain respectively, and not surprisingly reflect the difference between chapter business and the prior's correspondence. The primary motive for keeping the register was legal security and administrative reference, but they were also useful as formularies. It is interesting to note that some (like Martival's Salisbury register) had commendatory or warning titles: so for example 'Procuratorium bonum ad curiam romanam sub instrumento' and 'Nota bene istam literam et specialiter finem litere', but on the other hand 'Istud procuratorium non est sufficiens' and in a pleasingly brief dismissal 'Bona littera sed incorrecta'.[3]

[1] B L Lansdowne MS 397, fos 172-213. Among other miscellaneous contents the MS includes the Summa dictaminis of Richard de Pophis and copies of papal letters.

[2] B L Harleian MS1587, fos 189-214.

[3] Pantin, 'Letter-books', intro. 201-212, list of registers 213-22. These titles are taken from Durham register iii, B L Arundel MS 2 (Glastonbury 1351-66) and Canterbury register vi (1375-85).

This last remark and the description 'bene et specialiter finem' are important evidence of a standard of composition maintained in documents of an essentially technical and legal kind, at first sight far removed from the eloquently persuasive pieces of Stone and Mason.

iii

Academic institutions as much as monastic and episcopal ones needed the skills of those who were expert in the conventions of professional eloquence. In both Oxford and Cambridge however the development of a specialized secretariat or at least of particular secretarial officials concerned with letter-writing in addition to their other business took place later than in the administrations of most of the bishops and monasteries considered here. In Oxford it seems that the responsibility for the writing and recording of letters lay with the chancellor, the senior official of the university, at least until February 1447 the likely date of the statute concerning the duties and emoluments of the registrar or scribe of the university.[1] Entries in register F, the university letter-book from 1421, occur in the hands of at least three fifteenth-century chancellors: Thomas Gascoigne, Thomas Chaundler and Henry Sever.[2] Secretarial arrangements in the period between 1421 and 1447 can however be perceived only dimly, and the position is even less clear before 1421 particularly as to the existence,

[1] The most detailed discussion of the secretarial and administrative working of the university in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries is to be found in the epilogue by Graham Pollard to The Register of Congregation 1448-1463, ed W A Pantin and W T Mitchell (Oxford Historical Society new ser. xxii 1972). The governmental and administrative development of the medieval university from its origins is discussed in the chapter by M B Hackett OSA in J I Catto with R Evans (eds), The Early Oxford Schools (History of the University of Oxford i Oxford 1984). For the statute c 1447 see further below..

[2] Pollard in Reg. Cong. 1448-63, 416. For these chancellors see BRUO ii. 745-8, i. 398-9, iii. 1672-3. Register F is printed in EAO. Its title apparently comes from John Farley who wrote part of it. For him see further below.

permanence and duties of any assistants to the chancellor in his secretarial office. In July 1348 and again in March 1349 Robert de Appelby acted as a notary for the university, and a formulary apparently compiled by him gives some indication of his notarial and legal business.[1] There is no record however of Appelby holding an office other than that of bedel.

The office of clerk or scribe to the university seems to have emerged later. There is some evidence that Thomas Sampson held such a position in the early 1380s. Sampson has become well-known to historians as an instructor in ars dictaminis, ars notaria and other business skills in late fourteenth and early fifteenth-century Oxford,[2] but his employment as a secretarial officer of the university is very uncertain. The suggestion rests on the description of Sampson as 'scribam nostram' in a letter which purports to be from the university to John of Gaunt in c 1381, but which may be no more than a fictitious composition for the formulary in which the letter is contained.[3] Despite Pollard's dismissal the possibility does not seem absurd. Since Sampson was married and therefore not a member of the university it is likely that had the university employed him it would have been on an ad hoc basis, rather like the use made of him by University College,[4] and not in an official position comparable to that subsequently held by the university registrar. Some of the letters included in Sampson's formularies show a knowledge of the forms used in correspondence to and from the university,

[1] The university requested his appointment as a notary by apostolic authority in 1337-8 when he was a bedel of the university, BRUO i. 41. The formulary occurs together with the work attributed to the precentor of Salisbury in B L Royal MS 12 D xi at fos 47b-89. It includes such documents as wills and items entitled 'monicio' and 'cittacio'. See Salter in OF i. 84 and further below.

[2] BRUO iii. 1636-7; H G Richardson, 'Business training in medieval Oxford', American Historical Review xlvi (1941) and idem in OF ii. esp. 334-7.

[3] Richardson accepted the description, but for the contrary argument see Pollard in Reg. Cong. 1448-63, 425-6.

[4] See below p.69.

and some do appear to have been derived from the archives of the university.[1] Whether or not Sampson occupied a university position, temporary or permanent, it is interesting that the university could be conceived as employing a scribe. It is possible that in time a passing description could come to imply a permanent function. There is however no more definite evidence until fifty years after Sampson's supposed employment; a document concerning the boundary between the parishes of St Ebbe's and St Aldate's on 31 January 1428 was subscribed 'magistri Ricardi Emsay auctoritate apostolica notarii publici scribeque nostri'.[2] Emsay may have been succeeded by Robert Darcy who on 1 March 1447 was described more ambiguously as 'clericus dicte universitatis'.[3]

From February 1447 however the hand of John Manningham can be identified as making regular entries in the university letter-book, a task which had been mainly carried hitherto by the chancellor. The conclusion has been drawn from this that in early 1447 the responsibility for drafting and recording university letters was transferred from the chancellor to the scribe.[4] The importance of this change has also encouraged the suggestion that the undated statute concerning the office of registrar belongs to this time. It suggested that the absence of the common scribe caused serious loss,[5] and ordered that the university should have a permanent registrar for writing and for the notarial work of the chancellor and the university; he was to be a master of arts and notary public, and the statute adds that he was to be

1 See the examples from Bodl. MS Auct F 39, B L Harleian MS 4383 and Longleat MS 37 in OF ii. 380-6, 392-7, 399-400.

2 Ibid. ii. 463-4; Pollard in Reg. Cong. 1448-63, 426; BRUO i. 642.

3 Pollard, loc. cit.

4 Ibid. 416, 428. Pollard suggests that before this date the clerk or scribe of the university had more limited responsibilities such as the compilation of the proctors' accounts and the annual list of halls, besides his duties as a notary.

5 '... propter communis scribe defectionem irregistrata relicta in grave reipublice universitatis dispendium peritus ignorantur ...' Statuta antiqua universitatis oxoniensis, ed Strickland Gibson (Oxford 1931), 285-6.

'trained in rhetoric'.[1] This interesting phrase shows a consciousness of the importance of professional eloquence far better developed than any of the evidence considered thus far. In the university at this late date however such a description is most probably the product of emerging humanist values and so as will be seen does not provide evidence of a new professional awareness of the importance of the medieval ars dictaminis. In this connection it is interesting that John Manningham described himself as 'secretarius et scriba alme universitatis Oxonie' in a humanistic miscellany, and both John Farley registrar from c 1458 until 1464 and John Veysey who succeeded him from c 1465 until 1476 used to some extent humanistic scripts in the records of the university.[2] Despite these signs of a new age, the tasks assigned to the registrar are familiar. Most of his work was copied either into the letter-book comprising letters, indentures and acquitances or else into the register of congregation comprising the business of congregation, public and private graces, degrees and elections of officials.[3]

At Cambridge the office of registrar or secretary to the university developed later than at Oxford and the secretarial arrangements lie in similar obscurity. There are nevertheless some indications that provision was made

1 'Ne igitur registracio talium actuum tante universitatis merito memorandum communis scribe ob defectionem amodo pretereatur, congregacio regentium et non regentium divertissime statuit et decrevit quod unus magister artium notarius publicus in rethorica sufficienter eruditus, in scribam registrarium et tabellionem cancellarii et universitatis de cetero continue habeatur ...' loc. cit. The statute goes on to define the role of the registrar more fully: he was to register all public acts, draw up indentures and receipts, conduct correspondence, record graces, enter the names of graduates and record their fees. He was to be paid four marks a year and in addition 2d, 4d or 6d for each grace according to the means of the applicant.

2 Duke Humfrey and English Humanism in the Fifteenth Century: catalogue of an exhibition held in the Bodleian Library Oxford (Oxford 1970), 11, 16, 36.

3 Reg. Cong. 1448-63, p. xii. The chancellors' register with the possible exception of their lists of halls seem to have been kept by the chancellor or his deputy, the commissary, even after the 'reorganization' of 1447.

for the composition of the university's correspondence. David Herbard, a notary public, occurs as secretary to the chancellor in 1397.[1] A pattern does not emerge more clearly however until 1454 with the earliest grace book kept by the proctors and containing undifferentiated records of university finance and administration. Among the expenses of the two proctors Henry Boleyn and John Bolton for the year 1455 are the following entries:

> pro scriptura trium litterarum scilicet regine episcopo et cancellario xij d
>
> pro scriptione litere domino episcopo Eboracensi vj d
>
> pro scripturis literarum et commissionum xiiij d
>
> pro scriptura litterarum pro universitate viij d [2]

Similar entries occur in the following years; it thus appears that the proctors themselves had the main responsibility for the writing of letters. In 1460/1 however, and occasionally thereafter, the proctors recorded payments to others: to Master Gay in 1460/1 for example for three letters and in the same year to John Brokeshawe for writing 'commissionis in latino et anglico'.[3] Brokeshawe, a notary public, appears on several occasions in the following years.[4] It is also interesting to note that between 1483 and 1503 Caius Auberinus, an Italian humanist, was employed by the university as a lecturer and letter-writer.[5] An official registrar is not mentioned however until the appointment of Robert Hobbys the bedell of arts as registrar of the university in 1506,[6] and the surviving records do not preserve the correspondence

1 BRUC, 299.

2 Grace Book A ... 1454-1488, ed Stanley M Leathes (Luard memorial series i Cambridge 1897), 7.

3 Ibid. 28.

4 Ibid. 56, 66, 69, 109, 129; BRUC 95.

5 BRUC 23; R Weiss, Humanism in England during the Fifteenth Century (Oxford 1941, 2nd edn 1957), 163.

6 An entry for this year in grace book records 'Item conceditur magistro Roberto Hobbys bedello artium ut sit registrarius universitatis', Heather E Peek and Catherine P Hall, The Archives of the University of Cambridge (Cambridge 1962), 7.

of Cambridge in the way that the letter-book does for Oxford.[1]

Besides the two universities as corporate institutions, individual colleges within them at least occasionally employed officials to carry out their secretarial business. Thomas Sampson, whether or not he was the university scribe in any sense, was paid 4d by University College Oxford for the writing of letters in 1382-3.[2] John de Cudington, a notary public, was likewise paid by Queen's College both in 1364-5 and in 1385-7 for the drafting of documents,[3] and another notary William de Stikelynch was exployed by Exeter College in 1358 and 1376 although his business was described as legal.[4] In the following century the same John Brokeshawe who wrote letters for the university of Cambridge was also employed by Corpus Christi College there in 1471-2 'pro scriptura'.[5] These are only scattered references but there are some indications that arrangements for notarial and secretarial work could be on a fixed basis. William Bussche and William Hawtryve were both described as the college notary by New College Oxford in 1417-18 and 1423-35 respectively.[6] Hawtryve went on to become college sub-warden in 1435 and the chancellor's commissary in 1438-9. In 1448 King's College Cambridge after petitioning Pope Nicholas V was granted the privilege of creating a notary public; they generally appointed a fellow or a former fellow.[7]

Formularies and letter collections exemplify the official business and the correspondence of the university as in the episcopal and monastic

[1] Grace book A (1454-88) contains accounts of receipts and expenditure, lists of graces passed and occasionally records of new statutes or of a letter or some other memorandum, Grace Book A, ed Leathes, pp. vii-viii.

[2] OF ii. 337.

[3] BRUO i. 526-7 citing the college accounts.

[4] BRUO iii. 1777 citing the college register.

[5] BRUC, 95 citing the college accounts.

[6] BRUO i. 326; ii. 892-3.

[7] OF ii. 443 note 1.

secretariat. Here too the collections composed predominantly of technical and legal material may be distinguished from those containing letters of the kind written by Stone and Mason. Robert de Appelby's formulary which records university business and transactions in the chancellor's court about the years 1336-40 has already been mentioned.[1] Likewise John Snappe's formulary contained legal forms from the end of the fourteenth and beginning of the fifteenth centuries, some of which relate to Snappe's office as commissary at Oxford in 1399.[2] A small number of Oxford documents also appear for example in a collection of instances made by John Dalton.[3]

Oxford letters, although there is no record of them in an official collection before 1421, survive from earlier periods in several manuscripts, some of which have already been cited.[4] Richard de Bury's Liber epistolaris included a self-contained section of sixty-eight university letters most of which date from the chancellorship of John Lutterell 1317-22.[5] In the same collection as the Salisbury and Appelby formularies, a collection was included of letters dating from the mid 1330s addressed by the university to the pope, the papal nuncio, the king and queen, certain bishops and also some to the university's chancellor.[6] A number of these overlap with

1 B L Royal MS 12 D xi, fos 47b-69; for the connection with Appelby see Pollard in Reg. Cong. 1448-63, 424. Most of it has been printed in OF i. 112-78.

2 Snappe's Formulary, ed Salter prints Oxford extracts. See above. p. 54 note 1.

3 Bodl MS Selden supra 66 (c 1400-10); see OF i. 211-6.

4 Pollard comments: 'The university must have kept copies of its letters for more than a hundred years before Registrum F begins ...' Reg. Cong. 1448-63, 416.

5 Although Bury must have got the letters at second-hand it is interesting to note that he preserved some traditional features such as the positioning of the name of the chancellor at the right hand of each corner. Salter in OF i. 5 suggested that Lutterell was probably the author of those letters which bear his name and comments that he was esteemed as a stylist. Although the chancellor's name is preserved, others are reduced to initials. See Liber epistolaris and OF i. 3-79.

6 BL Royal MS 12 D xi, fos 27-30. Some of the names were reduced to initials but others are given in full. They are printed in 'Letters relating to Oxford in the fourteenth century' by H H Henson in Collectanea, 1st series, ed C R L Fletcher (Oxford Historical Society v 1885) and in a more accurate transcription in OF i. 83-107.

thirty letters which appear on the fly leaves of a dictaminal collection which apparently once belonged to Oriel College. The manuscript was donated by a fellow Roger Dannay, perhaps to be identified with the Roger Douneye who appears among the witnesses in a notarial subscription to an Oriel document.[1] The possibility that Thomas Sampson may have included genuine letters, or at least letters based on university forms, in some of his collections has already been considered.[2] Another dictator known as Simon O whose treatise on the ars dictaminis and model letters have been mentioned above in connection with episcopal correspondence also included a number of university letters which seem to date from the early fifteenth century.[3] From the same period Oxford letters followed Gilbert Stone's letter to Archbishop Arundel on the execution of Archbishop Scrope. These comprise letters between Arundel and the university and some correspondence concerning Bishop Thomas Merke.[4] A final example from the middle of the fifteenth century is particularly interesting from a dictaminal perspective. It comprises an ars dictaminis which has survived in mangled form and a collection of model letters. Three of these were drawn from the university archives and it is possible that their compiler was a university official, perhaps a successor of Richard Emsay as university scribe in about the mid 1430s. One of the letters was addressed to the university by Pope Eugenius IV, the other two may be identified with letters recorded in the university letter-book. The first was a draft sent with only minor variants, but the second has a more complicated relationship. The copy in the formulary,

1 Bern Stadt-und Universitätsbibliothek MS 69, fos 1-2b, 159b-162b. See OF ii. 259-60.

2 For example Bodl MS Auct F39 and Longleat MS 37. See above p.66.

3 Rylands Library Latin MS 394. Pantin 'Treatise on letter-writing'; see nos 15-20, 29-30, 73. Their authenticity is uncertain.

4 BL Cottonian MS Vitellius Ex, fos 114-132. The Oxford letters are printed in OF i. 181-208.

intended to be a reply to Pope Eugenius, was apparently a draft based on an earlier letter to Pope Martin V and the university letter-book shows that it was sent only after considerable revision.[1] This provides a fascinating glimpse into the way letters were composed at least on occasion. Some of the letters in the formulary have the separate parts of the letters labelled and within these headings different possibilities for the same sentence listed. Others are headed by titles which indicate the style of the letter, so for example 'sub mediocri stilo seu figura' or 'sub graviori figura seu stilo'.[2] The implications of these particular dictaminal annotations and titles for the structure and the style of the letter will be discussed in part two below.

Cambridge university letters are far more difficult to find. Before the sixteenth century, it seems that only isolated examples survive such as a letter from the university to the duke of Bedford in 1415 and letters preserved in for example Archbishop Chichele's register and in the cartulary of the hospital of St John.[3] The earliest Cambridge letter-book has entries only from 1506.

It is thus clear that Oxford provides the best evidence for the study of the use of the ars dictaminis, in the letters preserved in dictaminal collections and most particularly from 1421 in the letter-book. Whereas the former were intended to supply models for imitation, whether of legal or of literary forms, register F gives some indication of being intended at

1 BL Harleian MS 670, fos 3-36; see OF ii. 440-3. Compare OF ii. 447-8 with EAO i. 32-5, 90-1.

2 OF ii. 443-50.

3 See BL Cottonian MS Faustina C vii, fo 128; St John's College Cambridge, cartulary of St John, fo 23b and The Register of Henry Chichele, Archbishop of Canterbury, 1414-1443 (4 vols) ii ed E F Jacob and H C Johnson (Canterbury and York Society xlii 1938) i,iii,iv ed E F Jacob (Canterbury and York Society xlv-vii 1943-7) iii. 273-4. I am very grateful to Fr M B Hackett OSA for these references. Some isolated letters survive in the university archives, see W Ullmann, 'The university of Cambridge and the Great Schism', Journal of Theological Studies ix (1958).

least in the first instance as a register of current business. So for example names were generally written out in full and dating clauses were normally preserved. In some cases where the letter belonged to a type which varied very little from one particular example to another, most notably the testimonial letters, the scribe would sometimes and more frequently in the later parts simply record that a letter had been sent.[1] It does not seem that letters were always added immediately however or indeed always consistently: blank sheets in the register suggest that space was sometimes left in vain for subsequent insertions.[2] And though the book was primarily intended to be a register the relationship with letters in Harleian MS 670 shows that it could also be used as a formulary.

Acquitances of Oseney and Eynsham abbeys were entered and occasionally other documents such as a decree of congregation,[3] a declaration by the mayor, aldermen and burgesses,[4] or the indentures between Duke Humfrey and the university.[5] But most of the entries were letters sent by the university to various recipients: just under a third of the total sent between 1421 and 1450 were to bishops and just under a quarter were to magnates, of which a good number were to Duke Humfrey. A smaller number were addressed to the king and to the pope. Nearly all the letters had as their main point a particular petition: about two fifths between 1421 and 1450 were concerned to secure the aid of the recipient in some case in which the university was involved, while most of the remainder were requests for assistance and patronage, either for an individually named member of the

[1] For example '... fuit una littera testimonialis magistro Will^{mo} Certeyn sub forma secunde littere testimonialis scripta superius in secunda parte primi fdii istius registri, viz magistro W. Parker', EAO i. 10.

[2] See the comments of Anstey, ibid, p.x.

[3] Ibid. 40; see also the ordinance for the Chichele chest, 83-9 and the Exeter chest, 205-8.

[4] Ibid. 42-3.

[5] Ibid. 179-84, 232-7. The first resulted in 'Statuta veteris bibliothecae' which are also recorded.

university (most of the letters to the pope were of this type) or for the university as a whole. A smaller number were letters of thanks to donors who had proved generous, the most notable of these being the repeated and fulsome expressions of gratitude to Duke Humfrey, and there were a few letters which the university occasionally had to send to excuse the conduct of some of its members.

The university letter-book thus provides particularly good evidence over a sustained period of time of letters of eloquent persuasion, in a form approximating closely to that in which they were actually sent and with most of the personal details preserved intact. When taken together with the examples of similar letters in earlier formularies, it is clear that Oxford letters are an especially useful source for the study of the art of the letter.

Secretarial organization on the evidence examined in this chapter developed at different rates in epsscopal, monastic and academic administration. In at least some dioceses and monasteries a well organised structure is apparent in the fourteenth century, although it is possible that greater informality and ad hoc arrangements persisted throughout the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. At Oxford and Cambridge formal organization is not evident until the end of the period examined in this thesis. In retrospect it could not be argued that Gilbert Stone's career on this evidence exemplifies a new secretarial profession. Not only is there a difference in degree of organization at different dates, but there is a difference in the type of institution. Stone and his fellow clerks were broadly speaking 'household' officials and employees, whereas monasteries and universities were corporate institutions who generally delegated their secretarial work to members of the institution. The nature and significance of these differences will become clearer when they are viewed in the context of developments in lay households and in institutions of government which altogether cover a wider range from informal arrangement to highly

specialized departmental organization.

Despite these differences common skills were required in all three types of administration. Registers and formularies witness to the clerical, legal and notarial skills which were fundamental to secretarial work and the occasional descriptions such as 'Bona littera et formalis' or the frank 'Bona littera sed incorrecta' point, if only in an indeterminate way, to a dictaminal component in the composition of the staple material of the registry or the chancery. Dictaminal skills were of course more extensively and definitively employed in the composition of 'letters missive', particularly in letters of persuasion. The same secretarial officials were probably responsible in most cases for this correspondence, though those with a particular reputation for skills of eloquence such as Stone may well like him have written for a wider circle of acquaintances and colleagues. More importantly, letters preserved as models for imitation in collections which cover the three main areas of secretarial work considered here, show that this influence extended considerably beyond personal contact. Only a few writers may be specifically identified as authors of particular collections of eloquent forms, but the number of formularies and letter collections as a whole points to a notable diffusion of the art of the letter.

Chapter Three

LETTER-WRITERS IN LAY HOUSEHOLDS AND IN CIVIC AND ROYAL GOVERNMENT

In this chapter some consideration will be given to letter-writing in a lay rather that in an ecclesiastical environment. This distinction is more than purely arbitrary, but as will be clear, it is far from being an absolute divide. On the whole there is a greater diversity of types of secretarial organization and activity evident in different lay institutions, but broadly the same evidence may be adduced for the diffusion of dictaminal skills and to a certain extent for the more particular use of skills of eloquent and persuasive composition. It is thus possible to add a wider historical context and framework to the evidence considered in the previous chapter on the profession of secretary and to reinforce the conclusions about the nature of his work.

i

Below the level of the great noble households and before the middle of the fifteenth century evidence of secretarial work and letter-writing for, or by, laymen is necessarily fragmentary. Such isolated information as there is touches on difficult questions about the spread of literacy which must be largely by-passed here. It is interesting to note however that scriviners were employed in London for the composition of 'wills, charters and all other things touching the said craft' and that at least from 1373 they put their names to the deeds 'so that it is known who had made the same'. Foreigners were prevented from setting up open shops because they were ignorant of the English use of formulae and the method of writing French and Latin wills and charters according to English usage. Scriviners were so overworked that by 1392 their shops remained open on Sunday despite the

protests of the bishop of London.[1] The need for such skills was obviously not restricted to London.[2] Some of the letters in French and Latin composed by Thomas Sampson and his colleagues were intended to be by laymen, notably by the parents of Oxford scholars, and although most of these were presumably fictitious their composition as such was apparently not considered incongruous. Indeed there are some examples of lay letters written in Latin, such as that from Jane Swan to her husband at the Roman curia which mentions the difficulty of finding a scribe and which is composed in a deferential and florid style.[3] From about the 1390s it is possible to find letters written in English although the great collections of the Paston, Stonor, Plumpton and Cely families come either mainly or entirely from later in the fifteenth century.[4]

The Pastons provide interesting examples of the use of professional writers, although it must be remembered that this evidence is later than that for most writers considered here, apart from those in the universities. The letters vary greatly in the evidence they give about the employment of scribes by the different authors; the women seem always to have used scribes, often whoever was to hand, the older men apparently had more regular scribes but occasionally made corrections or comments in their own hands, while the

1 Francis Steer, Scriviners' Company Common Paper 1357-1428 (London 1968) pp. x, 3-5 cited in Janet Coleman, Medieval Readers and Writers: English literature in history 1350-1400 (London 1981), 55-6.

2 In York for example in 1407 Robert Louth paid his clerk for drawing up his will and other documents; Jennifer I Kermode, 'The merchants of three northern English towns', Cecil H Clough (ed.) Profession, Vocation and Culture in Later Medieval England: essays dedicated to the memory of A R Myers (Liverpool 1982), 36.

3 Jacob, 'To and from the court of Rome', 173-4; see also OF ii. 353 where Stonor letters in Latin from the 1380s are cited; The Stonor Letters and Papers, 1290-1483, ed C L Kingsford (2 vols Camden Society 3rd ser. xxix-xxx 1919) i. 21-2.

4 See Taylor, 'Letters and letter collections', 67-9.

younger men usually wrote their own correspondence.[1] The names of eleven scribes may be derived from the letters. Of these William Ebsham, who wrote at least one letter for William II and part of John II's 'Great Book', was a professional scribe.[2] But other scribes often performed their letter-writing services in addition to other activities; for example Richard Calle who wrote for John I, Margaret and Margery, was also the family bailiff for a considerable period. James Gloys, another writer for John I and Margaret was the family chaplain; besides his clerical and priestly duties he was Margaret's chief confidant.[3] William Worcester also wrote a letter for John Paston I, although a subsequent dispute brought his association with the family to an abrupt end. He was for many years secretary and personal servant to Sir John Fastolf. He was during this time occupied with a great deal of estate and other legal business, so for example he was sometimes sent by his master to hold his courts at Castlecombe, Wiltshire. He was also sent on missions to London. One of his duties was certainly to act as the knight's scribe, but it seems that he did not hold any regular office; he was sometimes called 'secretary' but more often merely 'servant'. It is not clear that the first of these titles denoted a specific and distinguishable

1 William Paston I's surviving papers show three hands, one of which writes corrections and informal notes of such a kind that it must be his own. Many of John I's letters are written partly in a neat and regular professional looking hand, then corrected, completed and signed in a coarse and ill-formed hand which is clearly his. Likewise William II and Clement seem to have written partly in their own hands. In the next generation the great majority of John II's letters are in a single hand which also signed and initialled them; nearly all John III's are in another. This suggests that these were their own work. The women's letters are quite different: there are a multiplicity of hands in one person's correspondence which suggests that the women could hardly write, and that they called upon a literate person who happened to be most readily at hand. Paston Letters and Papers of the Fifteenth Century, ed N Davis (2 vols Oxford 1971, 1976), pp. xxv-xxxvii.

2 Paston Letters i. p. lxxvi; A I Doyle, 'The work of a late fifteenth-century English scribe, William Ebsham', Bulletin of the John Rylands Library xxxix (1957), 298-325.

3 Paston Letters i. pp. lxxv-lxxix has brief accounts of all the known scribes and considers the extent of their scribal activity.

household office.[1]

The term 'secretary' particularly in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries is of uncertain meaning. A century earlier than Worcester in 1366 John Humbleton, one of Sir John Chandos's servants, was described as 'his councillor and secretary, governor of all his property in England', although three years previously John de Oulertone was described as his 'chancellor and secretary'.[2] Both Henry earl of Lancaster and Edward the Black Prince had secretaries, but Henry also had a chancellor[3] and Edward a registrar.[4] The papal registers mention secretaries in several baronial households besides those already mentioned, for example between 1340 and 1377 in those of the earls of Huntingdon, Salisbury and Warwick as well as in those of the countess of Arundel, Blanche de Wake and Bartholomew Burghersh,[5] but there is no indication of the meaning of the term. Most of this evidence in fact comes from the papal registers as did the evidence for those described as bishops' secretaries, so it is possible that the term was not a native one in noble households at least in the fourteenth century. The clearest evidence for the use of the term secretary for a specific administrative official is in fact found first in the royal administration.[6]

1 BRUO iii. 2086-7; Paston Letters i. p. lxxviii; K B McFarlane, 'William Worcester: a preliminary survey', J Conway-Davies (ed.) Studies presented to Sir Hilary Jenkinson (Oxford 1957) reprinted in McFarlane, England in the Fifteenth Century: collected essays (London 1981), see esp. 202-3.

2 Dibben, 'Secretaries', 433; Calendar of Papal Petitions, 525 and 444, see also 464 and 526.

3 John de Welbourne was described as Lancaster's chancellor in 1349 (ibid. 151), William Claville as his secretary in 1353 (ibid. 238) and Roger de Burton as his secretary in 1355 (ibid. 275; BRUO i. 321).

4 Margaret Sharp, 'The central administrative system of Edward the Black Prince' in T F Tout, Chapters in the Administrative History of Mediaeval England (6 vols Manchester 1920-33) v. 372-4.

5 Dibben, loc. cit; Calendar of Papal Petitions, 217 (Huntingdon), 356 (Salisbury), 87, 354, 503 (Warwick), 215 (countess of Arundel), 120 (Blanche de Wake), 167 (Burghersh).

6 See below pp. 95-6.

It is nonetheless clear that secretarial work on a major scale was involved in some large households from an early date. Some of the official designations are similar to those found in episcopal and monastic administration, but on the whole the differentiation of functions has been seen as a reflection of developments in the royal household.[1] Isabella de Fortibus, countess of Devon and Aumale and lady of the Isle of Wight must have required an active secretariat for she issued a large number of letters patent and close and various writs. Her seal was in the charge of a wardrober, but Roger Bigod earl of Norfolk who died in 1306, had his own chancellor. Sir William de Beccles is known to have filled this office between 1294 and 1301.[2] There was obviously scope for much terminological variation for Richard earl of Cornwall had a secretarial staff at whose head there was a protonotary.[3]

The secretarial activity which, mainly because of diplomatic correspondence, came closest to that considered in earlier sections is to be found in the households of members of the royal family. When Queen Eleanor wished Edward I to write a letter on her behalf about her claims abroad, she sent it to him drafted in his name. She asked him to send it if he saw fit, or else to make any necessary corrections.[4] 'In the queen's household in general secretarial activities on a large scale were involved.[5] Again the papal registers in the fourteenth century generally refer to the queen's secretaries[6]

1 N Denholm-Young, Seignorial Administration in England (London 1937), 6.

2 Ibid. 18-20.

3 Denholm-Young 'Cursus', 40.

4 H Johnstone, 'The queen's household' in Tout, Chapters v. 285-6.

5 'The bulk of writing done' in the queen's household must have been considerable, even if we exclude as not relevant to our subject copying and illuminating', ibid. 284-5.

6 So Robert Wyville in 1327 and probably until 1330, Alan de Retford in 1332 (although only referred to as clerk), 1343 and 1351, and Robert de Conghan before 1353, secretaries to Queen Isabella: Dibben, 433 and Calendar of Papal Letters ii. 261, 386, iii. 418, 497; Calendar of Papal Petitions, 70, 242. Queen Philippa's secretaries were Benedict of Norwich in 1344, Robert de Chigwelle in 1344 and 1345, Richard de Ashton in 1346, 1349 and 1353, John de Dranfield in 1362 and John de Clisseby in 1368: Dibben, 433 and Calendar of Papal Petitions, 80, 86, 99, 110, 156, 239, 395; Calendar of Papal Letters iv. 68.

and occasionally to junior clerks.[1] Of one of the secretaries, Robert Wyville later bishop of Salisbury and Stone's first employer, the chronicler Murimuth wrote 'scripsit speciales literas reginae'.[2] Wyville was occasionally described as the queen's chancellor and also as her notary;[3] there is further evidence of the queen's chancellor from the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries.[4]

Edward the Black Prince also had an efficient and elaborate secretariat as is evidenced by its systematic record-keeping.[5] John Carleton is the first clerk definitely known to have been appointed as registrar in his privy seal office. In 1352 Edward ordered that he be paid 100 s yearly 'to write for the prince's privy seal and keep a register of letters written under the said seal.'[6] John of Gaunt also kept a register kept by his chancellor rather than a registrar. In 1375 on his appointment as bishop of Salisbury Ralph Erghum who had been his chancellor since 1373 was ordered:

> que vous delivrez a nostre tres ame chivaler monsire Robert de Swillyngton nostre chamberlain touz les evidences queux avez en vostre garde touchantz vostre office de chancellerye si bien le registre que vous avez ... et que vous delivrez a noz maines de meisne si bien nostre prive seal come nostre plat seal queux vous avez en vostre garde de les armes d'Espaigne.[7]

1 Queen Isabella had, besides her secretary Robert Conghan, a domestic clerk and writer , John de Tateford: Dibben, 439; Calendar of Papal Petitions, 243.

2 Dibben, 436; Adae Murimuth continuatio chronicarum, ed E M Thompson (Rolls Series 1889), 30.

3 Dibben, 439; Chronicon Galfridi le Baker de Swynebroke, ed E M Thompson (Oxford 1889), 45.

4 Thomas Peverell was chancellor to Queen Isabella in 1399, BRUO iii. 1472 citing the patent rolls; Adam Davenport was chancellor to Lady Philippa, daughter of John of Gaunt and queen of King João I of Portugal, BRUC, 178 and John Kyngton, a clerk of the first form in chancery in 1401 was chancellor to Queen Joan, Henry IV's second wife, BRUO ii. 1075.

5 'The earliest register which survives begins in 1346, but some record of letters issued was certainly kept before that date. By 1351 the letters sent out were so numerous that the contents of the register had to be divided between several volumes, each dealing with one geographical area.' Sharp in Tout, Chapters v. 372-4.

6 Sharp, 380; Register of Edward the Black Prince (4 vols London 1930-33) iv. 38. See Sharp, 437-8 for a list of his privy seal officials.

7 BRUO i. 644-5; John of Gaunt's Register, ed S Armitage-Smith (2 vols Camden Society 3rd ser. xx-xxi 1911) ii. 343.

It is interesting to note that both Bishops Wyville and Erghum in whose households Stone first worked were secretarial clerks; perhaps this partly explains why he had a more self conscious view of his profession than many of his contemporaries.

In the fifteenth century one of the most famous lay households was that of Humfrey duke of Gloucester. His employment of secretaries is really part of the introduction of Italian humanism into England and so strictly lies beyond the scope of this thesis. His arrangements certainly suggest a self-consciousness which is in contrast to the attitude apparent in other households; he employed the Italians, Tito Livio Frulovisi and Antonio Beccaria, as secretaries in 1437 and 1438-1445 or 6 to conduct his correspondence with for example Leonardo Bruni and Pier Candido Decembrio.[1] Among native Englishmen Humfrey employed Thomas Bekynton as his chancellor for a time; Bekynton was subsequently the king's secretary and one of the first successful English humanists.[2]

Most of the letter-writing undertaken in lay households with notable exceptions such as that of Duke Humfrey was not strictly comparable to the elegant compositions addressed by ecclesiastical chanceries to the curia and to other recipients and although individual letters, or at least small groups of letters, survive there are not collections of letters in the same way. When the family collections began mainly from the second half of the fifteenth century they were not dictamina comparable to those examined above. Nevertheless most of Thomas Sampson's students in accounting, conveyancing and letter-writing were destined for clerical work in local household administration, so his model letters provide if only indirectly some evidence

[1] Weiss, Humanism in England, 42-6; secretarial self-consciousness will be discussed in the conclusions to this chapter.

[2] Ibid. BRUO i. 157-9; A F Judd, The Life of Thomas Bekynton, secretary to King Henry VI and bishop of Bath and Wells, 1443-1465 (Chichester 1961) esp. 1-48.

for lay letter-writing in French and Latin according to the standards of the ars dictaminis.[1] It would moreover be a mistake to draw a wide gulf between the correspondence of say the gentry families and those discussed in the preceding chapters. It might at first be thought that these family letters would display an 'artlessness', a similitude to everyday speech distinguishing them from formal epistles, but the form of salutation at least in many of the Paston letters followed well established conventions,[2] and their formality is also found occasionally in for example the Plumpton correspondence.[3] It may appropriately be said that 'although the letters are by no means literary exercises there is nonetheless a certain literary artifice about them.'[4]

ii

Town governments also had to conduct a certain amount of correspondence, and although this too was not for the most part comparable to the elegant compositions more frequently required of ecclesiastical letter-writers, nevertheless there are some further indications of the diffusion of dictaminal skills and of at least a few letters which do correspond to those examined in the previous chapters. The evidence considered here is taken mainly from London with a number of references where there is similar material from other towns.

In London the centre of the civic administration was the chamber and the

1 Richardson 'Business training'; OF ii. 334-6.

2 Paston Letters i. p. xxxv; N Davis, 'The Litera Troili and English letters', Review of English Studies new ser. xvi (1965), esp. 243; N Davis, 'Style and stereotype in early English letters', Leeds Studies in English, new ser. i (1967).

3 'Many of the letters were written by those who stood in some formal or business relationship to the recipient ... There was therefore a necessary formality and a 'common form' about the majority of these communications', J Taylor, 'The Plumpton letters, 1416-1552', Northern History x (1975), 86.

4 Ibid.

clerks of the chamber were an 'inner élite' with a special oath of secrecy. They provided from their own number clerks for the aldermen and mayor as well as for the common clerk, the city's chief secretarial official. The common clerk can first be identified from 1278-9 and by at least the early fourteenth century he, the chamberlain in control of finances and partly responsible for records, and the common sergeant-at-law, the supervisor of the city's legal system, were the three senior officials in the civic bureaucracy.[1]

Legal business in its clerical ramifications was here as elsewhere the main concern of the secretariat and it has been said that 'legal training was the key to the highest office'.[2] Some of the business of the city's administration can be gathered from the letter-books which date from 1275, and which contain among other entries records of the court of common council and of the court of aldermen before the fifteenth century.[3] There are also a small number of letters addressed by the mayor and aldermen on behalf of the city to a number of recipients, although these are outweighed in the letter-books by the copies of documents sent to the city, notably the large number of royal letters and writs.[4]

A number of collections were also made by those involved in the administration of the city. Notable among these was Andrew Horn, chamberlain of the city from 1 20 till his death in 1328. His Liber Horn in addition to other material contained documents derived from the rolls in the possession of the common clerk and the first five letter-books.[5] He was also responsible

1 Gwyn A Williams, Medieval London: from commune to capital (London 1963), 93-5.

2 Ibid. 98.

3 They are called letter-books because they are distinguished by a letter of the alphabet, not because of their contents, Calendar of Letter-Books preserved among the archives of the Corporation of the City of London, ed Reginald R Sharpe (11 vols London 1899-191) i. p. i.

4 The city's letters are considered below.

5 It also had a comprehensive collection of statutes of Henry III and Edward I, a series of legal treatises of the thirteenth century and the ordinances of 1311, Jeremy Catto, 'Andrew Horn: law and history in fourteenth-century England', R H C Davis and J M Wallace-Hadrill (eds) The Writing of History in the Middle Ages: essays presented to Richard William Southern (Oxford 1981), 371-2.

for, among other works, an Annales londonienses of which the core was a history of Edward II and particularly of his appeal to Londoners in 1312, and a Modus et ordo novus placitorum apud turrim Londoniarum which was a record of the London eyre of 1321.[1] This combination of information referring to the early history of the city with documents drawn from its laws, privileges and customs is to be found again in the Liber albus compiled by John Carpenter. He was town clerk from 1417, having received a legal training and probably served in a junior capacity under the town clerk before his election. He was also frequently referred to as the secretary of the city, a designation found otherwise neither before his time nor after. His Liber albus recorded the observances which had 'been accustomed and approved' in the city as well as other matters 'worthy of note and remembrance' which were collected so that 'the rulers of the city as the ruled may know with greater security what henceforth should be done in rare and unusual cases.'[2] From Exeter more specific legal documents refer to a dispute between the mayor and citizens on one side and the bishop, the dean and the chapter on the other in 1447-50.[3] A collection closer to that of the Liber albus was Robert Ricart's Kalendar; Ricart was elected town clerk of Bristol in 1479 and his hand is identified in the Kalendar until 1506. The book was divided into six parts, the first three of which were devoted to history and the last three to local customs and laws; the sixth part contained some of the 'usages' of the city of London since according to the introduction 'this worshipfull Toune of Bristowe hath alweis vsed comenly to execute his fraunchisez and libertees accordinge in semblable wise as the noble Citee

1 Ibid. 372-9.

2 Munimenta gildhallae londoniensis: liber albus, liber custumarum et liber horn, ed H T Riley (3 vols Rolls series 1859) i. p. xviii; Thomas Brewer, Memoir of the Life and Times of John Carpenter (London 1856), 11-13, 21-22.

3 Letters and Papers of John Shillingford mayor of Exeter 1447-50, ed Stuart A Moore (Camden Society new ser. ii 1871). This was not a collection of documents however, see p. xiii.

of London hath vsed'.[1] The Custumal of Sandewiche was a similar work begun in 1301 and copied and added to by a town clerk in Edward IV's reign; the reason given for its compilation was that it would provide help and advice for all those who would have the government of the town.[2]

A book which has closer affinities to some of those considered in the previous chapter was that compiled by William Asshebourne, the common clerk of Lynn in the early fifteenth century. Before entering the service of the town he had been employed in the administration of the bishop of Norwich in the episcopal liberty at Lynn, and he entered some of the routine documents from that time into his book. Most of the material concerns the town, however he entered forms of the documents which the town clerk would come across or need to write in the course of his business, as well as copies of the charters and grants of privilege with which a Lynn administrator would have to be familiar. There are also a number of testimonials to poverty or distress including one drawn up 'in the manner of London' and letters to other towns about the escape and return of apprentices. The book was therefore intended to be a formulary and in some respects also a memorandum or precedent book; but Asshebourne's clerkship covered a turbulent time in the history of the town when the basis of municipal government was being questioned and the trade of its merchants was being threatened by the Hanseatic cities, and so the book also has the appearance of a chronical record for the years between 1412 and 1417.[3] A minor but interesting detail recorded by Asshebourne which illustrates the contempt of the ecclesiastical for the secular within the administrative world is the sharp remark of the official of the bishop of Norwich on Asshebourne's transferral from

1 The Maire of Bristowe is Kalendar by Robert Ricart, ed L T Smith (Camden Society new ser. v 1872), pp. i-xviii.

2 'Quia litera scripta manet, in adjutorium et consilium eorum qui villam predictam fuerint postmodum gubernaturi', ibid. p. xiv.

3 William Asshebourne's Book, ed Dorothy M Owen (Norfolk Record Society xlviii 1981), 59-60, 66.

the episcopal to the civic administration: 'once you were Paul, now you are Saul'.[1]

It is likely that other town clerks and civic officials kept or made collections like that of Asshebourne. A somewhat similar book for example comes from Bury St Edmunds; it is a memorandum book mainly for conveyancing but with some other documents concerning residents of the town.[2]

Letters rarely survive in any great numbers. An exception to this are two rolls which contain a considerable correspondence from the city of London between about 1350 and 1370. Most of the letters are applications made by the city to the authorities of English or Flemish towns for the restoration of custom or toll taken from citizens of London travelling with their merchandize, although there are also a number to other towns demanding the surrender of runaway apprentices. There are also for example certificates of births, deaths and marriages as well as of ships' arrivals in the port, and letters of testimonial and of safe conduct.[3] A number of letters also survive in a packet from Southampton, some of which are from the periods 1458-9 and 1470-2 and one of which interestingly is a letter which was sent in draft to the king to be sent out under his privy seal, subject to his approval.[4] It is of course no doubt the case that municipalities did not very often need to send elegant letters of persuasion, but as in the case of lay letter-writing there are occasional examples, and there is the possibility of a wider if less pronounced use of dictaminal skills than might at first appear. The letters scattered throughout the London letter-

1 Ibid. no. 49.

2 A E B Owen, 'A scriviner's notebook from Bury St Edmunds', Archives xiv (1979-80).

3 Calendar of Letters from the Mayor and Corporation of the City of London, circa 1350-1370, ed Réginald R Sharpe (London 1885), pp. vi-xi.

4 Letters of the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries from the Archives of Southampton, ed R C Anderson (Southampton Record Society 1921), pp. iii-v; for the privy seal letter, 27.

books are generally addressed to the king, to noblemen and also in some cases to the pope. In 1350 for example the city wrote to the pope requesting that John de Worthyn OP be empowered to grant absolution in London since the citizens could not journey to Rome because of pestilence and war. In the same year they wrote to the pope recommending Richard Cleaungre a poor theological scholar.[1] In the next two letter-books there are further letters to the pope, one requesting a better bishopric for 'Cesarius' bishop of 'Sancta Maria de Rosis' and another deprecating the raising of William Courtenay then bishop of London to the dignity of cardinal and thereby depriving the citizens of his personal influence.[2] In the same volume as this last letter, there are a number addressed to the king, one apologizing for the wickedness of John Northamptone and his followers and another denying rumours of dissension in the city, while a further letter was sent concerning certain merchants of Almaine who had complained of their treatment by London merchants.[3] In the volume covering the years from 1399 to 1422 besides a letter inviting Richard Alkirtone canon of Chichester to preach on Easter Day 1415 and expressing the hope that his language would be temperate,[4] there is a series to the king and the duke of Clarence on their conduct of the war in France as well as one about a tax for a Welsh expedition,[5] and in the following volume there are letters to the duke of Bedford, the earl of Salisbury and to the king and to Bishop Waynflete of Winchester about an attack on Sandwich by the French.[6] Some of these letters as well as some of the proclamations (one of which in 1418 was signed 'Carpenter') show signs of dictaminal composition, and particularly of

1 London Letter-Books vi (F 1338-53), 206, 209.
2 Ibid. vii (G 1353-75), 19, viii (H 1376-99), 116.
3 Ibid. 36, 101, 305, 313-5.
4 Ibid. ix (1 1399-1422), 132.
5 Ibid. 82, 140, 183, 185, 193, 199, 200, 224.
6 Ibid. x (K 1422-59), 79, 94, 382.

adherence to the rules of ornata verba.[1]

iii

The organization and the work of the royal government, which have been extensively studied, reveal a degree of specialization and of bureaucratic development which due to the quantity of the business involved is far in excess of the types of administration previously considered. Nevertheless much of the technical clerical work of the royal government was at least similar to that carried on by other secretarial clerks, and more particularly the king too required clerks skilled in epistolary composition, notably for the conduct of his diplomatic correspondence. For the most part the evidence for this correspondence must be drawn from formularies and letter collections, the same sources that contain the work of non-royal secretarial clerks. Whatever verdict is finally reached about the importance and extent of professional eloquence, it is at least worthy of note that it was responsible for the preservation of some of the most important diplomatic documents of the period for the historian.

Clerical work was required in all the offices of government and of the royal household, but secretarial interest in particular is focussed in the chancery and even more in the emerging offices of the smaller privy and signet seals. By the fourteenth century the chancery existed as an institution 'out of court', the source of all formal administrative processes, even if as such it largely implemented in letters under the great seal decisions that had been reached elsewhere; it was 'the instrument not of the king so much as of the Crown'.[2] Not all chancery business however

[1] See further below, especially ch. 5. Some of the letters and proclamations from letter-books I and K, written in English, are printed in A Book of London English 1384-1425, ed R W Chambers and Marjorie Daunt (Oxford 1931), 64-89.

[2] B Wilkinson, The Chancery under Edward III (Manchester 1929), 207-8; for the early history of chancery as an organized writing office under the magister scriptorii which drafted documents for the chancellor to seal and which from the late thirteenth century slowly separated itself from its associations with the wardrobe in the household, see Tout, Chapters i passim and S B Chrimes, An Introduction to the Administrative History of Mediaeval England (Oxford 1959), passim.

depended on outside authorization: among other duties it was the only place where original writs for beginning an action in the king's court or an action concerning freehold in any court could be obtained. The development of this kind of business made chancery less of a secretarial institution and more of a 'department of state'.[1] Chancery also constituted a separate law court which was growing in importance and by the late fifteenth century the chancellor's exercise of an equitable jurisdiction came in fact to be the predominant business of the office.[2]

Despite indications of these developments, chancery obviously remained in part a secretarial office in the period from the mid-fourteenth to the mid-fifteenth centuries, and its staff provide some parallels to the careers of secretarial officials in other institutions. The chancellors themselves occupied positions of considerable political importance and it is generally true that their normal duties lay outside rather than within their own department of administration, even if their actions were often of effect on its development.[3] It was in fact the chief chancery clerks who supervised most of the administrative work of the office under the keeper of the rolls who, in the absence of the chancellor, was the effective head of the office.[4] These clerks of the first form had under them clerks of the second form and a certain number of junior clerks called cursitores. 'Commanders', normally

[1] Wilkinson, 25-7; Chrimes, 208.

[2] Nevertheless note: 'the judicial importance of the early chancellors has, however, been unduly insisted upon by the modern lawyers, who have studied the history of chancery, only from their own standpoint of the chancery as a court of equity. It cannot, therefore, be too much emphasized that for our period the chancellor was administrator and secretary much more than he was judge.' Tout i. 16-17; see also Wilkinson, 28-49.

[3] Wilkinson, 71. Wilkinson gives detailed accounts of the careers of chancellors during the reign of Edward III, of their political role, and of their impact on the office, 98-146.

[4] 'In the long, secure labour of these officials, the real atmosphere of the administrative department of chancery is admirably expressed'; Wilkinson, pp. xxvii-xxviii, 71-4.

clerks of the first form, heard those who came seeking writs from chancery, and 'commanded' for each the right kind of writ. 'Examiners', also usually clerks of the first form, in turn examined every resultant writ 'in ratione, litera, dictione et syllaba', before allowing it to be sealed, either by the chancellor or by whoever had a special commission for the purpose.[1] Besides these tasks, some clerks of the first grade probably also constructed or supervised the construction of writs at the request of petitioners. It is interesting to note that in 1343 the master of King's Hall Cambridge paid four shillings to Elias Grimsby, then a clerk of the first grade, for the composition (dictamine) of an instrument regarding some advowsons and two shillings for the writing (scriptura) of the same.[2] The clerks of the first form also performed clerical functions in parliament; two principal clerks were appointed according to the Modus tenendi parliamentum to record all pleas and transactions of parliament and to act as receivers of petitions. Elias Grimsby for example was a receiver for fourteen years.[3]

Below these clerks came those of the second grade, called prenotarii in Fleta and twelve in number. They like their superiors were hierarchically organised and they shared in the supervision of some writs.[4] They held such offices as the clerkship of the petty bag, responsible for the scrutinising of past rolls of chancery, perhaps the keepership of the hanaper and also the two clerkships of the crown. The latter prepared writs particularly

1 Wilkinson, 71-5. Wilkinson discusses offices in the time of Edward III particularly in relation to two works which give important details on the organisation of chancery: from an earlier period the law-book Fleta, and the later Ordinaciones cancellarie of 12 Richard II. There was a process of elaboration and development evident between the periods of these documents. See also T F Tout 'The household of chancery and its disintegration', H W C Davis (ed) Essays in History presented to R. Lane Poole (Oxford 1927), 63-4.

2 Wilkinson, 78-9.

3 Ibid. 81; A F Pollard, 'The clerical organization of parliament', English Historical Review lvii (1942), 32-3.

4 Wilkinson, 74, 84; Tout, 'Household of chancery', 63-4.

for the household, and may also have acted in parliament.[1] All these officials may have had subordinate clerks to write under their direction and in their names, but the main clerical composition of the office was completed, beneath the levels of the clerks of the first and second forms, by the cursitors who worked for the most part on writs of course.[2]

The work of a chancery clerk was thus despite some other duties primarily concerned with the composition and writing of writs, and the evidence of their work can now be found in the rolls of the office, the files of chancery inquisitions, chancery writs and returns, exchequer warrants and in the files of ancient correspondence.[3] These are hardly likely to offer very substantial evidence on the use of the ars dictaminis. It is however important to consider the use of notaries in chancery and the role of chancery in diplomatic correspondence. Tout wrote that a 'proportion of the chancery clerks were always notaries', but in fact it seems that the first notaries active in the royal administration were connected with the wardrobe. John Thoresby, notary public by apostolic authority, was the first to hold a position in the royal chancery, being active there by 1333 and definitely holding the position of royal notary in chancery by 1336.[4] At least two royal notaries subsequently were clerks of the privy seal but in 1355 Edward III appointed John de Branketre, notary public by apostolic

[1] Wilkinson, 84; A F Pollard, 'The clerk of the crown', English Historical Review lvii (1942), 314-6.

[2] Wilkinson, 74-5; Tout, 'Household of chancery', 63-4.

[3] In the construction of writs papal influence was of importance in the thirteenth century; the use of the terms 'mandate', 'mandate of provision' and 'grace' in place of the usual 'writ', 'letters' or 'letters patent' was due to the influence of the papal chancery, as was the idea of 'reservation' and 'revocation' and the use of the term non obstante, G Barraclough, 'The English royal chancery and the papal chancery in the reign of Henry III', Mitteilungen des Instituts für Österreichische Geschichtsforschung lxii (1954), 368-374. The papal chancery was also influential in introducing the cursus.

[4] Tout, Chapters ii. 70 note 2 followed by Denholm-Young, 'Cursus', 41-2, but see Pierre Chaplais, 'Master John de Branketre and the office of notary in chancery, 1355-1375', Journal of the Society of Archivists iv (1971), 170-2. Thoresby had begun his career in the service of Archbishop William Melton of York; he was later keeper of the rolls of chancery, keeper of the privy seal, chancellor, bishop of St David's, Worcester and archbishop of York, BRUO iii. 1863-4.

and imperial authority, as a successor to Thoresby as a notary in chancery. Notaries in the privy seal were thereafter subordinate to Branketre at least in the composition of diplomatic documents.[1] The Roman Rolls, begun under Edward II and continuing until the middle of the next reign and containing documents issued under the great seal, show also that at this time letters to the pope and cardinals, to the emperor and at times even to English bishops, were issued from the chancery. These letters are an important source for the use of the ars dictaminis.[2]

A letter in Foedera from 1307 provides an interesting clue to the composition of diplomatic correspondence in the early fourteenth century. The letter is a draft in French which was sent to the chancellor enclosed in a privy seal writ instructing him: 'que meisme la note facez translater en Latyn en bone et convenable forme et sealer de noster grant seal'.[3] This may well have been a common method and illustrates the close relations between different seals which make it likely that dictaminal skills were shared among royal clerks apparently working in different 'offices'.

A number of dictamina survive from the early and middle parts of the fourteenth century. Documents from 1330 to 1360 from both the chancery and exchequer archives for the most part were entered in one collection under the countries to which they referred: Germany, Flanders, Scotland,

1 Chaplais, 173-4.

2 D C Ric II, pp. viii-ix. 'It is clear from the organization of the office, no less from the results which it was capable of producing, that ... there were always men in the chancery acquainted with the theory of Dictamen', Denholm-Young, 'Cursus in England', 42.

3 The actual letter agrees almost verbatim with the French draft; Denholm-Young examines the terminology of instructions to chancery, particularly the command that a letter be rendered 'en bone forme et especiale'. In 'special form' could mean that the phraseology of the letter was left to the clerk responsible for its composition, although 'special' credences of the time of Edward II are distinguished from ordinary credences by the presence of a preamble; see Liber epistolaris, ed Denholm-Young, pp. xxvi-xxvii.

Brittany and France.[1] Royal letters, mostly diplomatic ones, were included in for example Richard de Bury's letter book,[2] in the mixed collection which also contained Oxford letters and documents and the Salisbury diocesan formulary.[3] in two collections one mixed with episcopal and papal letters[4] and another with letters of Queen Isabella, Charles king of France and his son,[5] in a formulary belonging to Reading Abbey, composed mainly of materials on canon law and monastic documents,[6] and in a collection made sometime after 1333, but containing letters of the 1320s and early 1330s.[7] The extent to which these collections may be directly associated with royal officials varies and there are other sources for royal letters, but the

[1] Rylands Library Latin MS 404; Friedrich Bock, 'An unknown register of the reign of Edward III', English Historical Review xlv (1930), 353-72; D C Ric II, pp. xvii-xix.

[2] Liber epistolaris ed Denholm-Young, see nos 1-359, 447-54, 486-541. The chancery letters are taken from drafts not enrolments, and some of them have alternate phrases for parts of the letter, pp. xxv-xxvi.

[3] B L Royal MS 12 D xi, fos 11-30. The letters are mainly of 1337-8, although one is as late as 1344; they begin without title or introduction. Commenting on the combination of royal and university letters, Richardson suggested that the man who collected the letters was in Oxford at one time but in London at another while the collection was being made, OF i. 84. See above, pp. 52-3, 65, 70.

[4] B L Cottonian MS Galba E x, fos 59-90. The letters have no titles, but marginal annotations draw attention to particularly good examples. Some are sent by E rex Anglie, and the other names such as Popes Innocent and Clement and John archbishop of York show the collection dates from the second half of the fourteenth century. See above, p. 54.

[5] B L Cottonian MS Vitellius E x, fos 85-111b. The royal letters are addressed to the pope, foreign princes, and English bishops, abbots and noblemen. It was in a later part of this manuscript that Stone's letter to Archbishop Arundel was included, above pp. 27, 71.

[6] Cambridge University Library MS Dd ix 38 for the royal letters from Edward III to cardinals, abbots, bishops, the keeper of the cinque ports and one (printed in Rymer, Foedera ii. IIII) to the peers, prelates and commons of France see fos 2b, 103b, 110-4.

[7] Bodl Rawlinson MS A 273, fos 109b-135. One of the royal letters to the pope is in French, perhaps a draft like that in Foedera mentioned above. There are other Latin letters to the pope together with royal letters to the archbishop of Canterbury and other English recipients. An entry on fo 131b is headed 'Litera bona'.

interest which attaches to such examples as these is the specifically dictaminal motive for their collection.

Towards the end of the fourteenth century and in the fifteenth dictaminal interest centres more particularly in the smaller seals, since by that time diplomatic letters were not generally sent out under the great seal, even though chancery clerks might still be asked to write, and the chancellor to seal, some formal documents such as appointments of ambassadors, treaties, agreements and truces.[1]

Both the chamber and the wardrobe as household institutions had performed among their manifold activities before the fourteenth century the functions of a secretariat.[2] In the reign of Edward I, particularly after 1289, the wardrobe officer who kept the privy seal could be described, as in one chancery writ, as 'the private chancellor of the king', and John Benstead, controller of the wardrobe was ex-officio keeper of the privy seal.[3] From the 1320s however the keepership of the privy seal became separated from the controllership of the wardrobe and came to be an important office in its own right.[4] The keeper of the privy seal was also described for most of the period from 1307 to 1367 as the king's secretary.[5] This term, as has

[1] DC Ric II, p. viii.

[2] At the beginning of the thirteenth century the chamber was more than a household office of finance. It was 'a secretarial office with a seal and a staff of clerks and writers of its own'. Tout, Chapters i. 160. Before King John's death the wardrobe was sharing in this, ibid. 168.

[3] Ibid. ii. 68: Chrimes, Administrative History, 139. 'The activities of the wardrobe as a secretariat are revealed mainly in the surviving warrants or notes on chancery records of warranties by privy seal, and in evidence of its relations with the chancellor's office, revelations which are sufficient to give some picture of the wardrobe as the personal chancery of the king', ibid. 140, see also 166.

[4] When Richard Bury was appointed to the keepership of the privy seal in September 1329, this was held to be a promotion for a keeper of the wardrobe, ibid. 203; Tout, Chapters v. 6-7.

[5] Dibben made this point citing the calendars of the patent and close rolls, 'Secretaries', 436.

already been observed, does not always admit of a clear-cut definition. In 1323, for example, it was still used in the sense of the king's intimate councillor,[1] and as late as 1350 it could mean an ambassador,[2] but these various meanings apparently ceased after 1350. Secretary could apparently before this date and more definitely after denote the holder of a distinctive administrative office held in conjunction with the keepership of the privy seal; thus John Benstede, keeper of the privy seal, was in 1299 in the midst of a list of witnesses described as 'secretarius'.[3] Casual references indicate both the existence of the office and make it possible to draw up a rough list of its holders.[4] As to function, Benstede's official duties were put shortly: 'to write the king's letters under his privy seal.[5]

In the second half of the fourteenth century however the secretaryship and the custody of the privy seal were in their turn separated, so that William of Wykeham was apparently the last person to hold both offices jointly from 1363-7.[6] Both the keeper and the office of the privy seal themselves moved 'out of court'. As an administrative office the privy seal was essentially a clearing house;[7] most administrative action involving

1 So Hugh Despencer the younger, Geoffrey le Scrope, justice of the king's bench, and Master Robert de Ayleston, keeper of the privy seal, were described by Edward II as 'secretarios nostros, quibus secretiora negotia nostra committimus et communicamus', Dibben, 431 citing Rymer, Foedera ii 541.

2 In that year an embassy to the pope consisted of the bishop of Norwich, the earl of Lancaster 'et alios secretarios et fideles nostros'; all the members of the embassy were at times included as secretaries, Dibben, 432-3, citing Rymer, Foedera iii. 201.

3 Dibben, 434-5, citing Rymer, Foedera i. 916.

4 Dibben, 435.

5 Ibid. 436-7.

6 Ibid. 437; Chrimes, 204,214.

7 As early as the ordinances of Walton of 1338 it was intended to make writs of privy seal the controlling instrument of the whole administration. Still the first parliament of Richard II when it petitioned in parliament for the nomination of the chief officers left the keeper of the privy seal to the king's discretion. Later parliaments however placed him among the five principal officers. Tout, Chapters v. 55-9, 232; Brown, 'Privy seal clerks', 261.

discretionary powers was by the reign of Richard II initiated by writs of privy seal, and this alone gave it a most important position.[1] In addition, the privy seal office was associated, if not exclusively, with the royal council. Council meetings were for example sometimes summoned by letters of privy seal, which were also used for subsequent authorisation, and when the office of clerk of the council was established during Richard II's time, it was normally held by a privy seal clerk.[2] Apart from such important executive functions as these, it is interesting here to note that privy seal letters were by this time also used for writing to foreign courts, as well as to private persons and to various officials for administrative purposes. Considering all this it has been said that the privy seal was 'the key-pin in the administration'.[3]

Of all these functions it is however the writing of diplomatic letters which is of the greatest importance here. This role from at least the reign of Richard II means that a particular interest attaches to the staff of the privy seal office. Privy seal clerks are relatively better known than many of their contemporaries in other departments, and historians have been able to reconstruct their lives and careers to a certain extent.[4] Under the keeper there were in the fourteenth century normally four clerks, one of whom was termed the secondary, but their number was sometimes increased and there were certainly more in the early fifteenth century. From at least the middle of the fourteenth century there was moreover a distinction drawn between clerks and under-clerks, and from an earlier date

[1] For other means of moving the great seal, see Chrimes, 205-6.

[2] Ibid. See also Tout, Chapters v. 59-60; A L Brown, The Early History of the Clerkship of the Council (Glasgow 1969), 3, 6.

[3] Chrimes, loc. cit. For the writing of diplomatic letters and for the other diplomatic business of the privy seal office, see D C Ric II, pp. xi-xvii.

[4] Tout gives a list of fifty two clerks from the reigns of Edward II, Edward III and Richard II, Chapters v. 110-112 and Brown notes twenty six between 1399 and 1425, 'Privy seal clerks', 261-2.

the clerks had assistants working for them although the latter were not formally recognised as clerks of the office.[1] Most clerks were not university graduates; John Prophete was an exception, but he was only nominally associated with the office while clerk of the council.[2] The possibility of some having had dictaminal training under an instructor such as Sampson prior to their arrival in the privy seal has been tentatively suggested in a recent study, and this is corroborated by the fact that some manuscripts contain treatises and letters by Sampson together with royal documents.[3] There is further evidence of dictaminal interest. Robert Frye, John Prophete's clerk in 1394, clerk of the council from about 1397 until 1421 and secondary of the office in 1420, may well have owned a copy of the Epistolarum of Petrus de Vinea, a collection of letters in six volumes which was popular in England.[4] If he did then this is the only example encountered of a major dictaminal work from the continent in the possession of a practising official. Fryewas also responsible for at least part of a book which apparently comprises two formularies, one composed of signet documents and written sometime after mid 1389 and the other a privy seal formulary begun in the 1390s and added to in the early fifteenth century. The privy seal formulary was most probably written by Frye, and since he was originally a signet clerk it is likely that he took the signet formulary with him to the privy seal and added to it there.[5]

Another formulary containing both privy seal and signet documents was

1 Ibid. and Tout, Chapters v. 77-9.

2 BRUO iii. 1521-3; Brown, 'Privy seal clerks', 263.

3 Ibid. For these manuscripts see for example above p. 105 note 6, and below p. 110 note 3.

4 Ibid. See E Kantorowicz, 'Petrus de Vinea in England', Mitteilungen des Instituts für Österreichische Geschichtsforschung 1i (1937-8), esp. 59-66.

5 Edinburgh University MS 183, signet formulary (fos 81-120), privy seal formulary (fos 27-80, 121-54); Brown, 'Privy seal clerks', 264. This formulary provided many letters in Perroy's edition of D C Ric II.

written in about 1390. Diplomatic letters occur in two blocks, a Latin section comprising letters to the pope, cardinals and some foreign princes from Richard II and a French section belonging to the last years of Edward III. The second of these comes entirely from privy seal archives, but in the first there are both privy seal and signet letters.[1] Examples of letters in French mixed from both seals are to be found in a further collection dating from the last years of Richard II.[2] Some royal letters of Henry IV and V are to be found in the Prophete-Felde letter-book, although the collection as already noted is a very miscellaneous one. Some Cottonian manuscripts and others in the British Library which may be part of the privy seal archives, also contain diplomatic letters from this period.[3]

The best and most illuminating formulary, one of the 'purest' examples of the genre, was however the book compiled by Thomas Hoccleve clerk of the privy seal and English poet. It provides the most illuminating guide to the work of the privy seal office in the early fifteenth century.[4] Hoccleve included systematically warrants and writs addressed to the chancellor, to the treasurer, to household officials and to those abroad, to the keeper of

1 Cambridge University Library MS Dd iii 53; D C Ric II, pp. xix-xxi.

2 B L Harleian MS 3988; the manuscript also contains a treatise on letter-writing in French with examples, apparently by Sampson. Richardson suggested that it found its way into the hands of a clerk of the privy seal or signet, who added further examples, c 1396, OF ii. 408.

3 B L Harleian MS 431. The same hand that copied Stone's letters also included a few diplomatic letters of Henry IV and V. For comments on this manuscript, see above pp.31-4. Original diplomatic letters of Henry IV are also found in Cottonian MSS and in some other collections such as B L Additional MS 14820, see Royal and Historical Letters during the reign of Henry the Fourth, ed F C Hingeston (2 vols Rolls Series 1860-5). Perroy suggested that the Cottonian documents are in part the relics of the privy seal archives, D C Ric II, pp. xvi-xvii.

4 B L Additional MS 24062; Brown, 'Privy seal clerks', 260-1, 264. There is a transcription of the formulary by E-J Y Bentley. (Emory University PhD Thesis 1965); I am very grateful to Professor Brown for lending me a microfilm of this thesis for an extended period.

the wardrobe, mayors, sheriffs and other such officials and to persons of 'all estates'. Towards the end of the book he entered letters patent and 'missives', including diplomatic correspondence, which extend from the reign of Edward III to that of Henry V and at the end of the formulary he placed a section entitled 'exordies et extraits des lettres', a collection of elegant phrases and clauses for inclusion in letters.[1]

Some impression can also be given of the life of the privy seal clerks comparable to the details of Stone's professional life afforded by some of his letters. Thirty private letters of Robert Frye reveal him as an acute man of business, as part of the 'gossipy, promotion-conscious world of the civil servants of the period', while the personal letters about Prophete in the Prophete-Felde letter collection are concerned with ecclesiastical preferment.[2] Among Frye's correspondence there is a Latin letter to his mother, like that from Jane Swan to her husband, although it is possible that this was simply a formal exercise. Hoccleve, less successful than Frye and far below the level of Prophete and Felde, is nevertheless in his autobiographical poetry the most revealing of the clerks about his personality generally, and more importantly from the present perspective, about the nature of his work. In addition to his constant concern with finance, he gives a thoroughly unromantic view of the routine of the privy seal clerk:

[1] For the contents see Brown loc. cit. and D C Ric II, pp. xiv-xvii. Under the 'missives' there were also included some letters of the great seal, petitions to the king and letters from foreign princes. There was also a section containing papal bulls. Perroy suggests that some of these must have been kept in the privy seal office, ibid. p. xvii.

[2] For Frye see Public Record Office, exchequer, treasury of receipt, council and privy seal (E 28), files 23 and 29 and Prophete in B L Harleian MS 431. Brown gives detailed consideration to this subject, 'Privy-seal clerks', 265-81.

A wryter moot thre thynges to hym knytte,
And in tho may be noo disseveraunce.
Mynde, ye, and hande, non may fro other flytte ...

Wrytying also doth grete anoyes three,
Of whyche ful fewe folkes taken hede,
Sauf we oureself, and thyse lo þe be.
Stomak ys on, whom stowpyng out of drede
Annoyeth sore. And to oure bakkes nede
Moot yt be grevous. And the thrid, oure yen
Vpon the whyte mochel sorwe dryen.[1]

But as another poem reveals the respect paid to him by boatmen on the Thames provided Hoccleve with some consolation:

Othir than maistir callid was I nevere
Among this meynee in myn audience.
Me thoghte I was ymaad a man forevere.
So tikelid me þat nyce reverence
Þat it me made largere of despense
Than þat I thoghte han been. O flaterie,
The guyse of thy traiterous diligence
Is folk to meschеef haasten and to hie.[2]

It is also worth noting that just as Stone wrote letters of advice to Bishop Clifford and Archbishop Arundel, so Hoccleve in 1471? addressed his major work, the Regiment of Princes on the virtues necessary to a ruler, to Prince Henry.[3]

In the glimpses of its life which it affords and more particularly in the evidence of its work, the privy seal has certain basic similarities with the non-royal forms of administration examined above despite the great differences of environment and subject matter. Before leaving the royal administration however the office of king's secretary and the signet seal, responsible for the intimate correspondence of the king, may be considered to complete the picture of his main secretarial arrangements.

As already noted the keeper of the privy seal was until the time of William of Wykeham customarily referred to as secretary, but from 1377 this

[1] The Regiment of Princes, ll. 995-7, 1016-1022, Selections from Hoccleve, ed M C Seymour (Oxford 1981), 35.

[2] La Male Regle de T Hoccleve, ll. 201-208, ibid. 17.

[3] Ibid. p. xiii.

latter term designated the confidential clerk whose primary function was the custody of the signet seal.[1] Lists of secretaries and of some of the clerks of the signet have been drawn up, and in the case of the secretaries most of their careers are well established.[2] But a reconstruction of their activities is greatly hindered by the lack of office records; in fact it seems that these duties were from the start of a vague and uncertain nature. There survive, however, a considerable number of signet letters among the chancery warrants; in the years 1383-86 there was a great increase in the practice of using letters under the signet for the initiation of action under the great seal, and although this was temporarily restricted by the lords appellant in 1388 as part of their attempt to curb Richard's authority, its use was re-established in the 1390s. Similar signet warrants came to be issued to the keeper of the privy seal, and the usual practice in the fifteenth century was for the signet to move the privy seal, which in turn moved the great seal.[3]

This function of the signet was by no means the only one, nor necessarily the most important, but the great number of letters which had original force, concerned with 'internal administration and external diplomacy' have left little trace in any comprehensive way. Some formularies containing signet material have, however, survived. Robert Frye's formulary, as described above, began with signet letters collected after mid 1389.[4] while the Cambridge formulary compiled about the same time, although apparently

[1] The signet was not a new seal; it became synonymous with the secret seal in the reign of Edward III, although it is not clear precisely how this was effected. Chrimes, Administrative History, 214; A J Otway - Ruthven, 'The king's secretary in the fifteenth century', Transactions of the Royal Historical Society, 4th ser. xix (1936), 81; A J Otway-Ruthven, The King's Secretary and the Signet Office in the Fifteenth Century (Cambridge 1939), 60.

[2] Tout, Chapters v, 211-30; Otway-Ruthven, Secretary and Signet, 160-179 (secretaries), 180-189 (clerks).

[3] Chrimes, 214-6; Otway-Ruthven, 'Secretary', 85-87.

[4] See above p. 98.

designed for the use of clerks of the privy seal, contained a number of signet documents.[1] The miscellaneous collection of Anglo-Norman letters and petitions, perhaps compiled by John Stevens, also contains letters specifically associated with Roger Walden king's secretary from 1393 to 1395 and treasurer from 1395 to 1398. The formulary has some of his official, as well as some of his private correspondence,[2] and a number of the official letters are in common with those in the formulary of mixed origin in which some of Stone's letters were included.[3] These collections show that the secretary was responsible for the king's private letters; it was under the signet that Richard II commanded Lady Ponynges to spend Christmas at court, and congratulated Archbishop Courtenay upon a miracle which had lately been worked at the shrine of St Thomas. The secretary also wrote royal letters concerned with business and government. Directions were sent under the signet to royal officials such as the clerk of the king's ships, the keeper of the great wardrobe, or one of the controllers of the king's works. In this way the king attempted for example to secure the election of his nominees to bishoprics and other benefices, and there is an interesting series of signet letters in the Anglo-Norman formulary written to the government in England keeping them informed of the progress of the king's expedition in Ireland.[4]

But a certain amount of diplomatic correspondence also was sent under the signet. During the reign of Richard II this was mainly less important diplomatic business such as safe-conducts and credences, or else the king's personal business such as the details of his French marriage. Although it is difficult to be certain the same seems to apply to the reigns of Henry IV

[1] See above p. 99.

[2] Anglo-Norman Letters and Petitions, pp. xvi-xvii; see above p. 49.

[3] B L Royal MS 10 B ix; compare fos 1-8 with letters which appear in more abbreviated form, but in the same order, in All Souls MS 182, fos 207-12; Otway-Ruthven, 'Secretary', 90.

[4] See ibid. 91-2 and Otway-Ruthven, Secretary and Signet, 118.

and V.[1] It is likely however that when Henry VI was able to govern, a greater and more important proportion of diplomatic correspondence was conducted under the signet. Thomas Bekynton who was the king's secretary compiled a letter collection which was substantially taken up with the king's diplomatic letters, although since he only included Latin letters there is none of the correspondence to French-speaking courts. Some of the letters were subscribed 'sub secreto nostro' or 'sub signeto nostro'. Since it is unlikely that the secret seal was at this time a description of the privy seal it is most probable that these terms were synonyms. If this is the case then by the middle of the fifteenth century the signet had substantially encroached upon, if it had not taken over, the diplomatic business of the privy seal. Thomas Bekynton is of interest for other reasons, as he came under humanist influence which affected his Latin composition to at least some extent. It is also interesting to note that he gave his collection a full title somewhat in the manner of Stone:

> Opusculum ex missivis literis serenissimi principis Henrici sexti ... tempore venerabilis viri Thomae de Bekyntona legum doctoris ejusden regis secretarii per eundem regem missis, unacum quibusdam aliis literis ejusdem secretarii ac aliorum ut infra suis locis patebit ad utilitatem simplicium in unum collectum et compilatum incipit feliciter.[2]

Unlike Stone Bekynton does not say that he has written all the letters himself and his responsibility for the royal diplomatic correspondence has to be inferred.

The fifteenth-century secretary remained essentially a household officer until the reign of Edward IV, and only from that time did he begin to take on the character of a public official. But while he was responsible from the late fourteenth century for most of the correspondence and business

[1] Ibid. 50-9.

[2] Ibid. 53; Bekynton's collection is in Lambeth Palace Library MS 211 and Bodl. MS Ashmole 789; Memorials of the reign of King Henry VI: official correspondence of Thomas Bekynton, ed George Williams (2 vols Rolls Series 1872); Judd, Life of Bekynton.

which passed under the signet seal, he performed other functions as well; most notably, the secretary sometimes acted as one of the king's ambassadors. He was however never an ambassador as secretary - in virtue of his office - but he was employed only as any other household clerk might be, according to his own ability and qualifications.[1] Secretarial skills in the king's household as elsewhere could lead to more diverse employment.

It may be seen in conclusion that the same dictaminal and secretarial skills examined in previous parts were required in the royal offices despite their elaboration and specialization and the fact that royal secretarial officials of all those examined were more likely to approximate to departmental bureaucrats than to personal household attendants. In fact royal letter-writing, together with that in some of the great noble households, most closely resembles the type of ecclesiastical letter-writing examined in the previous chapter, and in terms simply of extent the king may have had the greatest need for the skills of professional eloquence. His diplomatic correspondence in which fine letters are generally to be found is the clearest demonstration of this, although the possibility that dictaminal skills were not restricted to their most particular manifestation in fine letters may well also apply to the royal administration. Although it is not always possible to be specific, either because of lack of evidence or because there was still a certain potential for informality and for arrangements ad hoc, it is generally apparent that the conduct of diplomatic and other correspondence was affected by the tendency in royal administration for secretarial offices in the direct service of the king to evolve into departments conducting their routine business within their own competence and on their own initiative, and in the case of chancery for a further

[1] Richard Holme, William Hayton and William Alnwick among the secretaries of Henry IV and V were employed for diplomatic purposes; it was not, however, until the reign of Henry VI that the king's secretary really became prominent as an ambassador, Otway-Ruthven, 'Secretary', 96; Secretary and Signet, 71-73.

evolution into essentially a legal institution. Thus the composition of the diplomatic correspondence within the time span covered by this thesis moved, even if not absolutely, from chancery through the office of the privy seal to the signet. Here as elsewhere the main evidence for the importance of eloquent letter-writing in the royal administration is provided by formularies and letter-books in which royal letters have been preserved either as models for other royal clerks or else simply as examples inter alia of the epistolary art. Hoccleve's formulary, very much at the jobbing end of the market, Fryè's books, the Cambridge privy-seal collection and, from earlier, the register of diplomatic documents now in the Rylands library are 'pure' examples almost entirely composed of royal documents; but the other collections considered all contain royal letters more or less mixed with letters written for bishops, monasteries, universities, noblemen or others. Thus the way in which the evidence for the use of eloquence in the royal administration survives as well as the type of letter in which it was employed suggest a fundamental similarity in the skills required of royal letter-writers and those who worked for other masters.

iv

What may be concluded then about the practice of professional eloquence in later medieval England? In many and important ways the secretarial clerks examined here were of different types and stood in different relationships to the institutions they served, so that they are hardly to be considered as members of a consolidated profession. Originally officials had various functions in households including clerical and secretarial duties. This pattern persisted throughout the period studied here in those institutions with comparatively small bureaucratic needs, notably in the households such as they may be reconstructed of gentry and of some noble families. In other noble houses, particularly those of the royal family and its close associates and in most episcopal households, bureaucratic needs led to the

performance of secretarial duties by a specifically designated official rather than by a general clerk, and the further tendency was for this official to gather a 'department' around himself. Within these arrangements the function of the official seems generally to have undergone a more or less gradual evolution from secretarial to executive and legal functions, leaving former assistants in charge of the secretariat. This was at any rate a prominent if not universal development in the offices of chancellor and registrar in episcopal administration. The most advanced moves in these directions however were evident in the royal administration. By the beginning of the period specifically designated, secretarial officials were already apparent and in its course, clear even if not completely separate, departmental administrations emerged which tended in the case of chancery and privy seal to do the work now only nominally associated with their heads. The offices tended in turn to develop from secretariats into executive departments, and by the end of the period chancery's most notable function was as a court of law.

There was thus considerable variation in the circumstances in which secretarial work was performed. The types considered so far were however variations on, and elaborations of, a fundamentally similar type of household structure. But secretarial work was also undertaken in institutions of a corporate structure, in monasteries, the universities of Oxford and Cambridge and (although not perhaps corporate institutions in quite the same way) in towns and cities. Here too there were specific officials, at least by the end of the period, in Oxford and considerably earlier in most large monasteries, but most of these were members of the institution and would appear primarily as monks or as members of the university.

It is possible that even those who were definitely secretarial officials in the household-type structure, did not think of themselves primarily as such. So for example Gilbert Stone probably considered himself to be the servant of his bishops serving them primarily in their secretarial work,

rather than a secretarial official who happened to be in the service of bishops. Adding weight to this suggestion is the fact that though holding a specific office Stone and many like him performed other non ex-officio administrative and advisory functions. An exception to this however would appear to be the clerks of chancery and privy seal, particularly in their 'out of court' developments, for they had moved away from their household origins in direct service of the king. But here of course they prove the rule, for the logical development of this process was that they lost their secretarial function. It is no doubt the case that these clerks could with most justification be considered as members of a separate and self-enclosed profession, with particular family traditions of service and apprenticeship. But even here the position of English governmental offices may be contrasted with the tradition of France where the king possessed a single centralized secretarial department served by commonly titled officials with a strong corporate sense of identity.[1]

On the whole then a weak or non-existent sense of professional identity combined with different historical and institutional developments, and perhaps with underlying secular-regular, lay-clerical antipathies, to prevent any conscious or identifiable emergence of a secretarial profession. There is nevertheless a common theme, not in the profession but in the skills exercised by these different types of official.

The basic secretarial skills, suitably adapted to circumstances, exercised by most of the officials considered here for most of their time

[1] The royal notaries set up a confraternity which held its meetings in the convent of the Celestins at Paris. According to Tout: 'there is no trace of jealousy between the notaries attached to the different offices. Even the separate interest of the clerical and lay notaries' - there was a strong lay element at least as early as 1359 - 'could not destroy their keen esprit de corps. Thus the French king's scribes remained, all through the fourteenth century, one body with strong traditions and an organization powerful enough to impose the wishes of the college on the king himself.' Chapters v. 144-8.

were those which may be conveniently, if somewhat vaguely, described as technical. They were most basically scribes but to this skill had to be added an appropriate knowledge of relative legal form and precedent. This fundamental secretarial business is evident in surviving registers, and in formularies and memorandum or precedent books. These business skills (which overlapped with those of the notary public), although of greatest importance in most secretarial careers, will not be considered further, apart from the extent to which they provided an occasion for the exercise of dictaminal skills. On the evidence examined so far there is little evidence that 'technical' secretarial work was affected by the standards of epistolary composition; but the rare description of such letters and other documents as 'bona' by an official like John Lydford and still more the title 'bona litera sed incorrecta' at least invite closer scrutiny of such documents for signs of the ars dictaminis.

The greatest interest however attaches to the composition of 'fine' letters, generally only one part and in some cases a very small part of overall secretarial activity. Explicit references to their composition are unfortunately rare. Stone made his role as letter writer clear, it was explicitly said of Wyville that 'scripsit speciales literas reginae' and a century later the registrar of the university of Oxford was to be skilled in rhetoric, but secretarial clerks cannot always be definitely associated with eloquent letter-writing. Some laymen certainly wrote their own correspondence,[1] but these were not for the most part fine letters in the sense used here. Some however may well have written their own fine letters, like Abbot Whethamstede, or secured the services of a friend like Prior John Langrysh and others among Stone's acquaintances. These examples show the possibility for ad hoc arrangements, but at the same time they

[1] See on the Paston family above. Also for example the earl of Arundel in c 1394 referred in a letter to his brother, the archbishop of York, to another letter which was 'escript de ma mayn', Anglo-Norman Letters and Petitions, 76-8.

emphasize the fact that this letter-writing was a specialized matter, and in the absence of definite evidence to the contrary, it seems a reasonable presumption that this composition was normally required of secretarial clerks.

Letter collections and formularies containing letters, since most often associated with officials or the official world, are the best justification for this presumption, just as their concern with form and style rather than content is the best indication of the more fundamental point that literary quality was important in most of the different kinds of letter writing considered. There is nevertheless a difficulty in the evidence afforded by these sources. For though they may often be associated with officials and though they testify to the importance of the form and style of letter-writing widely diffused in different households and institutions, the very fact that models were collected for imitation might suggest that the skill of eloquent composition as such was acquired only by a few, and that for most it was a matter of selection and copying. It certainly does seem to have been the case that some writers such as Stone and Mason acquired a particular if modest reputation for being able exponents of the art of epistolary composition. But while historians have generally assumed that the letter collections were compiled with a practical motive, it has not always seemed so clear that they were actually used for the intended purpose.[1] In fact it is clear that there was a range of collections from those close to the register, associated with the traditions of a particular office or type of letter writing, through training manuals for students to collections which

[1] So Denholm-Young commented that it was unlikely that Bury subsequently used his collection - it was more of a writing exercise, Liber epistolaris, p. xx; Haines observed that the Worcester precedent book did not seem to have been much used, 'Register Brian 2', Materials Sources and Methods of Ecclesiastical History, 178. In fact while most books undoubtedly were compiled for predominantly practical reasons, it will be suggested in ch. 6 below that this does not exhaust the purpose of all letter collections.

more generally exemplified the art of the letter from a wide assortment of different types. Interestingly the only example given here of the actual use of a letter to supply a model for a specific correspondence came from the Oxford university letter-book, a collection of the first kind. The more immediately and practically useful book was probably one still closely associated with the office in which the correspondence had to be conducted. But it is noteworthy that even in the case of the university letter, the 'form' was copied only for the first draft of the letter, and was then extensively revised before sending. One example does not provide much to go on, but it may be proposed that model letters were often used suggestively rather than prescriptively. If this be accepted then those responsible for eloquent letter writing may well have used models as aids, but they must also have had an appreciation of the literary principles involved in their composition and an ability to imitate and develop them in letters more or less freely adapted from the original models.

There remains of course a further assumption. The collections examined here may well, as argued, demonstrate a concern with the literary form of the letter, and in what has been written above, this has sometimes been rather loosely described as dictaminal. The question however of the relationship of this literary form to the traditional medieval ars dictaminis requires an internal examination of the letters entered in these numerous collections. Such an examination will also provide some answer to the question following on the recognition of the importance of literary form, namely whether this was anything more than a hack eloquence, the tired later medieval reiteration of literary principles which long since had had their freshness and inventiveness stultified by formalism.

Before such a study is undertaken however it is clear that professional eloquence in the fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries was not a highly self conscious skill undertaken by a well-defined profession. It is this that has made its interpretation so often a matter of inference. The work

of most of the clerks examined here was not well rewarded. Those in the service of the higher nobility and of the queen occasionally became bishops. Of the king's secretaries before Bekynton only two were elevated to the episcopate.[2] Most royal and episcopal clerks had to content themselves with lesser benefices and on occasion even these were hard to come by as Hoccleve's misfortunes illustrate. Stone with his several prebends and collegiate positions was probably among the better rewarded; for the most part the bishop's secretarial staff had to be content with a vicarage or a rectory and only the senior clerk was likely to secure a canonry, higher cathedral dignity or similar position.[3] The most successful secretarial officials were those who concentrated on or developed the legal and diplomatic part of their skill.[4]

The fate of the humble English secretarial clerk may be compared with the practice in Florence, where in 1400 Coluccio Salutati chancellor of the city from 1375 until his death in 1406 was granted the signal honour of citizenship. His commendation gave as fitting grounds the fact that he was a fine writer: 'Considerantes virtutum merita et scientiam eminentem, qua, presertim rhetoricis et arte dictaminis, in pluribus aliis pollet vir egregius ...'.[5] English clerks belonged to an environment in which literary skill - professional eloquence - was not entirely neglected, but in which

1 Bishops Wyville and Erghum are cases in point; Thomas Peverell chancellor of Queen Isabella in 1399 and Edward Dauntesey chancellor of the duke of Clarence in 1413 also became bishops, BRUO i. 546; iii. 1472.

2 These were Bishops Bubwith and Alnwick, Otway-Ruthven, Secretary and Signet, 160-172.

3 See for example the discussion of the careers of secretarial clerks in Overton, 'Ralph Erghum', 36-9; Reg. Wolstan de Bransford, p. iv; Butler, 'Robert Braybrooke', 274-8, 287.

4 See for example the careers of Archbishops Islip (BRUO ii. 1006-8) and Whittlesey (ibid. iii. 2040-1) and Bishops Skirlawe (ibid. 1708-10), Hallum (ibid. ii. 854-5) and Catrik (ibid. i. 371-2).

5 D Hay, The Italian Renaissance in its Historical Background (Cambridge 1977); Demetrio Marzi, La cancellaria della repubblica fiorentina (Rocca S Casciano 1910), 113-7, 147.

it was not elevated to the status of a self-conscious cult.

Part Two

THE ART OF THE LETTER

Chapter Four

THE ARS DICTAMINIS

The medieval ars dictaminis developed in response to precisely the kind of need examined in the preceding chapters.[1] It constituted the adaptation and elaboration of classical rhetorical theory, notably the Ciceronian, to the particular needs of letter-writing, and its history has been traced from Alberic of Monte Cassino in the late eleventh century through three main types: an earlier and later Italian phase associated mainly with Bologna but later also with Florence, and a French tradition associated mainly with Orléans. In Alberic and at Orléans the theoretical relation of letter-writing to a wider rhetoric remained a concern, and a certain humanistic flavour has therefore been attributed to their work, but as early as 1135 in Bologna the wider rhetorical implications had been swallowed in the specificity of particular dictaminal instruction and in the development of the Italian phases there is evident an increasing practicality and formalization marking in some ways an approximation to the ars notaria. From the perspective of the development of an intellectual tradition this tendency has encouraged a pessimistic evaluation of the ars dictaminis.[2]

Despite these differences there is a consistency in dictaminal theory which can already be found in Alberic:

> One can see in Alberic's two works almost all the features of the fully developed ars dictaminis: the relation of rhetoric to letter-writing, the standardization of parts of a letter, the emphasis on salutations and introductory sections with the distinction between social levels of addressees, the recommended use of colores, the inclusion of model letters and official forms, and even - if my conjecture is correct - the encouragement of rhythmical prose for letter-writing.[3]

[1] For a bibliography see James J Murphy, Medieval Rhetoric: a select bibliography (Toronto 1971) and also the comments in the introduction above, pp.3-4 . For the following survey I have relied mainly on Murphy, Rhetoric in the Middle Ages, ch. 5.

[2] See the conclusion in ibid. 266-8.

[3] Ibid. 210.

Of these six features the second and the third concerning the parts of the letter actually constitute the most consistently definitive aspect of the ars dictaminis. The precise system of rhythmical letter-writing, the cursus curiae romanae, was initiated by John of Gaeta papal chancellor 1089-1118 and later elected pope as Gelasius II at the same time as the ars dictaminis, but they were not associated until later when the cursus appears as the correlative style as an 'undigested whole' in dictaminal treatises.[1] The use of colores was even more notably independent of letter-writing being at least in the first place a concern of grammatical theory.[2] Thus the ars dictaminis had no style of its own, attaching instead stylistic doctrines from elsewhere to itself.

It is generally thought that the theory of letter-writing was not popular in England.[3] It is certainly the case that England made no substantial original contribution to theory. In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries a number of treatises were composed, an anonymous Tractatus de litterarum composicione,[4] as well as treatises by John de Briggis,[5] Thomas Sampson[6] and his successors notably Simon O,[7] and by Simon Aleock[8] and Richard Kendale.[9] These were essentially derived from the main European

1 Ibid. 202-3, 210, 251-3; Denholm-Young, 'Cursus'.

2 Murphy, Rhetoric, 182-193, 266.

3 See the comment in ibid. 239 and Taylor 'Letters and letter collections', 57-8. The significance of the facts have however been disputed, compare James J Murphy, 'Rhetoric in fourteenth-century Oxford' Medium aevum xxxiv (1965) and R J Schoeck, 'On rhetoric in fourteenth-century Oxford', Mediaeval Studies xxx (1968).

4 OF ii. 355-6.

5 Ibid. 338-9; Murphy, 'Rhetoric in Oxford', 15-16. His Compilatio de arte dictandi is in Bodl. MS Douce 52, fos 82b-89b.

6 OF ii. 336-7; Richardson, 'Business training', esp. 334; Murphy, 'Rhetoric in Oxford', 16-17.

7 Pantin, 'Medieval treatise on letter-writing'. Another treatise in the form of a dialogue between Queen Rhetoric and the Nightingale, which survives in BL Royal MS 10 B ix, fos 178-95b and Trinity College Cambridge MS O 5 4, fos 69b-72, may have been used by Simon O if he did not write it, OF ii. 431.

8 Murphy, 'Rhetoric in Oxford', 13; his De arte dictaminis is in St John's College Oxford MS 184, fos 188b-194.

9 Murphy, 'Rhetoric in Oxford', 13 and Rhetoric, 267. The work is lost.

traditions: so the work by Simon O shows Orléanist influence, while those of John de Briggis, Thomas Sampson and Richard Kendale reflect the later Italian phase. Indeed it has been said that Sampson's Modus dictandi brevis et utilis reads like a notarial manual, and that it proceeds by giving multiple examples rather than by definition. Some of his treatises are more difficult than others, but they are on the whole elementary works.[1] The only English work significantly to transcend practical considerations was the De moderno dictamine or Regula dictaminis probably by Thomas Merke monk of Westminster and for a time bishop of Carlisle which structured around a discussion of the five parts of the letter was in fact a general treatise on prose composition.[2]

The derivative nature of the ars dictaminis in England is further emphasized by the number of foreign artes or collections of letters which circulated in medieval England between the twelfth and fifteenth centuries. Denholm-Young noted thirty-six treatises in eighty manuscripts, the most popular foreign authors being Guido Faba, Peter de Vinea, Richard de Pophis and Thomas of Capua.[3] Although both French and Italian writers occur in England, in terms of popularity the later Italian seem to predominate. The ownership of most of these manuscripts is unknown; only seventeen have been associated with owners, all but one of these religious houses.[4] In addition a further eighteen treatises, apparently not now surviving, are known from library catalogues or from other sources to have belonged to

[1] See the comments of Richardson in OF ii. passim.

[2] Murphy, 'Rhetoric in Oxford', 17-20; Rhetoric, 239; Denholm-Young, 'Cursus', 52.

[3] Denholm-Young's list in 'Cursus', 46-55 is the starting-point for a study of the reception of the ars dictaminis. I have not been looking specifically for treatises, and have found only a small number of additions, although his list must be supplemented for Sampson and the Oxford dictatores by OF ii. He also included some dictamina but excluded others (such as the very popular letters of Peter of Blois as well as the collections mentioned above): see his introduction to the list, 46.

[4] Ibid. and Taylor, 'Letters and letter collections', 57-8.

religious houses, and in one case to Merton College Oxford.[1]

Of prime concern here however is not the reception of the theory of the ars dictaminis as such in England, but the extent to which it impinged on practising secretarial officials. The external evidence for this, such as it is, has already been presented at different points in part one of this thesis. At an elementary level it is to be presumed that Thomas Sampson and his colleagues stood at the beginning of some secretarial careers. This is particularly suggested by those cases in which treatises by him seem to have been owned by officials, who may have been his students, and who then later added their own letters, or letters they encountered in the course of their work. In general Sampson and his colleagues included some actual letters in their collections and their works sometimes circulated with other collections of certain official origin. Apart from this it is difficult to associate dictaminal treatises closely either with officials, or with the products of their work. Robert Frye may have owned a copy of the letters of Peter de Vinea, while Hoccleve may have used some dictaminal sources for his 'Exordies et extraitz des lettres',[2] Richard de Bury included Italian material in his liber epistolaris,[3] a Reading abbey formulary included the De arte dictandi rethorice of Peter of Blois[4] and official letters accompanied some of the manuscripts of Merke's treatise.[5] It is notable that the collections of notable writers such as Mason and Stone did not have treatises attached to them, and perhaps this fact together with the number of collections which have been associated with officials add weight to the suggestion that dictamina rather than treatises supplied

1 Ibid.
2 Above, p.98.
3 Above p.54 ; Liber epistolaris, nos. 363, 388, 397.
4 Above, p. 94.
5 Above, p. 54

the needs of most Englishmen concerned with the practice of letter-writing.[1]

If this is the case then the structure and the style of the letters contained in these _dictamina_ constitute an art handed on by example rather than precept.[2] It is however a reasonable initial hypothesis that traditional dictaminal precepts lay at least indirectly behind the examples, and these precepts will be taken as the starting point for this study. In this chapter attention will be given to the parts of the letter, the _ars dictaminis_ proper, and in the following chapter to the main stylistic features associated with the _ars_, the _cursus_ and the treatment of _flores_.

At the outset a problem of method must be admitted. It is clear that to examine all the letters in the collections mentioned above for all the possible signs of dictaminal or other types of composition would be a vast undertaking, so it is necessary to be selective. In the following chapters there is a reliance on a small number of collections. For the most part these represent the work of a variety of practising officials, but the model letters of the Oxford _dictatores_ have also been examined, because of their importance as elementary examples for instruction, and because they make explicit mention of features which elsewhere pass without comment. Where possible printed editions have been used, although for a number of crucial points the original manuscripts of these works have been consulted.

Medieval writers on the _ars dictaminis_ usually divided the letter into five parts. There were a number of exceptions, but the usual division was into _salutatio_, _captatio benevolentiae_ (or _exordium_), _narratio_, _petitio_ and _conclusio_ (some added a _subsalutatio_). Most _dictatores_ gave a brief description of all the parts, but it was normal for them to devote most

1 Murphy, _Rhetoric_, 239. Murphy's comment 'these _dictamina_ probably supplied the needs of Englishmen interested in the matter' has however been modified here; _artes dictaminis_ did exist, but may not have been much used by practising officials.

2 Indeed, as noted above, example rather than precept was the predominant method of Sampson's theoretical treatises.

attention to the first two, since the formal greeting in which the status of the recipient relative to the sender was to be carefully observed, and the quotation or proverb designed to 'secure benevolence' were the parts most easily subjected to general regulation.[1]

In practice all letters necessarily began with a salutation of some sort which would have been included in the original form of the letter sent to the addressee.[2] The greeting, however, is not always found in its full form in the surviving copies of letters because the compilers of the registers, formularies and letter-books in which the letters of professional secretaries are preserved, frequently abbreviated or omitted the opening phrase. This was due partly to a concern to avoid repetitions of more or less identical material in each letter (however necessary and important in the original communication), and partly at least in the case of formularies and letter-books to a desire to omit personal details of no further concern. On the whole, however, enough survives in most collections for some impression to remain of the forms and conventions of the salutation. It is rare to find a collection such as that of John Mason where the salutations have been omitted altogether, although it is certainly worthy of note that a collection intended to furnish eloquent models for copying should have neglected one of the parts about which theorists had most to say.[3] In most cases either the outline of the greeting,[4] or the title and adjectives which give some indication of its tone,[5] are preserved and there are at

1 These points are made in most modern works on the ars dictaminis; see particularly Constable, Letters and Letter Collections, 17-18; Murphy, Rhetoric, 266 and see the chapter on the ars dictaminis generally for some notable divergences from the standard five part structure.

2 Constable, Letters, 17.

3 Pantin, 'The letters of John Mason', 194.

4 Examples of this form of abbreviation are to be found in the privy seal formulary of Thomas Hoccleve: 'Roy etc. au chanceller' or some similarly reduced address occurs very frequently. References to Hoccleve's formulary are taken from the transcription of BL Additional MS 24062 by E-JY Bentley.

5 See, for example, Gilbert Stone's letters. He gave a full salutation for the first six letters in his collection only, using a reduced formula for the others, as did William Swan.

least some examples in which the full salutation does survive or where only the personal names are omitted.[1]

It was customary according to the traditional teaching to write the salutation in the third person with the sender's name in the nominative, the addressee's in the dative and the actual expression of greeting in the accusative, as in the following example from Stone's collection:

> Ricardus permissione divina Wygorniensis episcopus
> dilectis in christo filiis abbati et conventui
> monasterii sancti Augustini Bristoll' nostre
> diocesis salutem graciam et benediccionem.[2]

Within this system there were particular rules as to the relative positions of the names of sender and recipient. Albert of Samaria, for example, summarized the traditional dictaminal teaching about relative position where the recipient was of greater, lesser or equal status to the sender: a greater person was always put first, whether he was writing or being written to, whereas an equal could be placed either before or after.[3] These rules were in fact followed for the most part by all the writers considered for whom sufficient evidence survives to show that they used this particular construction. There are however a small number of exceptions, as in the case of some letters from bishops or abbots to those who were below them in hierarchical position, but were not specifically of their jurisdiction. In these cases courtesy sometimes led the senior to put the junior name first; so for example Abbot Whethamstede placed his name second in a letter to a monk of Norwich, and in different circumstances Bishop

[1] John Lydford reduced many of the names to initials but otherwise left the salutation intact: LB. More or less full forms are also to be found in collections of diplomatic letters: DC Ric II, in the letters of the university of Oxford: EAO and in most episcopal registers. Some compilations defy generalization, however, notably that of Whethamstede.

[2] SL fo 37b.

[3] Cited in The Letters of Peter the Venerable, ed G Constable (2 vols Harvard 1967) ii. 36. Theorists were not always so specific. The treatise attributed to Simon O commented 'Salutem est brevis oracio salutari noto mentem alliciens et a statu, non discrepans personarum', Pantin, 'Medieval treatise on letter-writing', 338.

Roger Martival and Rigaud de Asserio the papal nuncio placed each other's names first in a series of letters.[1]

Apart from these examples, the main cases of variety are those, as allowed by dictaminal tradition, in which the recipient was an equal. In royal diplomatic letters for example while the pope or the emperor would be placed first and cardinals, queens or foreign noblemen second, foreign kings occur in either position. Richard II placed Robert II of Scotland and Charles II of Navarre after his own name and title, but Peter IV and John I of Aragon and John I and Henry III of Castile before.[2]

In most cases differences of status are immediately apparent, although further conventions seem to have applied in certain particular instances, notably in letters for general reception. So it was customary to place the universal title 'to all the faithful' before the sender, as in a letter of Bishop William of Wykeham in Lydford's formulary:

> Universis sancte matris ecclesie filiis ad quos presentes littere nostre pervenerint Willelmus de Wykeham permissione divina Wynton' episcopus salutem in eo qui est omnia vera salus.[3]

This form recurs in all the episcopal registers examined as well as some other collections with ecclesiastical material,[4] and it seems to have been followed by the king in his general addresses to the church.[5]

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1 Reg. Mart. i. 212, 214, 221-30; WL, 456.

2 Hoccleve, esp. 757 ff; C Ric II, passim.

3 LB, 29.

4 The following example, also from Lydford's collection, is the only one, at least among the writers considered here, to have reversed the position; 'Jo. permissione divina Cantuariensis archiepiscopus tocius Anglie primas et apostolice sedis legatus quibuscunque Christi fidelibus has litteras inspecturis salutem et memoriam rerum gestarum...' ibid. 134.

5 See for example, fo 114b; royal letters of general address in a secular rather than an ecclesiastical context did not apparently follow the same convention: for a considerable number of forms such as: 'Edward par la grace de Dieu Roi d'Angleterre segneur d'Irlande et d'Aquitain as touz ceux qi ces lettres verront, saluz', see Foedera, iii. passim.

Such rules as apply to the position of names were relevant in the formal third person form of address, which as already noted accorded with the theory of the ars dictaminis. There are, however, other forms of salutation of a less formal sort, which occur in some collections interspersed with those in the third person and exclusively in other collections. In the letters of Stone's book, apart from the first six, and one or two later ones, the salutation at least as now recorded comprises only a form of vocative greeting such as 'Amice carissime', in some cases combined with a phrase like '... premissa recommendacione cordis interna specialissime...'[1] There are some similar salutations at the beginning of some of Whethamstede's letters.[2] They are also to be found in many private letters in French and they are common in some English letters of the fifteenth century. So the Stonor correspondence has many letters which begin with some such phrase as: 'Ryght worshypfull and my goode kynde brother, in my most feythefull wyse I recommaunde me unto yowe'.[3] The Plumpton letters rarely employ these elaborate form of addresses, although there are a number of examples.[4] While most letters in the vernacular had a direct vocative greeting, a construction copied into a Bury St Edmunds book used the name of the sender and referred to his relationship to the recipient: 'I Thomas Thorn yoman of the kynggys hous yowr cosyn grete yow weyl sendyng yow word...'.[5]

In letters with a direct first person greeting, it was not possible to

[1] About a quarter of the letters in the MS added a phrase of greeting, but the others began only with the brief vocative address. It is possible that some of these letters did originally contain a formal third person address, like the early ones in the MS; Stone may have considered that after the first few examples the nature of the formal greeting had been established.

[2] WL, 419, 423, 425, 427.

[3] Stonor Letters and Papers, ed Kingsford i. 93, see also ii. 53. This form of salutation and its presence in both French and English letters is fully discussed in Davis, 'litera Troili and English letters', 236-42.

[4] Taylor, 'Plumpton letters', 86.

[5] Owen, 'Scriviner's notebook', 17. Only the salutation occurs, scribbled in the margin of the book.

indicate the relative status of sender and recipient by the position of the names. Instead the qualifying adjective and title which can be found in nearly all salutations, had to convey social distinction - and since the sender was not named, this could not be a comparison of the status of sender and recipient, but only an indication of the social position of the recipient. The different levels of description are for the most part readily identifiable, particularly in the upper social echelons. The pope was 'beatissime' or 'sanctissime' or sometimes both, while the prince was 'magnifice', 'excellentissime' 'serenissime' or some combination of these. In Stone's letters such adjectives nearly always occur. So for example clerics of equal or occasionally of superior status were 'reverende' or 'precarissime', while bishops and cardinals were 'reverendissime' and spiritual charges or clerks under jurisdiction were commonly 'dilectissime'.[1] Similar descriptions may be found in other collections although in some, notably in the letters of the university of Oxford and in the correspondence of Abbot Whethamstede, there is a greater variety of description.[2]

The formal third person salutation and the direct vocative salutation generally appear as alternatives, but some of the writers who have been noted above in their use of the first form, in fact added the second as well. So, for example, a diplomatic letter of Richard II began with two

[1] Only three of Stone's letters had no qualifying adjective; other descriptions such as 'predilecte', 'carissime', 'benignissime' and 'amantissime' were used but not so frequently that any social implication is obvious; Stone also used double phrases such as 'benignissime et specialissime' or 'reverende et confidentissime' in nine letters.

[2] John Lydford in drafting episcopal letters to cardinals also used 'reverendissimo' or 'reverendo et dilectissimo' while he used 'reverendo' to most clerics, apart from to officials who in correspondence with their bishops were 'dilecto' as in Stone. In university letters these forms sometimes occur, but a patron bishop could be described as 'amplissimo domino dominoque singularissimo', while Whethamstede more commonly used 'prehonorabili', 'magnifice bonitatis viro' or 'singularissimo viro preamabili' for bishops. Some of these are in the dative, some in the vocative, depending on what form of salutation they appeared in; as noted above although qualifying adjectives appear in both forms, they were crucial as indicators of status only in those vocative addresses in which the names did not appear.

successive forms of address:

> Serenissimo et excellentissimo principi domino Wenceslao, Dei gratia Romanorum et Bohemie Regi semper augusto fratri nostro precarissimo, Ricardus eadem gracia Rex Anglie et ffrancie et dominus Hibernee, salutem et fraterne dilectionis continuum incrementum.
> Serenissime princeps et precarissime frater...[1]

In other letters which also had a double greeting, the actual salutation was attached to the vocative part, rather than as in this diplomatic example to the third person part; so the university of Oxford began a letter to the pope in 1429 with these two successive addresses:

> Santissimo in Christo patri et domino Domino Martino divina providencia sacrosancte ac universalis ecclesie summo Pontifici.
> Beatissime pater solita et filiali recommendacione premissa cum devotissimis terre osculis ante pedes...

It is not clear in this case that the first formal part was in fact integral to the letter. The university letter-book entered the dative address either at the beginning or at the end of the letter (although in the printed edition it has always been placed at the beginning), and in a similar case in one of Stone's letters it is clear that the formal address stood on the dorse of the letter.[2] While some letters might still use the full formal dative salutation, it seems that on the whole there was a tendency to adopt the type of vocative address which is generally to be found in letters in English and French.

Some writers as already apparent added a further decorative phrase to the salutation, generally of a standard and repetitive kind such as 'salutem in eo qui est omnia vera salus' or 'salutem et sincere dilectionis

[1] DC Ric II, 24.

[2] EAO i. 50. In a letter written on behalf of Bishop Richard Clifford to Pope Innocent VII which began: 'Pater beatissime. Cum omnimoda filialis obediencia reverencia premissis recommendacione devotissima...' there is a sentence included at the end which reads: 'Et in dorso sic: Santissimo in Christo patri ac domino nostro innocencio sacrosancte Romane ac universalis ecclesie divina providente clemencia summo pontifici' SL fos 38b-39.

continuum incrementum'.[1] Sometimes more ornate and individualistic forms of elaboration were added as in a letter from the monks of Lincoln cathedral to their prior:

> Reverendissimo in Christo patri ac domino, domino T.B. Lincolniensis Dei gracia priori, seipsos ad omnia genera mandatorum debitam obedienciam tanto patri decentem cum omni subieccione, in presentique graciam et in futuro gloriam consequi sempiternam. [2]

Such elaborations occurred frequently in the letters of Whethamstede, for example after the names in a letter from the abbot to the abbess and father confessor of Syon: 'salutem in hujus visceribus Lathomi, Qui dat gratiam coedificandi habitaculum Spiritus Sancti'.[3]

These last phrases anticipate in certain respects the captatio benevolentiae or exordium - the quotation or conventional phrase theoretically considered to be the second part of the letter. At any rate the phrase in Whethamstede's letter echoes passages from the epistles to the Philippians and to the Ephesians.[4] In most letters which have an exordium it is clearly distinguished however, being placed in a separate sentence or in some cases marking the beginning of a new paragraph.

Professional letter-writers did not in fact always consider the exordium to be a necessary part at least on a strict interpretation of the exordium as a commonplace generality, proverb or scriptural quotation. Indeed some collections hardly contain any exordia of this kind in their letters. In John Lydford's book for example there is only one in an

1 For example LB 29; Hoccleve, 757. Lawrence of Aquilegia gave a list of such standard elaborations in his Practica sive usus dictaminis including such phrases as 'salutem in eo qui est omnia vera salus', L Rockinger, Briefsteller und Formelbücher des elften bis vierzehnten Jahrhunderts (Quellen zur Bayerischen und Deutschen Geschichte ix 1863), 956-66.

2 BL Royal MS 10 B ix, fos 29b, printed in OF ii. 367.

3 WL 272.

4 'In visceribus Jesu Christi', Philippians 1:8; '...ipso summo angulari lapide Christo Jesu; in quo omnis aedificatio constructa crescit in templum sanctum in Domino, in quo et vos coaedificamini in habitaculum Dei in Spiritu', Ephesians 2:20-22.

actual letter and one brief entry which was headed: 'Bona prefacio '.[1] The other letters passed directly from the salutation to the narration or to whichever part of the letter followed. This is also generally the case in the collections of Swan, Hoccleve and in the letters of the Oxford dictatores. Hoccleve, for example, only has two letters with separate exordia in the domestic and governmental letters and mandates which occupy the first part of his formulary, while more surprisingly they are also rare in the later diplomatic sections (he did however, as already noted, add a section entitled 'Exordies et extraitz des lettres' at the end of the formulary).[2] There are a slightly greater number of examples in the correspondence of the dictatores, though sometimes the more lengthy ones are difficult to distinguish from the following part of the letter. In one example from BL Royal MS 10 B ix there is the unusual case (unique indeed among the writers examined here) of an exordium which precedes the salutation:

> Quicquid sciverit reverencie et honoris, devocionis et obediencie eaque agere in terris que Deo et angelis placeant in excelsis. Reverendissime magister et domine ...[3]

In some collections only restricted types of letter were given an exordium. So in episcopal registers some pastoral letters, for example those ordering prayers, granting indulgences or promulgating excommunications, occasionally have an exordium included, as do certain solemn letters, notably those addressed to the pope, in the diplomatic correspondence of the king.[4] Gilbert Stone was less systematic in his use, placing some form of introductory sentence in both personal and official correspondence

[1] LB 45, 134. The content of these exordia and the others mentioned in this and in the two succeeding paragraphs will be discussed below.

[2] Hoccleve, 71, 138; and for later diplomatic letters notably to the pope with an exordium see 747, 763, 827, 832, 839, 856, 861.

[3] OF ii. 365; and for less clearly demarcated introductions 387, 393, 412.

[4] For example DC Ric II, 6, 149. Diplomatic letters to the pope from the reign of Edward II in Bury's Liber epistolaris usually have an exordium (or arenga as Bury called it), but this was not necessarily the case in letters to cardinals, Liber, p. xxvi.

apparently without discrimination; but even he was sparing for despite this flexibility there are only nineteen exordia to be found among the 123 letters of his collection.[1] The registrars responsible for the letters of the university of Oxford used the second part with far greater frequency though still not invariably. They are most regularly to be found in elaborate form in the begging letters to patrons which abound in the collection and also in the testimonial letters which the university wrote on behalf of its members; some of the latter were however common forms and can be found repeated in successive letters.[2]

Of the writers considered here only John Mason and Abbot Whethamstede nearly always included an exordium in their letters. Mason only very rarely omits it and as Pantin observes, it quite frequently occupies so prominent place that the precise subject of the letter is difficult to determine; in the first letter for example the exordium takes up thirteen lines of a fifty line letter.[3] Whethamstede's ornate introductions likewise occupied a large part of his letters; in one example the salutation and exordium combined take up fifteen lines of a fifty one line letter in the printed edition, while in more extreme cases the exordium occupies fourteen lines of a thirty two line letter, or twenty one lines of a thirty line letter.[4]

The incidence and length of the second part of the letter thus varies between the various collections; the same applies to its content. Modern commentators have written of the 'commonplace generality, proverb or

[1] These include the personal introductory letter, personal letters on friendship and official letters about praying for the dead and on pastoral responsibility. See SL fos 1, 2, 3-3b, 5b, 12b, 16, 17b, 22, 27, 28, 31, 32b-33, 33b, 36, 38, 39b, 41b-42.

[2] EAO i. 4, 6, 10, 18, 19. These common forms will be examined below.

[3] Pantin, 'Letters of John Mason', 194. ML, fos 1-1b; for a few examples without an exordium see fos 5-5b, 5b-6, 8-8b, 39-39b, 42-42b.

[4] WL 367-9ff, 374-5, 418. On 419 however there is an example without any form of exordium.

scriptural quotation' as typical of the exordium,[1] and all three of these may be found with varying frequency in at least some of the letters examined. Biblical material predominates, particularly if allusion to and paraphrasing of scriptural passages is included as well as the direct quotation of verses, and even if there is no direct or indirect scriptural reference the great majority of exordia have a biblical and theological tone. In a letter to the bishop of Salisbury a writer for the university of Oxford quoted and underlined the opening words of the Magnificat in an exordium:

> Magnificat anima nostra Dominum et exultavit cum in tribulacione nostra de vestra graciosa paternitate nobis ad memoriam occurrit ...[2]

In other cases the reference was not so precise. In a letter ordering prayers for peace written on behalf of Bishop Erghum, Stone paraphrased a passage from Ezekiel as the introduction: '...qui non vult mortem peccatoris sed ut magis convertatur et vivat',[3] while in another on the theme of perseverance he began with an allusion to a condemnation by Christ of works begun but not completed.[4] More than one university testimonial letter began:

[1] CH Haskins, Studies in Medieval Culture (Oxford 1929), 2-3. See also Murphy, Rhetoric, 233-5. The author of the Rylands Latin MS 394 was more brief stating: 'Exordium, id est proverbium', Pantin, 'Treatise on letter-writing', 338; it is interesting to note that this treatise is found in the same manuscript as a large collection of proverbs: see ibid. and WA Pantin, 'A medieval collection of Latin and English proverbs and riddles from the Rylands Latin MS. 394', Bulletin of the John Rylands Library xiv. (1930).

[2] EAO i. 126.

[3] SL, fo 2; 'Numquid voluntatis meae est mors impii, dicit Dominus Deus, et non ut convertatur a viis suis et vivat': Ezekiel 18:23. For the same exordium see also Reg. Mart. ii. 139; Reg. Melt. ii. 71.

[4] 'Quemadmodum edificande turris incerto edificant plenarie non commendat, donec inceptum edificium finaliter consummetur', SL; fo 12b; 'Quis enim ex vobis, volens turrim aedificare, non prius sedens computat sumptus, qui necessarii sunt, si habeat ad perficiendum? ne posteaquam posuerit fundamentum et non potuerit perficere, omnes qui vident incipiant illudere ei, dicentes: Quia hic homo coepit aedificare, et non potuit consummare!' Luke 14:28-30.

> De summo celo egressus Unigenitus Dei filius ad ima mundi descendens veritati testimonium perhibuit, nobis relinquens exemplum testimonium veritati consimiliter perhibere ...

thus adapting the words of Christ to Pilate recorded by St John.[1] In other collections in which the exordium was less common there are nevertheless isolated examples in which scriptural passages were likewise more or less closely adapted or else allusion was made to them. So one of Bishop Edmund Lacy's registrars referred at the beginning of a letter to the divine command to rest on the seventh day,[2] while John Lydford has a passage with an echo of Christ's warning that father would be set against son.[3] A mandate of Archbishop Bowet in Bishop Thomas Langley's register refers (as does a university letter) to the weeping of Rachael,[4] while in Bishop Roger Martival's register there is a more general scriptural allusion in the reference to the ark of the covenant as a prefiguration of the blessed sacrament.[5]

These are all obvious examples of biblical exordia, but some of the other forms which belong to different categories will be seen to contain scriptural echoes as well. This does not apply however to those instances in which proverbs or 'sentences' taken from particular authors were used.

1 EAO i. 4-5 and ff; 'Ego in hoc natus sum et ad hoc veni in mundum, ut testimonium perhibeam veritati; omnis qui est ex veritate audit vocem meam', John 18:37.

2 'Licet tam veteris quam novi testamenti pagina septimum diem ad quietem humanam deputaverit ac eciam mater ecclesia diem dominicum a vespera in vesperam cum omni veneracione decreverit observandum ...' Reg. Lacy iii. 2. For a similar example see The Register of Robert Hallum, Bishop of Salisbury, 1407-17, ed Joyce M Horn (Canterbury and York Society lxxii 1982), 240.

3 'Plena periculis exorta discordia multociens facit excandescere patrem in filium et filium in parentem ac exurgere servum in dominum et subditum in majorem Huic verum consumpcio provenit labores importabiles prosiliunt necnon et odia suscitantur', LB, 134.

4 'Vox in excelso audita est lamentacionis fletus et luctus Rachel, id est, sancte matris ecclesie plorantis filios suos Christiani nominis fideles athletas'. Reg. Lang. i. 77; see also EAO i. 155.

5 'Si olim archa federis celestem cibum continens quem dominus in solitudine filiis Israel' dederat ad edendum per quem verum panem angelorum et hominum voluit figurari...' Reg. Mart. ii. 102.

A particularly explicit reference of this kind occurs in a letter now in BL Royal MS 17 B xlvii urging the recipient to send his son to Oxford: 'Cum antiquum sit proverbium et est assersio Sapientis "Quod nova testa capit inveterata sapit"'; this was a common proverb.[1] An exordium in Hoccleve's formulary with a similar appeal to antiquity began: 'Magistra rerum efficaci experiencia docti scripturisque antiquis in evum memorie commendatis ...' and then continued with an adaptation of a line in Sallust's War with Jugurtha which states that harmony makes small states great, while discord undermines the greatest.[2] Not all statements of commonly accepted truths received automatic sanction and approval, for in one case Gilbert Stone denied that wisdom and purity of life increased in old age, commenting that this popular wisdom was belied by the conduct of his recipient.[3] Elsewhere however Stone was equally capable of underlining a general statement about the weakness of the human condition with an assertion of the proof of this from common experience.[4] The themes of the inconstancy of human nature and the instability of fortune were particularly popular; Stone used the theme in the opening sentences of two other

1 OF ii. 414. For this proverb see H Walter, Lateinische Sprichworter und Sentenzen des Mittelalters (5 vols Gottingen 1963-7). i.v 474.

2 '... preclare intelligimus et videmus concordia et amicitia res minimas crescere, ac econverso discordiis res maximas labi et irrecuperabilia nonunquam perpeti detrimenti' and so the conclusion is drawn: 'cuius rei gratia in omnibus nostris actibus, tam bellicis quam privatis, aut amicitie habite continuationem aut lese et turbate reformationem, a nostris primordiis quibusvi rebus mundanis tu antetulimus universaliter', Hoccleve, 766. Compare the first part of this exordium with Sallust's: 'Nam concordia parvae res crescunt, discordia maximae dilabuntur', noted in its use as a medieval proverb in Walter i. 355.

3 'Quamquam vulgus communiter opinatur in senibus vigere sapienciam et honeste conversacionis mundiciam in viris locum tenere perfectius literatis, nichilominus si sit verum quod de vobis asseritur habemus opinionis contrarium in persona tua realiter experimur', SL, fo 28.

4 'Cotidie realiter experimur quod humane condicionis infirma fragilitas et inconstans nunquam sic in eodem statu permanet quin prosperantes nunc opprimat adversitas nunc arridens prosperitas oppressos vice versa, unde si fortassis interdum acciderit quod graviter affligendo contristat ...' SL fo 38.

letters,[1] as did the registrar or clerk of Ralph of Shrewsbury bishop of Bath and Wells,[2] while the author of a letter in BL Harleian MS 670 used the simile of flowers blown away by the wind to convey instability.[3]

In these examples of proverbs and commonplaces at least two - from BL Royal MS 17 B xlvii and Hoccleve's formulary - were traced to classical authors. In neither case was the author mentioned by name and the respective authors were content simply to refer to the antiquity (antiquum and antiquis in evum) of their authorities. It is hardly to be expected that the second of the quotations was derived directly from Sallust's War with Jugurtha and indeed since Sallust is not mentioned it is quite possible that the writer of the letter did not know the source of the quotation deriving it from a secondary collection of proverbs and 'sentences' such as those in the Rylands manuscript or in Hoccleve's formulary. Only later in the fifteenth century did the use of classical sources become more explicit and self conscious in some writers. In 1450 in an Oxford university letter the example of the ancient Romans was used to commend learning as well as arms,[4] and in a later exordium mention was made of Socrates and of his

1 'Sic se habet humane condicionis infirmita limitem ...' ibid. fo 3; 'Impetos fortune hodie mirabiliter variabiles et incertos ...' ibid. fo 39b.

2 'Effrenata generis humani cujus conatus nisi justicia sua virtute reprimeret, ita ex sibi malicia iniciata excresceret, quod caritas extra mundi terminos exularet ...' Reg. Ralph of Shrewsbury ii. 639.

3 'Sicut arbor inchoans producere primos flores si contrarius flaverit ventus confunditur, folia cadunt et flores non producunt fructum, eciam sicut rosa, si nimio deprimatur calore, suum deponens colorem delectabilem marcessit ...' OF ii. 448.

4 'Nam communi utilitati studere, patriamque aut consilio aut opera tueri, non solum apud Romanos, qui ceteras gentes in milicie gloria longe anteibant, verum eciam apud ipsos antiquitatis philosophos inter cetera preclara facta pro divinissimo sancitum erat', EAO i. 290. This may be contrasted with an example from the previous year which had made a Christian and a crusading rather than a classical comparison: 'Sicuti pugnatoris militibus arma turciora adversus hostium impetus necessarium dinoscitur, ita nobis indubie, qui Christiane fidei professores et peculiares alumpni sumus, contra hereticorum insultus atque pro solidiori militantis ecclesie confirmacione opere precium est sanorum librorum multitudine communiri ...' ibid. i. 281. The first of these was to the duke of York, the second to the executors of the bishop of Chichester.

pleasure to be born a Greek rather than a barbarian.[1]

All the examples so far cited have conformed to the description of the exordium as a 'commonplace generality, proverb or scriptural quotation'. In the place of these however some writers used with varying degrees of regularity a brief form of invocation or petition either directly to the recipient or else indirectly to him through a prayer to God. This was certainly intended to fulfil the basic aim of the exordium to secure benevolence. Stone made the opening phrase of one letter a prayer for the illumination of the recipient: 'Oriens ex splendor lucis eterne sol iusticie summus iudex, cordis vestri penetralia sui luminis claritate sic irradiet et inflammet ...'.[2] In other cases the writer recalled the excellent qualities of the recipient and sometimes added a request for continued benevolence. In the register of Bishop Roger Martival of Salisbury there was a common form of this type of introductory phrase which was used at the beginning of at least four letters: 'Merita vestre devocionis et probitatis ac morum honestatem pensantes, inducimur ut personam vestram favore benevolo prosequamur.'[3] Likewise William Swan used introductory expressions of gratitude and petitions for benevolence in some of his letters.[4] The most common captatio benevolentiae of this form however was

[1] 'Non est constans ille Socrates sibimet amplius gavisus, quod non barbarum sed Grecum nasci contigerat, quam nos quod mater nostra te peperit' ibid. ii. 460. Although this exordium makes a conscious classical allusion, it is worth noting that gavisus (joyful) is a medieval rather than a classical word (cf Revised Medieval Latin Word-List, prep. RE Latham (London 1965), 209); the writer did not reproduce an authentic Ciceronian style and the effect ought not to be described as humanist. More will be said about this in the following chapter on style and in part 3.

[2] SL, fo 17b.

[3] Reg. Mart. i. 36, 53, 70, 90; for a variation of this phrase see also ibid. 44, 65.

[4] 'For example: '... sincere dilectionis incrementum de vobis et vestri status amati supportacione talia iocunda audire desiderans vestro cordi placentissima pro summo leticia cordis mei pro vestris gratitudine concilio et labore diligenti circa expedicionem negotiorum meorum vicibus iteratis constanter absque meis meritis factis et exhibitis vobis regracior viscerose vos de bona continuacione corditer deprecando...' SwL, fo 54b; also fos 57, 62, 64ff, 91b.

an expression of concern for the recipient's welfare. These are particularly common at the beginning of letters in French and English, and are generally the only trace or form of an exordium to be found in such correspondence. So a letter in a treatise of Thomas Sampson begins:

> Jeo me recomanc a vous come je suffice, desirant de trestout mon coer et treshumblement vostre benisone et que vous soiez en bone saintee, qi prie al tresoveraigne Seignour Jesu Crist, a la request de sa treschere Miere, que, a la pleisance de eux, honour et profit de vostre vie et salvacione de vostre alme, bone saintee longement vous voille ottroier par sa grace.[1]

A similar and lengthy introduction was also used in some of the letters of the All Souls Anglo-Norman formulary,[2] and an English version may be found in a Stonor letter:

> I recommaund me unto your good ladyshipe in the mooste lowlyest wyse that I best can or may, ever more desirying to here and know off your wellffare, the whiche I beseche almyghty Jhesu to preserve and kepe to his plesour and to your mooste hartes desyre ...[3]

Such introductory enquiries and prayers also occur in some of the Paston letters, including a repeated form which mentioned the health of the sender as well as the recipient.[4]

In a letter in BL Harleian MS 670 which, together with a number of others in the same manuscript, has the parts of the letter labelled a similar clause is described as the status affectus; it reads: 'Desiderio vehementi desiderat anima mea votiue recreacionis medelam in clariori vestri status noticia, felici continencia et salute.'[5] This phrase with its echo of Luke 22:15 evidently fulfils the function of an exordium

[1] OF ii. 374-5.

[2] Anglo-Norman Letters and Petitions, passim.

[3] Stonor Letters and Papers, ed Kingsford ii. 53.

[4] 'I recummund me hartely to ȝow, desiryng speciali to here of ȝowre wellefare and prosperitee, qweche Almyty God contenu to ȝowre gosteli hele and bodili welfare: and if it plese ȝowre goode brodorod to here of myn wellefare, at þe makyng of þis bylle I was in good hele ...' Paston Letters and Papers, ed Davis i. 149. For the same form see also 206 and ii. 2.

[5] OF ii. 445.

despite its different title. In fact another manuscript containing letters of the Oxford dictatores illustrates even more clearly that the exordium should not necessarily be restricted to the scriptural quotation, proverb or commonplace generality which may be its most precise definition. A letter in BL Royal MS 17 B xlvii was headed: 'Nunc de arenga. Sciatis quod arenga est quedam prefacio per quam perpetramus [sic] beneuolenciam domini vel amici verba gracia.' The letter in fact begins with a phrase which, without this title, would be difficult to distinguish from the body of the letter:

> Recolens qualiter in mee tempore iuventutis dominus meus, honorabilis pater vester, me quasi de limo terre suscipiendus, redigebat in mentem exhibendo michi necessaria quecumque ad scolas oxonienses per septennium, quo tempore, six vixisset, ad sedem cathedralem fuissem prouectus, qui tunc in extremis vos deprecans corditer exoravit vt vestram exhibicionem post eius mortem michi deberetis prebere suo specialiter pro amore.[1]

This phrase encapsulates in advance the message of the letter. If such a passage were to be admitted as the compiler intended as a form of exordium, then this part would be found to be much more common in letters.

In fact what was described in this manuscript as an arenga appears to be close to the part described as motiva in the Harleian manuscript, which in two letters was further supplemented by a regratio. Expressions of thanks occur frequently as an introduction, as for example in twenty six of Stone's letters.[2] But the motiva was apparently a preparation for the narration: so for example in a letter from a scholar to a benefactor in the Harleian manuscript four alternative clauses with a distinct exordial flavour expressing the need to bring a work begun to completion were placed

[1] Ibid. 416.

[2] SL, fos 7b (twice), 9b, 10, 14b, 22b, 23 (twice), 23b, 24, 29 (twice) 29b, 30b, 31, 31b, 34 (twice), 35, 36b, (three times), 37b, 39, 40, 41b.

between the regracio and the narration.[1] In another model from a monk to his abbot the motiva also contained an anticipation of the petition.[2] Stone had several introductory clauses of this type notably in a letter to the superior of the Carthusian order on behalf of John Langrysh.[3]

The description of clauses in these two manuscripts of the Oxford dictatores thus suggest a development of the second part of the letter in a variety of different possible directions with a tendency in some cases to assimilate it more closely to the specific point of the letter contained in the subsequent parts. It is possible that this was the result of a more or less conscious desire to ensure that the introduction remained apposite. So in a model letter of an Oxford student advice about the study of rhetoric included attention to relevance:

> Take care ... that your exhortations and those preliminaries which we call 'never-ending' do not proceed eternally in a circle and lead to no conclusion. Why give a picture of the heavens and complain that you are in an ill plight? Why begin with a description of the planets before lamenting your unhappy circumstances? And if you are asking a friend for money, what right have you to begin with the Incarnation of the Word?[4]

1 'Et quia tocius fructus fecunditas ad nichilum redigitur si granum adhuc manens segetem non expectato maturitatis termino evellatur vel sic Inanis restat aggressus incepti operis nisi aliquales fructus respondeant laboranti vel sic Nullum opus magis Deo placabile fore dignoscitur quam quod ardor caritatis incipit perfeccione gaudens fine debito compleatur vel sic Non enim est res perfecta cuius medie subsistitur aut abortiuus labor tempus preveniat, donec interne caritatis degerente calore deduci poterit ad maturum', OF ii. 445.

2 'Cum enim nature instintu quevis animalia quas gratas meminerunt pascuas dinoscuntur amplius appetere, et indigentes solent, vbi sperant celerius remedium, protectores benivolos deprecari vel graciosis dominis supplicare.' ibid. 446.

3 'Cum omni gratiarum actione possibili humillime recommendacione premissa benevolenciam vestram paternalem et specialem solite dileccionis affectionem mihi vestro obediencie filio frequencius licet immerito preostensas continuari humillime deprecor et imploro rogans specialiter inter cetera iunctis manibus genuflectens quatinus de subscripta, que voce lamentabili non absque interni meroris angustia dolenter refero et dignetur clementer advertere vestra paterna compassio misericors et benigna ...', SL, fo 19b.

4 The letter is from All Souls College MS 182 and is translated in Jacob, 'Florida , 284.

It would be a mistake however to exaggerate the extent to which the exordium was given an entirely ad hoc content. For as noted above examples of general reference can be found, and in some cases these did consist in a proclamation of the incarnation or another solemn mystery of the faith. Both Stone and the university registrar began certain exordia with such phrases as 'Oriens ex splendor lucis eterne sol iusticie summus iudex' and 'De summo celo egressus unigenitus dei filius ad ima mundi descendens'.[1] In another university letter the incarnation was united to the doctrine of the church as the bride of Christ, using an opening phrase which is found in almost the same form in the letter collection of John Mason.[2] Stone began a royal letter to the pope with a brief reference to the ascension,[3] while a copy of a provincial constitution by him opened with a much longer exposition of the harrowing of hell.[4]

In all these cases however the grandiloquence and solemnity of the

[1] See above.

[2] 'Gloriosus sponsus, uteri virginalis procedens de thalamo, nuptam sibi ecclesiam constituit in alto, ut potestatis plenitudine universas transcenderet orbis dignitates', EAO i. 46; compare 'Gloriosus sponsus de thalamo procedens uteri virginalisnuptam sibi ecclesiam sic in alto constituit sui quam luminis splendoribus illuminavit ut honoris excellenciam ac plenitudine potestatis universas, orbis transcenderet dignitates', ML, fos 2b-3.

[3] 'Regnans in altissimis rex regum princeps pacis unigenitus dei filius de mundo transiturus ad patrem ...' SL, fo 16.

[4] 'Oriens ex alto splendor lucis eterne unigenitus dei filius summe iustus et misericors rigorem legis iusticie volens moderacius mitigari penam perpetuam humano generi quondam in tenebris et in umbra mortis habitanti, pro preteritis iuste debitam in temperalem disposuit misericorditer commutari quandam viam nondum perfecte bonis seu mediocriter malis limitans mediocrem, gloriosam et securam sed asperam minis valde a vestigiis tamen reproborum eminus segregatam ad quam viam mediam fidelis anima quandoque peccatrix et in hac vita penitendo veraciter resipiscans, cum ab hac luce migraverit in toto nondum purgata gressus suos spe duce statim dirigit ad hunc finem, ut ibidem quorumlibet peccatorum rubigine flammarum asperimo decocta fervore et omnio deleta, sic per viam illam ad salutifere purgacionis remedia ducentem, anima transiens memorata chaos obscurissimum celerrime voraginis infernalis clementer evictans, ad illam quietis patriam luminosam splendore inextinguibili claritatis eterne fulgentem, habemus vie labore completo tandem feliciter transferatur', SL, fos 41b-42.

opening marked the seriousness of the correspondence, be it a testimonial, letters to the pope or a constitution for the province of Canterbury and some connection was generally established however tenuous it may seem between the theological opening and the theme of the rest of the letter. Thus Christ's witness to the truth was considered to be a suitable starting point for Oxford's witness to the worth of her graduates. A rather smaller leap from one subject to the next was involved in the references of Mason, Stone and the university to the incarnation and to Christ's saving work in the church which lead to humble acknowledgement of papal authority. Stone for example stated that after his ascension Christ: 'pacem suam relinquens suis apostolis, vobis patri nostro sanctissimo ad apicem omnino gradus apostolice divina providencia sublimato exemplum saluberrimum preostendit ...'[1]

Indeed in general writers ensured that the exordium was relevant to the subject of the later parts of the letter, rather than being simply a pleasing quotation out of context. Academic letters would frequently begin with appropriate references to the power of study before seeking patronage from important political figures.[2] In the same way solemn episcopal letters began in some cases with an introduction which was designed not only to capture benevolence but to be the premise of the ensuing argument: so in general pronouncements such as excommunications,[3] indulgences[4] or petitions

[1] SL, fo 16. For other letters with exordia on papal authority see OF ii. 395; DC Ric II, 6.

[2] See above where an example is given in full and also EAO i. 281.

[3] 'Detestanda perversorum iniquitas nesciens abhorrendis sacrilegii serviciis abstinere curam suscepti regiminis sollicitat et compellit ad oportuni remedii subsidia contra execrabiles servicias circa dei ecclesias et personas perpetratas efficaciter apponenda ut detestabiles contra eas malignancium audacie reprimatur et serviencium in easdem nephanda temeritas propulsetur ...' Reg. Mart. ii. 217; see also Stone fo 2 in a letter about the murder of Archbishop Sudbury in 1381 and Registrum Simonis Langham cantuariensis archiepiscopi, ed A C Wood (Canterbury and York Society liii 1956), 181.

[4] 'Pietas a cunctis fidelibus est eo libencius amplectanda quo ipsius exercitatio in die messionis extreme exstat precipue requiranda ...' The Register of Nicholas Bubwith, Bishop of Bath and Wells, 1407-1424, ed TS Holmes (2 vols Somerset Record Society xxix, xxx 1914) i. 4; see also for example Reg. Lacy i. 126, iii, 2, 14.

for prayer,[1] a general principle might first be established and then a particular case considered. Similar expressions were also used in individual letters for the same purpose, as in a reprimand from Bishop Ralph Erghum to the abbot of Muchelney which began with a statement that an abbot should live to his calling[2] and in personal letters of Stone and Abbot Whethamstede which began with general disquistions on the necessity of regular communication between friends.[3] The relevance of the exordium to the main part of the letter is further emphasized in some cases where there is a link word such as 'igitur', 'itaque', 'sane' or 'eapropter' before the following section.[4]

It seems therefore that an attempt was usually made to integrate the second part into the letter as a whole. In some cases letter-writers followed the usual and traditional practice of making the exordium a scriptural or proverbial quotation or a commonplace statement. But if this be the only form permitted, then it was for the most part rarely used apart from in a small number of writers. There are good reasons however for including a number of other types of clause which did apparently aim at the securing of benevolence, such as prayers or petitions for well being, expressions of thanks, or a motiva, an anticipation of the main point of

1 'In agendis omnibus prosperiorem evenire speramus effectum cum in ipso ingressu pariter et progressu ad illum qui est omnium dispositor atque rector fideles Christi spe firma suum dirigunt intuitum, ipsius presidium devotis precibus postulando ...' Reg. Lang. ii. 106. See also for example SL, fos 2, 5b, 33b, 41b-42.

2 'Quemadmodum bonus pastor et pater abbas ille merito designatur ex nomine cuius opus bonum tanto nomine realis exhibet se conforme', SL, fo 22; see also fo 36.

3 'Qui se invicem perfecte diligunt raro pariter colloquentes, quanto rarius conveniunt tanto ad mutuum solacium eorundem fervencioribus desideriis plus affectare solebant frequencius personaliter convenire et in uberioris recreacionis augmentum quandoque temporis oportunitate captata simul habere eciam vicibus plurimum repetitis colloquium personale ..' SL fo 32b; for another example see WL, 453.

4 Examples may be found in OF ii. 433; EAO i. 148; DC Ric II, 6; Reg. Bubwith i. 4; Reg. Lacy iii. 2, 14; Reg. Orleton, 174; Reg. Trillek, 147.

the narration and petition. In Stone's collection and in the letters of the Oxford dictatores it is particularly noticeable that these different forms coexist in letters of the same type, suggesting that the first 'proper' form was not distinguished in their minds from the others or thought necessarily to be more suitable for formal letters, or for those requiring a more expert eloquence.

About the following parts there is much less to be said of a general and comparative kind, and as has already been said the theoretical treatises generally paid little regard to them. Varying skills of composition could however be required in the body of the letter as in the introductory phrases. In structure many letters did have a simple and clear division between narratio and petitio with in some cases some such linking expression as 'Quocirca amiciciam vestram fili dilectissime maiori qua plus possumus affectione rogamus' or 'Vestram igitur reverenciam, flexis cordis genibus, cervice depressa et capite inclinato, deprecor et exoro quatinus ...'.[1] In some cases however the narration was omitted and in at least three of Stone's letters the subject was only apparent from the title given at the head of the letter, it being assumed in the text either as already known to the recipient or as orally conveyed to him (perhaps with the petition as well) by the bearer of the letter.[2] On the other hand some letter writers did not aim at petition at all. Many of the Paston letters were exclusively concerned with the exchange of news rather than with particular requests, and at most these end with a petition for the sending of news

[1] SL, fo 34; OF ii. 391. For other clearly distinguished narrations and petitions see for example SL, fos 18-18b, 35, 37b, 37b-8; ML, fos 2b-3b, 5b-6ff; LB, 118, 153; EAO i. 1, 11, 12, 78; Reg. Mart. i. 34, 173; Reg. Repingdon i. 132-3; Anglo-Norman Letters and Petitions, 57.

[2] 'Quem mecum continuari si placet amodo sicut ante totis meis visceribus humillime deprecor et imploro recomendans ulterius totum me vestrum ad voca necnon agenda mea hiis diebus in curia reverencie vestre plenius exponenda, organo vive vocis socii mei dilectissimi magistri presencium portitoris, cui in dicendis si placet aures inclinando favorabiles et benignas ...' SL, fo 30b; see also fos 7, 39b, 41b.

in return.[1]

Hugh of Bologna in his Rationes dictandi prosaice (1119-24) wrote that goodwill could be sought in various parts of the letter, and so he did not treat the captatio benevolentiae as a separate part but rather regarded its rhetorical function as belonging to several places in the letter.[2] Although later theorists do not seem to have taken up this point the type of material used in the 'proper' form of exordium was sometimes also to be found in the following parts of the letter in the use of apt quotations in the narration or the petition.

In general the writers who most frequently included a traditional exordium also included such exordial material in the subsequent parts of their letters. Again scriptural material predominates. Stone frequently cited verses, although since presumably from memory not always very accurately.[3] In a letter written on behalf of Prior John Langrysh to a monk desiring to devote more time to prayer and contemplation, Stone referred to the prosperity granted to Jacob, the raising of Jacob at Bethany and to the passage from St Luke 10: 38-42, the locus classicus of the religious life, comparing the active vocation of Martha with the contemplative vocation of Mary. In another letter, a request by Bishop Ralph Erghum for the manumission of two serfs, the obedience required of Abraham in the sacrifice of Isaac and God's rescuing of the Israelites from the power of Pharoah were considered to be appropriate references.[4] Abbot

[1] Petitions are to be found however introduced by such phrases as 'I prey yow hertily to sette al these matieres in continuance', Paston Letters i. 5; 'Wherefore I hertyly desire and praie your Maystyrs hepe', Stonor Letters ii. 52.

[2] Murphy, Rhetoric, 220.

[3] Stone quoted the text from Matthew 7:7-8 'Petite et dabitur vobis; quaerite et invenietis; pulsate et aperietur vobis' with Luke's addition from 11: 9-10 'Omnis enim qui petit accipit, et qui quaerit invenit, et pulsanti aperietur', as 'Hic est ille semper pius et propicius unigenitus dei filius ... qui enim vobis dicit, pulsate et aperietur, petite et accipietis, pulsantibus libenter aperitur et petentibus misericordiam nunquam negat', SL, fo 12; for further examples of Stone's use of scriptural phrases see ibid. fos 2, 6, 12, 24b, 28-28b.

[4] Ibid. fos 6-7, 15.

Whethamstede alluded frequently both to biblical phrases and events, indeed one letter contained nine different scriptural references.[1] In the university letter-book, just as a sententia was often a common form appropriate to the beginning of testimonial and begging letters which recurred in the collection, so scriptural allusions in the text were fitted to the same themes, commonly using the example of figures from the gospels who made requests of Christ.[2] As already noted university letters were generally more explicit than those in other collections in the making of quotations which were often underlined; a particularly clear example was inserted in a letter of 1438 to the archbishop of Canterbury and convocation:

> Moveat amor fidei periclitantis, malaque nepharia, quibus indies fideles ab hereticis vexantur: de quibus sic apostolus scribit; 'Instabunt, inquit, in novissimis diebus tempora periculosa, homines sese amantes, cupidi, elati, sine pace, criminatores, habentes quidem speciem pietatis virtutem autem ejus abnegantes, contra fidem reprobi: et sicut Jannes et Jambres Moysi restiterunt, ita et hi veritati resistent.[3]

Proverbs and quotations from other works besides the Bible likewise occur in the main part of the letter. Stone wrote on behalf of Bishop Richard Clifford to Richard Wynge rector of Tredington, having heard rumours of his scandalous life, saying that there was no smoke without fire,[4] while the abbot of St Augustine's Bristol in a reproof for deserting his house was reminded that when the cat is away the mice will play.[5] In another letter written for Clifford to John Maydenhithe dean of Chichester

[1] WL, 463-7; six different passages are alluded to in another letter at 375.

[2] EAO i. 18, 30, 39, 46.

[3] Ibid. 157, taking phrases from 2 Timothy 3:1-8.

[4] 'Et quamvis forsan examine fideli in anima vestra poterit indubie deprehendi quod tot et talia de quibus premittitur de persona vestra ut speramus mendaciter oblocuta totaliter a tramice veritatis oberrant, opinantur tamen aliqui quod ubi ignis abest fumositas non ascendit ...' SL fo 28b.

[5] 'Sic et illi a claustro ad non clausa vobis absentibus illicenter exilire prout didicimus quotidie non verentur sed velud mures absente murilego debacantes laxatis habenis palam saliunt in plateis loca ...' ibid. fo 36.

the reference was more explicit: ' ...ymo quod merentes referimus in vobis hodie veraciter experimur proverbium hoc antiquum "selden seye ys soone forgete"'.[1] Besides such references as these Stone mentioned the Moralia in Iob of Gregory the Great in one letter,[2] while Abbot Whethamstede made great use of classical material, quoting in several places such works as the Satires of Juvenal, the Pharsalia of Lucan and the Metamorphoses and Fasti of Ovid.[3] Again in the university letters there were more explicit references than in other collections, classical examples being used to prove the importance of study[4] and sometimes quotations were underlined and attributed to particular writers; so Plato, Cicero and St Augustine were all cited by name.[5]

On the other hand collections in which it was more unusual to include the traditional form of exordium tend even more rarely to have literary and scriptural allusions or quotations deliberately worked into the body of their letters. In the various model letters of the Oxford dictatores, where there were only a few examples of quotations or general common places in the exordium, there seem to be no examples of exordial material as described here used in the subsequent parts of the text.

Before leaving the body of the letter a brief digression may be made to consider the conventions of abbreviation. To most modern readers these medieval letters appear to be unnecessarily prolix and circuitous, but while the ars dictaminis itself does not seem to have given any instructions

1 SL, fo 30.

2 Ibid. fo 12b-13.

3 WL, 380, 450, 469, 471, 472.

4 EAO i. 81, 129, 156-7.

5 '... quod processisse videtur ex illo Platonis dicto 'per jocos pueriles sciantur regni prospera vel adversa" ibid. 123 (see also 129 where the quotation is in slightly different words). '... qua in re haud dubium est perpendisse optime regiam magnificenciam illud Ciceronis eloquium, "parvi sunt foris arma nisi est domi consilium"' to which has been added to emphasize the point of the letter that states flourish if learning is fostered: 'consilium, inquam, sapientium' ibid. 252. '... nam et inquit precipuus pugil ecclesie Augustinus, "multi multa referunt sed non omnia digna fide"', ibid. 11. For the reference to Plato see also OF ii. 90.

on length there were apparently rules or conventions intended to limit the letter. These touch on what was known as the modus or stylus epistolaris. The precise injunctions of the modus epistolaris are not entirely clear, since the phrase was sometimes used in letters without qualification, but its main requirements seem to have been brevity and the restriction of the letter, or more particularly the narratio of the letter, to a single subject.[1] These requirements though not necessarily part of the ars dictaminis do seem to have found their way into some dictaminal treatises such as the Dictaminum radii of Alberic of Monte Cassino and the second is perhaps to be found in the frequent dictaminal injunction that a letter should contain a particular request and not simply be a narrative or exposition.[2]

Brevity is of course a relative standard and it is difficult to examine the letters of professional letter-writers for their obedience to this requirement. It may however be said that most of the letters examined of whatever kind were at least brief compared to some of the lengthy works of an earlier age. Even the letters of Abbot Whethamstede did not threaten to become treatises as did for example the De praecepto et dispensatione of St Bernard, who apologized at the end of that work for exceeding the precept of the modus epistolaris commenting that it could be considered either as a letter or a book.[3] It is interesting to note however that Stone did place a formal apology at the beginning of a letter to Henry Bryan canon of Stone priory in which he claimed to be concerned about the length and diffuse nature of the letter and hoped that Bryan would not

[1] Constable, Letters and Letter Collections, 18-20.

[2] Ibid. 20.

[3] Ibid. 19. Constable points out in his edition of the letters of Peter the Venerable that though Peter occasionally apologized for the length of his letters, he seems generally to have disliked the tendency to brevity attributing it to laziness rather than elegant style: Letters of Peter the Venerable ii. 35-6.

find it tedious to read.[1] Indeed the letter extends to over two folios and is the longest letter in the collection. While it is hardly a treatise it does not follow the normal epistolary structure of narration and petition; written as a reproof to Bryan for breaking his monastic vows by living in sin with a woman it consists in a series of exhortations, homilectic in style, which moved from the certainty of damnation if Bryan remained obdurate to the promise of redemption if he turned from his sin and trusted in the saving blood of Christ. Stone's apology for length and concern about his reader's boredom were conventional, at least he must have hoped that Bryan would experience no tedium in reading his fearful account of the judgement of God and of the pains of hell. Stone ended some other letters with an expression such as 'what has already been written is sufficiently prolix' which likewise suggest brevity as an ideal.[2]

It is on the whole easier to recognize a letter as being restricted to a single subject, the second precept of the modus epistolaris. The letters of the university of Oxford, for example, all lead to a particular request and no letter discourses on a variety of subjects while in the printed letters of the Oxford dictatores there is only one case of a letter which first thanks the recipient and then asks him to thank another on a separate issue.[3] In Stone's collection there are just five examples which do not restrict themselves to a single subject. All of these contain more than one narration but only two contain different petitions within the compass of a single letter: in one Stone wrote to Clifford asking both for news of the progress of a case in the Roman curia and about the repayment

1 'Presertis exhortacionis sequens series hic merita ex medullis anime mee et sincere caritatis affectione oritur deo teste et si nimis prolixa fuerit seu diffusa nihilominus carissime non sic vobis utinam legentibus tediosa', SL, fo 10b.

2 'Idcirco quicquid arguit prolixa nimis series suprascripta sic concludo ...' SL, fo 32.

3 OF ii. 368.

of a debt, while in the other he wrote on behalf of Clifford to the prior of Canterbury cathedral priory asking for a mitre and requesting prayers for a forthcoming journey overseas.[1] The only writers however regularly to mention more than one subject in a letter were the members of the families who, as already noted, frequently sent letters exchanging news often on a wide variety of issues without any particular petition at all, apart perhaps from a request for a reply.[2]

As has been said the central portions of the letter were the most varied in structure as in content, and therefore not very amenable to theoretical or formulaic treatment. In dictaminal treatises the definition of the conclusio meant that it was also generally conditioned by the particular subject matter of the individual correspondence. In the twelfth-century Rationes dictandi for example the conclusion was defined as that part which pointed out the usefulness or disadvantage of the subject of the letter and: 'If these topics have been treated at length and in a roundabout way in the narration, these same things are here brought together in a small space and are thus impressed on the recipient's memory.'[3] This definition is found in other treatises and notably perhaps with some direct influence in the treatise attributed to Simon O.[4] In the annotated froms of university letters contained in Harleian MS 670 there are three examples of conclusions which are labelled as such; they are models from students to benefactors and in different ways the conclusions all sum up the point of the letter and more particularly of the petition immediately preceding by

1 SL, fos 19, 29b; for the letters with more than one subject but only one petition see fos 7b, 26, 35-35b.

2 See above

3 Murphy, Rhetoric, 223.

4 'Conclusio est quasi finis epistole, utilitatem indicans vel incommodum, quod ex negocio subsequetur.' Pantin observed that this definition followed the Ars dictandi aurelianensis (prob. 1200-1210 Orleans) and less closely the Rationes dictandi, Pantin, 'Medieval treatise on letter-writing', 15.

referring to the consequences of continued beneficence on the part of the patron. Were they not labelled it would be easy to consider them as the final clause or sentence of the petition, rather than as a separate part of the letter, since there were no clear demarcating words or expressions such as were often found between the narration and the petition.[1]

This means that in many collections little apart from positioning indicates the conclusio and it is possible that in some cases there was no separate part deliberately intended to point out the usefulness or disadvantage of the subject of the letter or to impress it on the recipient's memory. Some writers did however occasionally use phrases, often conventional and frequently repeated, which reminded the recipient to carry out the request of the letter. So one of the entries in Bishop Roger Martival's register of divers letters concluded:

> Et quid in hac parte facere duxerit vestra paternitas reverenda nobis celerius quo commode poteritis rescribere dignemini per litteras vestras patentes harum seriem continentes

using a formula found with certain variations at the end of subsequent letters of Martival as in the registers of some other bishops.[2] In the Stonor and Paston letters a list of different items of news made impossible a conclusion summing up the single point of the letter; in only some letters with a particular point was there ever any concluding phrase such as 'Yf eny remedy therin wilbe hadde I pray yow attempt hit',[3] or as in a letter

[1] The three parts labelled as conclusions are: '... ne inceptum meum studium renuere compellar, penurie pretextu, ad meum dispendium cum pudore', 'Ut specialiter Deo sint honor et gloria, anime vestre eternale meritum, et vester orator perpetuus, manuumque vestrarum opus proprium, maturum incepte sciencie fructum valeat reportare' and 'Quod si graciosa vestra decreverit paternitas, instar lete volucris immense leticie iubilo interius gaudeam exauditus', OF ii. 444-6.

[2] Reg. Mart. ii. 41ff; Reg. Langham, 277; Reg. Bubwith, 54. Another letter of Martival ended with the injunction to obey an order in a different form: 'Quocirca vobis injungimus quatinus dictum mandatum juxta ipsius [tenorem] et effectum in omnibus quatenus vos contingit exequamini diligenter', Reg. Mart. ii. 141. See also LB, 30 for a conclusion which sums up the main point of the letter.

[3] Paston Letters i. 209.

from John Paston to Lord Grey concisely summarizing the point of the letter: 'For jn gode feyth, my lord, it were to me grette joy that my seyd pore sustere were, according to her pore degre marijd be yowre avyse, trusting thanne that ye wold be here gode lord.'[1]

Stone ended his long letter of correction to Henry Bryan with the statement that it was not always fitting to add a 'final conclusion' - although he did in fact end the letter by repeating a quotation made earlier which might be thought to encapsulate his message.[2] It is a reasonable assumption that he did normally intend to end with some form of conclusion since he made a particular reference to it in this case. In another letter written to the executor of Bishop Ralph Erghum he ended by saying that he had written enough and that he would now conclude the letter; in a brief sentence he then went on to sum up the point of the letter by submitting himself to the executor's munificent liberality and special grace.[3] Apart from these examples there are no other explicit references to the conclusion, although there are certainly letters which ended with phrases emphasizing the petition or as in one case expressing the hope that Stone would himself follow the advice he had given to the recipient.[4]

In common with Stone it is again the case that those writers who most frequently included a traditional exordium most frequently 'followed the rules' in the conclusio. In a letter to the bishop of Durham the university

1 Paston Letters i. 82. It was quite common for further information to be entrusted to a messenger so for example i. 50 and for a statement to this effect to be the conclusion to the letter.

2 'Ad presens carissime non vacat plura scribere sicut ut estimo non oportet ymo pro conclusione finali.' He ended with the words: 'Et tandem de futuris abstinencia et de preteritis indulgenciam tam vobis quam mihi concedere dignetur solus summe misericors non estimator meriti sed venio largitori qui neminem vult perire' SL, fo 12b.

3 'Idcirco quicquid arguit prolixa minis series suprascripta finaliter sic concludo. Reverende domine solius vestre liberalitatis munifice et gratie specialis arbitrio quo ad premissa in omnibus me submitto.' SL, fo 32.

4 Ibid. fos 4, 7, 18, 27b; 21b: 'Et sicut vobis consulo sic volente domino fortassis in brevi facere me dispono. Nec sine misterio quod taliter vobis scribo.'

of Oxford ended in the manner approved by the Rationes dictandi by indicating the usefulness possessed by the subject treated in the letter: 'Qua in re eciam vobis et laudem et gloriam quam maximam comparabitis'.[1] Most of the university letters being petitions for patronage ended with phrases commending the patron or emphasizing the desired outcome of the petition, in a few cases demarcating this concluding part of the letter with 'postremo'.[2] Frequently a common form phrase, notably 'ut sue matris preces sibi senciat profuisse', was used to stress the university's hope that its prayer might be heard.[3] In the same way Abbot Whethamstede summed up a letter with the hope that his recipient would put nothing in the way of what the spirit of good suggested to him or of what was seen to be good and expedient to his reason.[4] The diplomatic correspondence of Richard II, since it often consisted in petitions about particular matters, also commonly ended with a succinct phrase commending the subject in general terms and trusting in the beneficence of the recipient.[5]

Not surprisingly quotations and phrases similar to those in their exordia were sometimes used by these writers in conclusions. Stone referred jocularly (burdando) to a vernacular French proverb at the end of one

[1] EAO i. 174.

[2] So in a letter to the king: 'Postremo, celstitudini vestre nos obsequentissime recommendamus; semper rogantes obtestantesque ut memineritis nos eos esse, qui omnem vitam atque studium vestre voluntati et arbitrio dedicavimus', ibid. 302 and see also 273, 274.

[3] See for example ibid. 112, 118, 214, 252, 254, 273, 283.

[4] 'Quod si haec omnia, aut horum aliqua, caro et non spiritus revelaverit nobis, praevio nostro scripto extunc in aliquo non obstante, faciatis quod spiritus bonus suggerit vobis, bonumque videtur, et expediens, in oculis rationis', WL 443.

[5] These usually required something of the recipient as in a form found at the end of several letters from the king to Pope Urban VI: 'Unde, pater beatissime, magnam nobis faciat complacenciam vestra sancitate prelibata.' DC Ric II, 7, 11, 14, 26, 65. A letter could end with a promise however as in an example from the king to Pedro IV king of Aragon: 'Nosque ad partes in dictis articulis contentas potenciam que predicitur quam cicius comode poterimus intendimus destinare, ac erga vos affectionem consimilem ostendere propensius in futurum.' Ibid. 12.

letter,[1] and he included references to at least five New Testament texts at the end of another written on behalf of Prior John Langrysh comparing the active and contemplative lives, in which he encouraged the recipient to persevere remembering the promise of future glory and assuring him that the burden would be light compared to the reward won by Christ's passion and death.[2] A university letter ended with a verse from Psalm 104,[3] and Abbot Whethamstede also worked scriptural quotations or allusions into some of his conclusions; in one he had a phrase reminiscent of a verse from the Magnificat together with Christ's call to Peter (Mark 1:18) and to the flowering of the rod of Aaron (Numbers 17:8).[4] In the university letters, in the middle of one and as the conclusion to three others, the writers also used 'a philosphical dictum' to show that what affected an individual member also affected the whole community; this was an appropriate conclusion to letters in which the university sought the promotion of its graduates.[5]

1 'Unde taliter libencius vobis scribo, ut huiuscemodi motivis trustatoriis et iocosis vos ad cicius veniendum efficacius animarem vobiscum non adulatorie ymo pocius veredice sic burdando ut vereficem in hac parte francorum proverbium hoc vulgarem: "En bourde peot homme voir dire."' SL, fo 22.

2 'Non sunt enim condigne passiones huius temporis ad futurum gloriam que revelabitur in vobis [Romans 8:18] si a litis benefacientes omnia pro deo obedienter et pacifice toleretis [cf I Peter 2:20]. Et si sic confrater mi satis erit vobis onus leve, tempus quidem breve sed merces infinita [cf Matthew 11:30; I Corinthians 7:29] quam vobis concedat dominus noster Iesus qui factus obediens usque ad mortem in cruce passus est pro nobis [Philippians 2:8].' Ibid. fo 7.

3 'Sic unanimes in vera doctina ecclesie permaneamus, ut ad Eum tendere valeamus de quo canit propheta, Querite Dominum et confirmamini, querite faciem Ejus semper, sic letetur cor querencium Dominum hic in via, quatinus ipsum querentibus dignetur esse merces in patria.' EAO i. 17.

4 'Quibus viis jam expositis, eligatis, consulimus, eam quae elatos humiliat, et exaltat humiles, quea subtiles postponit, et praeacceptat simplices, quaeque nec ira sternitur nec odio, favore non atteritur, nec pretio, immo, recto calle in ipsum vota dirigit, qui, cum Petro linquit retia, et, veluti alter Aaron, virgam floridam in dextera manu gerit.' WL, 377; for other examples see 406, 427.

5 '... ut eo plenius eidem paternitati vestre ad graciarum teneamur acciones, quo nostrum sincerius confratrem de vestri pectoris armariolo noverimus exaltatum; ex dicto recensentes philosophico hoc pertinere ad tocius integritatem quod sui parti impenditur ad profectum.' EAO i. 9, 117, 135, 148.

Most *dictatores* treated the *conclusio* as the final part of the letter, although in practice most writers added a *subsalutatio* and in some collections the dating clause survives as well.[1] In fact the author of the *ars dictaminis* now in the Rylands Library included the subsalutation as one of the parts of the letter, describing it in terms resembling descriptions of the two opening parts as the seeking of benevolence (*exordium*) in a manner fitting the person to whom the letter was addressed (*salutatio*); the letter was thus to be ended in the same way in which it had been begun.[2]

This description does not account for all the formulae used by writers at the end of their letters; sometimes a letter whether business or personal would end with a simple phrase such as 'valete' or 'in domino valete' which made no adjustment for the recipient. Other short phrases such as 'dominus sit vobiscum' or even 'Amen' were also used.[3] Not surprisingly such simple formulae as these were often elaborated. A model letter from a son to a mother in Harleian MS 4383 ended: 'Feliciter in Domino diu valeat vestra reverencia maternalis'.[4] Diplomatic letters of

[1] In Stone's collection twenty of the letters have dating clauses at the end; only four of these have no other form of subsalutation. Dating clauses are not found in the letters of the Oxford *dictatores* or of Mason but are common in the letters of Swan, in the university letters and in episcopal letters and documents where they often form part of the notarial subscription or authenticating cause. The reasons for the presence or absence of a dating clause are probably connected with the intention behind the different collections.

[2] 'Subsalutacio est quedam benevolencie captacio quam optat delegans illi cui littera destinatur'; this phrase was not taken from either of the treatise's sources the *Ars dictandi aurelianensis* or the *Rationes dictandi*, Pantin, 'Treatise on letter-writing', 15.

[3] There seems to be no obvious reason why these short forms were chosen with the exception of 'Amen', which generally appears after a liturgical formula or prayer; Stone used it after the words 'secula seculorum' in one letter and in another after a concluding reference to Philippians 2:8: SL fos 7, 30; see also for example OF ii. 426, 427 *inter alia*. Stone also used it however at the end of a letter to Bishop Waltham of Salisbury about the potential success of a case at the curia to mean 'may it be so', fo 19.

[4] OF ii. 391; a French form of this letter is also given which has a similar but not identical subsalutation: 'Longement et benurement vaille vostre reverence maternele', *loc. cit.* Another subsalutation of this sort is in Royal MS 10 B ix; *ibid.* 433.

Richard II occasionally contained such subsalutations as 'Valeat semper et crescat in Domino vestri culminis dyadema',[1] while Abbot Whethamstede ended letters with phrases like '... vos in nomine Patris et Filii feliciter valeatis, et in gratia Spiritus Sancti' and '... semper valeatis in prosperis, et crescat vobis gratia pro operibus pietatis'.[2] Of these examples only the first from the Harleian formulary contains a reference to the status of the recipient in relation to the sender.

A common form of subsalutation found in nearly all collections was a somewhat varied form of indirect prayer in the subjunctive for the preservation of the recipient, generally with references to health and prosperity and sometimes mentioning the tasks for which he was to be preserved.[3] William Swan for example sometimes used an expression such as '... a diu conservet in prosperis filius virgine gloriose' or with the last three words replaced by 'summus deus'.[4] Similar constructions may be found in Stone: 'Cum honoris augmenta vos diu conservet in prosperis nostri clemencia salvatoris', and in letters in French and English so 'Et nostre Seignur Jhesu vous eit toudiz en sa garde', 'And our blissid Lord preserve your good ladishipe in vertu ever' or 'The Holy Trinite have yow in governaunce'.[5] Sometimes more elaboration was used as in a letter in John Lydford's collection addressed 'Universis sancte matris ecclesie filiis' which ended:

> In nomine sancte et individue Trinitatis patris et filii et spiritus sancti ad laudem et honorem crucifixi gloriose virginis Marie matris eius sustentacionem et exaltacionem fidei Christiane ecclesieque profectum et honorem ac ut premittitur cultus divini.[6]

1 DC Ric II, 29; see also 30, 45.

2 WL, 434, 450, see also 272.

3 John Mason is an exception however, since in the collections of his letters there are neither salutations nor subsalutations; see above.

4 See for example SwL, fos 34, 35b, 36b, 37b, 45b, 46, 48b, 49, 50.

5 SL, fo 7b ff; Anglo-Norman Letters and Petitions, 119 and also 351; Stonor Letters i. 105, ii. 53; Paston Letters i. 26, 149.

6 LB, 30.

The most interesting of these subsalutations are those which according to the theory as elaborated in the Rylands manuscript, alluded to the status of the addressee. This might be no more than a phrase reminiscent of the salutation such as 'amiciciam vestram', to a bishop perhaps 'vestram dominacionem' or 'vestre nobilitatis celsitudinem paternalem', to a prince 'magnifenciam vestram' or to the pope 'paternitatem vestram sanctissimam' or 'vestram celsitudinem apostolicam' among other forms. These expressions were in the accusative as the object of the blessing desired, and in some cases they were preceded by a vocative address, as in two examples from the diplomatic correspondence of Richard II: 'Magnifice princeps, consanguinee noster predilecte, in prosperitate votiva magnifenciam vestram conservare dignetur altissimus in longevum' and 'Beatissime pater, in prosperitate votiva sanctitatem vestram conservare dignetur altissimus ad universalis ecclesie sue regimen et munimen'.[1] In this last subsalutation there was a reference to the preservation of the pope for the rule and defence of the universal church. In the same way a cardinal might be offered a prayer for his preservation for the advancement of the universal church, or a bishop or abbot for the rule of his particular flock.[2] In a further development some writers not only referred in some way to the status of the recipient but made the subsalutation relevant to the particular subject of the letter. The model letters of Harleian MS 670 where the subsalutations like the other parts were labelled as such were also chosen as appropriate

[1] DC Ric II, 4, 5. These examples mirror the salutation of some diplomatic letters which had a double structure as well; first a dative address then a vocative introduction to the next part of the letter, see above. Sometimes the vocative part might occur alone in the subsalutation; see SL, fo 33b.

[2] In a letter to Angelus Acciaiolus cardinal bishop of Ostia, for example, the subsalutation was: '... ut mihi libencius parcat vestra paternitas gloriosa, quam ad profectum universalis ecclesie diu conservet in prosperis filius virginis gloriose', ibid. fo 40b, while a letter to Ralph Stanford on becoming prior of Stone priory ended: '... vos reverende domine ad salubre regimen provida gubernacionum honorabilis domus vestre cum honoris augmenta diu conservet in prosperis et dirigat in agendis nostri clemencia salvatoris.' Ibid. fo 28.

to the subject of the letter; so a begging letter from a son to his father ended with the prayer that God the omnipotent Father would preserve him (ie the father) in his succour, while a letter from a scholar to his patron ended by commending the recipient to a heavenly reward.[1] Both these letters closed by holding up a divine recompense for the earthly assistance requested by the writers, and in the case of the first a further parallel was drawn between the addressee as father and the fatherhood of God. In some of Stone's letters also, with varying degrees of subtlety, subsalutations were adapted to the circumstances of the letter; he ended a letter on behalf of Bishop Erghum to the bishop of Lincoln concerning pagan practices on the border of their dioceses with the prayer that God would keep him in the rule of his flock for the maintenance of the catholic faith,[2] and another on behalf of Erghum dismissing his commissary for acting wrongly on his own initiative, with the hope that he who did not desire the death of a sinner would lead and reform his conduct so that it would be better than before.[3] Probably the most interesting in Stone's collection came at the end of a letter written c 1405 to Pope Innocent VII on behalf of Roger Walden. He had been archbishop of Canterbury during the exile of Thomas Arundel at the end of Richard II's reign, but had been deposed in Arundel's favour after Henry IV's accession. The letter made much of Walden as the innocent victim of political developments outwith his control, and so it was probably deliberate that this letter ended not only with the prayer

1 'Paternitatem vestram filialem conservet ad succursum pater omnipotens deus noster'; 'Quod pie vestra dignetur reverencia, que diutine valeat in humanis et vivat, ut felicia comparet premia coram deo.' OF ii. 444-5.

2 'Quam ad commissi sui gregis regimen diu conservet in prosperis quem recte tolit et adorat universitas catholice credencium unus deus', SL, fo 3.

3 'Agenda vestra imposterum qui non vult mortem peccatoris in melius quam antea dirigat et reformet.' Ibid. fo 5b. This scriptural reference was a favourite of Stone's and of other ecclesiastical writers, see above p. 129.

that the pope be preserved for the healthy rule of the universal church, but with the further prayer that during his reign the schism afflicting his rule of the church be brought to an end.[1]

Having thus examined the separate parts of the letter in succession in this chapter, it may be concluded that professional letter-writers did pay close attention to the structure of their letters and that in many cases this structure was influenced by the ars dictaminis. It is certainly the case that most of the collections examined give some indication of the traditional five part division envisaged by the theorists. It is also clear however that notably in the treatment of the salutation and captatio benevolentiae or exordium, the two parts of greatest theoretical interest, there were signs of pragmatic adaptation and development.

In the salutation there was a grammatical difference between Latin and vernacular writing with consequences for the way in which the important matter of the relative status of sender and recipient was observed, although in some cases Latin letters incorporated the vocative form of address typical of vernacular correspondence either in addition to, or perhaps in some cases instead of, the traditional form. There was some use made of the exordium in the sense of a quotation or of a general statement intended to be the premise of the argument of the letter. It is unlikely however that most of the writers considered here restricted the exordium to this form, since in most cases the actual subject-matter of the letter began immediately. At first sight it might appear that the second part of the letter was simply being ignored, but references in certain manuscripts of the Oxford dictatores suggest that an introductory sentence could either

[1] 'Paternitatem vestram sanctissimam ad salubre regimen universalis ecclesie diu conservet in prosperis cujus vicegeritis filius virginis gloriose et vobis pater Innocenti sanctissime sic vires adaugeat et virtutes ut tanti patri innocencia cito tollat de medio quodcunque pestistiferum horrendi scismatis nocumentum et divisionem unitatis catholice utinam in diebus vestris pater sancte in toto redintegret sancta Trinitas unus deus.' Ibid. fo 41b.

be a general statement or else an advance reference to the particular subject of the letter, which could be called the motiva. It is evident that a regracio or a status affectus, a prayer or petition for benevolence placed at the beginning of a letter, was also intended to secure the good will of the recipient.

It is interesting to note that in the Harleian manuscript which supplies these descriptions, the letters are so arranged as to demonstrate an ascending number of clauses. Thus the first is an illustration of a five clause letter (salutacio, narracio, peticio, conclusio and subsalutacio), the second of a six clause letter (by the addition of a motiva), the third of seven clauses (by the addition of regracio and motiva) and the fourth of eight clauses (by the addition of status affectus, regracio and motiva).[1] It would seem that the traditional teaching lies behind these developments, but that this dictator can envisage a letter which either has no part corresponding to the exordium or else divides its function between three different clauses. At a more elementary level, though Sampson's teaching presupposed a knowledge of the five part structure, he treated of thirteen parts beginning with the first words and ending with the signatures.[2] These different variations and adaptations may well account for the fact that the letters examined appear to be at the very least remotely based on the traditional structure, but that beyond this there are considerable differences in the extent and nature of obedience to specific precepts.

If the evidence examined shows variation on and elaboration of the traditional requirements of the dictatores, it is also clear that at a more basic level the usefulness of the ars dictaminis depended on the particular circumstances of the letter-writer and his work. For the most part this

[1] OF ii. 443-6.

[2] Murphy, 'Rhetoric in Oxford', 16-17.

reflects the extent to which a writer had to exercise the skills of a persuasive eloquence, since the need for these skills was presupposed by the ars. This draws into the discussion of the art of the letter the distinction already noted in the first part of this thesis between 'technical' and 'literary' secretarial work, and within the latter category the further distinction made on the basis of the nature of the correspondence and of the status of sender and recipient. In for example the collections of Lydford and Swan, and in episcopal registers letters were only one type of entry, while in the non-diplomatic sections of Hoccleve and in the collections of the Paston, Stonor or Plumpton families there was little call for letters of persuasion. In neither of these different types were dictaminal features completely absent, but in the first at least standards of composition and construction drawn from elsewhere, for example the ars notaria would have been of greater importance.

The ars dictaminis encouraged the making of quotations, certainly at the beginning of a letter, and given the precept that benevolence be sought at various points it is not surprising that quotations are found throughout the letter and that they sometimes completely take over the conclusio. But whether or not this is in the end admitted as a direct or indirect consequence of the ars dictaminis, it is the case that the use of traditional exordial material at any point is the most distinctive feature of the 'fine letter' so far considered. It is to be found to some extent in the model letters of the Oxford dictatores and with greater frequency in the collections of Mason, Stone and Whethamstede, in the king's diplomatic correspondence and in the letters of the university of Oxford. This was a consequence of their purpose, and in their purpose and by their structure these letters do not simply show signs of dictaminal influence, but are examples of the ars dictaminis in practice, albeit of an ars developed and elaborated.

As has been said the history of the ars dictaminis in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, particularly in its second Italian phase, has been seen as a decline into mechanical drudgery. Murphy has written of the irony of the fact that Richard Kendale in England should have composed a dictaminal treatise based on Bolognese concepts in the middle of the fifteenth century: 'Like some supernova whose light travels through space for millennia after the explosion which destroys the emitting star, the ars dictaminis flourished all over Europe for a long period after Italian writers had turned to other concerns.'[1] The writers considered here were at the most practical end of the art, their adaptations were of a pragmatic kind and one looks to them in vain for any development or resuscitation of the ars dictaminis as a lively theory with literary potential. When they are described as members of a literary profession it is clear that the description denotes a craft rather than an inspiration, and most of them appear as the servants rather than the masters of their skill. Certainly none of them exhibited the sovereign independence maintained for example by Peter the Venerable in the twelfth century. He seems to have known of the ars dictaminis and to have had a distaste for it, particularly for its formalism and for the requirement of the modus epistolaris concerning brevity. In his letters he generally showed no regard for the divisions of the dictatores and would normally place his name second irrespective of the higher or lower status of the recipient.[2] It would be a mistake to think that writers in later medieval England never showed any signs of originality. Whethamstede in particular, though since often interpreted as offensive to good taste, leaves an individual impression, and it has been argued that in addition to observing the conventions examined here he wrote his letters chiastically, with attention paid to proportional structural composition.[3] A writer's

[1] Murphy, Rhetoric, 267.

[2] Letters of Peter the Venerable, ed Constable ii. 35-6.

[3] See the chapter on letter-writing in DR Howlett, 'Studies in the works of John Whethamstede' (Oxford DPhil thesis 1975).

skills may not be bounded by the rules of the ars dictaminis. Whethamstede was not however a professional letter-writer, and his career puts him somewhat beyond the other writers considered here. But Stone as well as Whethamstede shows, perhaps in a modest way, that dictaminal convention could be transcended in the adaptation of the letter to a form resembling the sermon. His letters to Henry Bryan and to a lesser extent to Archbishop Arundel are homilies in a certain sense obeying different structural rules from the ars dictaminis, although as letters written in his own name these were not strictly professional.

Such examples are certainly rare. But it is possible that the generally mundane appearance of the art should be attributed as much to the environment in which these letter-writers worked as to their particular abilities. This point will be examined more fully once consideration has been given to the use of the stylistic features most closely associated with the ars dictaminis.

Chapter Five

THE STYLE OF THE LETTER

In this chapter the use of *cursus* and of rhetorical figures by professional letter-writers will be examined. These constitute the features of style which though, particularly in the case of rhetorical figures, never solely associated with the *ars dictaminis*, were taken over to at least some extent by dictaminal theorists.

As in the discussion of the *ars dictaminis* proper a representative selection has to be made from the great bulk of evidence. In fact the problem is more acute in dealing with the use of *cursus* because to gain a full impression of the extent and nature of its use would necessitate a very extensive discussion. This difficulty will be considered more fully below, but it is necessary to say from the outset that a restricted number of collections will be examined, and that this examination within the necessary limits of this thesis will have to rely on statistical tables rather than on fuller expositions. More especially the discussion of the *cursus* will be limited to letters in Latin. The possible influence of the *cursus* on Old and Middle English literature has been the subject of some controversy and although its influence on vernacular composition cannot be excluded, it is clear that its proper detection calls for specialized literary and linguistic skills, and so here the subject must be left to one side. In the discussion of *flores* however it is possible to return to a somewhat broader base.

i

In dictaminal treatises from the thirteenth century onwards there was usually some discussion of the system prose rhythm commonly known as the *cursus*.[1] It was usual in the terminology of the *cursus* to describe syllables

[1] For the history and theory of the *cursus* considered in relation to the *ars dictaminis* see Murphy, *Rhetoric*, 249-53 and Denholm-Young, 'Cursus'.

as being long or short in the manner of classical metrical prose rhythm, and some theorists notably Albert of Morra and later those of the Orléans tradition used such classical terms as dactyl and spondee. Despite these descriptions, however, the medieval cursus depended on accent rather than quantity, so that syllables were in reality distinguished as stressed or unstressed rather than as long or short.[1] Theorists varied somewhat as to the combinations of stressed and unstressed syllables that they would tolerate, although the best known and most frequently found forms are the three known as the planus, the velox and the tardus or ecclesiasticus. Guido Faba in his Summa de modo dictaminis, which appeared in the 1220s, concentrated on the positioning of these forms at the end of clauses and sentences and it was in this way that the cursus was most frequently described in subsequent treatises. The rules have been concisely summarized as requiring that, clauses and sentences end with either a trisyllable or a quadrisyllable. A trisyllable required a similar accent in the penultimate syllable of the preceding word as in its own penultimate, while a quadrisyllable required a different accent.[2] These precepts gave such combinations as, for example, 'circumquáque/valláto' (cursus planus), 'propósitum/impedíri' (cursus velox) and 'lúpum/degénerans' (cursus tardus). The general statement of the rule concerning trisyllables would also permit the combination 'génibus/déprecor', known as the cursus medius, which was permitted by some theorists, although not by the stricter requirements of

[1] This distinction between ancient and medieval prose rhythm is particularly commented on in one of the first and most important modern works on the cursus, Noël Valois, 'Etude sur le rythme des bulles pontificales', Bibliothèque de l'école des chartes xlii (1881), 179-80.

[2] The proper technical description of the theory of the cursus, involving the terminology of paroxytones and proparoxytones, is to be found stated briefly in Paget Toynbee, 'The bearing of the cursus on the text of Dante's "De vulgari eloquentia"', Proceedings of the British Academy x (1923), 360-2, cited in Murphy, Rhetoric, 251-3. For longer accounts see, for example, A C Clark, The Cursus in Mediaeval and Vulgar Latin (Oxford 1914) and M G Nicolau L'Origine du "Cursus" Rhythmique (Paris 1930).

the papal chancery. Besides the medius some other licences were occasionally allowed such as the placing of the caesura within a word to construct a correct ending so perhaps 'prómo/ciónem' (planus), and some treatises added further instructions about for example the suitable occasions for the use of the different forms of the cursus, or about the way in which the sentence should begin.[1]

Denholm-Young has commented on the theoretical treatises with mentions of the cursus which are known to have circulated in England, while brief descriptions were included in some of the native theoretical works of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Thomas Merke used a neat formula at the end of his account of the rules of the cursus to summarize them: 'tres sibi vult similem, tetras sibi dissimilem vult'; this phrase was also used by Thomas Sampson.[2] These treatises generally used the Italian rules, such as those propounded by Guido Faba, with their normally clear and simple directives concentrating on the ends of clauses and sentences. The treatise attributed to Simon O, however, in addition to a section on the parts of the letter, contained an explanation of the cursus in the Orléans manner using terminology of dactyls and spondees; it allowed thirteen different endings, which regulated precisely the accents of all the final syllables of the clause or sentence, sometimes up to the number of eleven. This system can hardly be equated with the Italian, although three of the endings could be construed as equivalent to the planus, one to the velox and but for the positioning of a caesura one to the medius; there was no equivalent however to the tardus ending.[3]

Modern writers considering the application of the ars dictaminis have

[1] Denholm-Young, 'Cursus', 28-29; these and other licences and refinements will be discussed more fully below.

[2] Ibid. 36-39.

[3] Pantin, 'Treatise on letter-writing', 328, 334-7. The velox ending is no 4, the planus endings nos 2, 9a, 9b and the possible medius no 7 in Pantin's list.

been reluctant to make general statements about the actual use of the cursus.[1] Denholm-Young has provided, however, some indications of its introduction into official documents and episcopal correspondence in England in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries, commenting on the lateness and incompleteness of its development and concluding that the second quarter of the fourteenth century was its best period.[2]

It is difficult to decide how far professional letter-writers in the period under consideration here followed the cursus, more difficult for example than to trace their use of the five parts of the letter. Gilbert Stone, to take one instance, made no explicit reference to the use of a rhythmical style, although the identification of good composition with cursus by certain theorists,[3] means that comments by writers like Stone about an ornate rhetoric may include or even be equivalent to references to rhythmical composition.[4] Such comments, whatever their precise meaning, still leave as already mentioned a daunting number of phrase endings to be examined in order to determine the use of cursus by professional letter-writers, let alone to discuss further questions such as the possible use of cursus in different degrees in letters to different recipients and in the

1 See for example Constable, Letters, 51.

2 He discusses the use of rhythm in the letters of Archbishop Pecham and of Earl Richard of Cornwall, and among royal letters concentrates particularly on the royal diplomatic correspondence from the Roman roll 1306-58. He says of the early fourteenth century: 'The phraseology of this period is less elaborate and courtly than that of Edward III's reign, when the greatest degree of combined ornateness and rhythm is reached. Succeeding generations see a decline in rhythm and balances together with the adoption of a more elaborate and self-conscious turn of phrase.' Denholm-Young, 'Cursus', 39-44. This judgement will be considered below.

3 The Rylands MS 394 begins its first part which is on the cursus: 'Dictamen est litteralis edicio venustate sermonum et egregia sentencia coloribus ornata, per quam quidem diffinicionem, que et qualis sit cadenica, attente scire poterit perspicuus indagator, cuius venustatis cadencia extat, quia cadencia nichil aluid esse poterit nisi distinccionis vel scissure et precipue diccionum finalis clausura.' Pantin, 'Treatise on letter-writing', 334.

4 See for example 'Nuper enim visis sub compendio quibusdam vestris sentenciosis epistolis magni fructus oculata fide didici satis plane, que ex calamo vestro nequaquam egreditur nisique ornatu rethorico mirabiliter venuscetur', SL, fo 10.

different parts of the letter, the number of licences tolerated and the extent to which one finds 'good' cursus, according to the standards of the theorists. The problem is exacerbated by the fact that, even if a very large number of phrase endings are to be examined, medieval scribes were so indiscriminate in their use of the comma, the colon and the period, that designating the intended clauses and sentences is not easy.[1] Editors of letter collections frequently rationalize the punctuation in letters, sometimes thereby altering the sentence and phrase structure, and so editions often need to be used with care; this is particularly obvious, for example, in HT Riley's edition of Whethamstede's letters where not only is the punctuation of the sentence altered but sometimes the structure of the paragraphs as well.[2]

A second set of difficulties arises over the interpretation of results obtained, difficulties which would remain even if all possible letters were examined. First and foremost of these is the question as to what constitutes proper evidence of use of cursus, that is to say what proportion of cursus endings should one expect to find in a letter in order to claim its deliberate use. Some commentators have pointed out that since Latin is a highly inflected language with a considerable number of frequently recurrent endings often producing trisyllables and quadrisyllables with regular stress patterns, there is a high probability of producing at least a certain number of acceptable cursus endings accidentally. MG Nicolau set a minimum of sixty percent endings conforming to the cursus for the inference of conscious use; he was writing particularly of the third century AD, and it has been pointed out that for different periods considerations may have to be borne in mind which would require the altering of a minimum percentage.[3] For the

[1] N Denholm-Young, Handwriting in England and Wales (Cardiff 1954), 77.

[2] See the strictures in Howlett, 'Studies in Whethamstede', 124 ff.

[3] Nicolau, L'Origine du "Cursus", 38; the case for taking careful account of variable factors in deciding a percentage figure for use of cursus is argued in LK Smedick, 'Cursus in Middle English: A Talkyng of ȝe Love of God reconsidered', Mediaeval Studies xxxvii (1975).

writers considered here one such important consideration is their tendency in the exordium and elsewhere in the letter to take phrases from other writers, from letter collections or from commonplace books. Cursus could already be built into this material and therefore appear in subsequent letters whether it was the conscious design of the writer or not.[1]

These points will be borne in mind and will certainly affect the conclusions to be drawn, but some attempt must still be made to comment on the use of cursus by Gilbert Stone and his fellow professional writers. In general the method used has been to take a number of the writers examined in the preceding section and to look at the last sentence of the conclusio in all their letters in order to give a broad impression.[2] In the second place a selection of letters has been taken from each writer (approximately a tenth of the total in each case) and all the apparent clause and sentence endings have been examined in these letters; an attempt has been made so far as the respective letter collections allow to choose equal numbers of letters of different kinds sent to different types of recipient to see if cursus was more frequently used in, for example, correspondence addressed to the pope or the Roman curia than to recipients in England. In most cases, for reasons to be set out, this approach does allow certain conclusions to be made about the extent and the nature of the use of cursus in these writers. The collections considered illustrate the range of Latin letter-writing examined above. In addition to Stone, examples have been taken from the model letters of the Oxford dictatores, given their importance as examples of instruction, from Richard II's diplomatic correspondence, the letter-book of the university of Oxford and, to provide a non-professional contrast, from the letters

[1] This difficulty is particularly noted in Denholm-Young, 'Cursus', 39; this added to problems of the points at which a rhythmical group was to be expected and the indeterminate number of licences allowed, led Denholm-Young to eschew any statistical tables, see ibid. 42.

[2] This was, for example, the main approach used by Constable in his brief discussion of cursus in the letters of Peter the Venerable.

of Abbot Whethamstede. Besides these, letters and some other documents have been selected from the memorandum book of John Lydford, and from the episcopal registers of Bishop Roger Martival of Salisbury (1315-30), Archbishop William Melton of York (1317-40), Bishop Thomas Langley of Durham (1406-37) and Bishop Edmund Lacy of Exeter (1420-55). These provide an opportunity to study the style of documents in collections which were not composed of elegant letters of persuasion, and to assess the dictaminal influence in ecclesiastical documents not primarily inspired by the ars dictaminis.

In Latin letters there is in fact a high occurrence of cursus endings in the conclusio. There is a cursus for example at the end of 102 of Stone's 123 letters. This number would be still larger if one subtracted from the total number of letters those which ended with a quotation and were therefore according to the dictatores exempt from the rules;[1] discounting these, and letters where the conclusio merges with the subsalutatio, would give in Stone's case a total of 89% cursus endings. Similar percentages in the 80s and 90s occur in most collections, in for example the letters of the University of Oxford, the model letters of the Oxford dictatores, the diplomatic correspondence of Richard II and the episcopal registers of Roger Martival, William Melton and Thomas Langley. Abbot Whethamstede and John Lydford have 78% cursus endings in their collections, while in the

[1] This licence is discussed by Constable in Letters of Peter the Venerable ii. 31.

register of Edmund Lacy the figure is somewhat lower at 71%[1] (see table one). The lower number in the case of Whethamstede is perhaps to be explained, as will be described below, by his apparent use of licences. It is interesting to note that the fifteenth-century registers of Lacy (71%) and Langley (at 80%) were markedly lower than those of Martival (92%) and Melton (89%) from the first half of the fourteenth century. Some confirmation might be found here for Denholm-Young's view that the use of cursus was in decline from the middle of the fourteenth century; it is however important to note that while letters were contained in a separate section of Martival's register they were mixed together with such material as appropriations, mandates and ordinations in the registers of Lacy and Langley; the same also applies to Lydford's book (where the cursus was also rather lower than average at 78%). Added to the fact that cursus might have been considered as less important in such material, these documents sometimes ended with notarial instruments which since they had to contain lists of

[1] These figures all come from letters in printed editions; it is important to note that the model letters of the Oxford dictatores are drawn from different manuscripts and that they represent only a small number of the letters in those manuscripts. In the case of Lydford and the diplomatic correspondence a number of the letters were given in calendar form without text. The bulk of the letters in the episcopal registers of Martival and Lacy was so great that only a certain number were examined: those between fos 1 and 50 in Martival's register (144 letters) and between fos 20 and 145 in Lacy's register (121 letters).

Table one: instances of cursus in final phrases

	instances of cursus	total number of letters examined*	% of cursus
SL	102	114	89%
OD	57	62	92%
EAO	111	127	87%
DC Ric II	141	153	92%
WL	45	58	78%
LB	33	42	78%
Reg. Mart.	133	144 (fos 1-50)	92%
Reg. Melt.	105	118 (fos 224-265)	89%
Reg. Lang.	130	163 (fos 1-80)	80%
Reg. Lacy	85	120 (fos 20-145)	71%

* subtracting those in which cursus is not to be expected because they end with quotations etc.
In this and the following tables the abbreviation OD is used for the model letters of the Oxford dictatores as found in OFii. 357-450. Percentages are rounded up or down as appropriate.

names and dates were definitely exempted from rhythmical constructions.[1] The figure may be artificially high in the case of Melton's register since the printed edition only gives such entries in calendar form.

There are of course a number of combinations which recur to make up these percentages. In Stone's collection 15 of the cursus endings comprise a form repeated without great modification such as 'patérnitas reverénda'. The 'paternitas' could be exchanged for 'dominacio' and the 'reverénda' for 'gloriosa' or 'memorata' without a correct velox ending being affected. These combinations occur in other collections together with other velox common forms like 'remédia convolándi' in the diplomatic correspondence of Richard II and 'plénius innotéscet' or 'dignémini' followed by 'expedíre', 'liberári' or 'promovére' in the Oxford university letters. In the three episcopal registers velox forms like 'canónice potestáte' or 'canónice compelléndo' and 'débite' followed by words like 'rescribátis' or 'cercióres' recur. In these collections the proportion of such common forms is not generally higher than in Stone's collection and on the whole the variety of different endings conforming to the cursus is notable, given the large proportion of letters in each collection on the same subject addressed to the same type of recipient.

Velox endings predominate overwhelmingly in all the collections (see Table two). In Lydford's they comprise 97% of the cursus endings, and the

[1] Letters of Peter the Venerable, loc. cit.

Table two: types of cursus in final phrases

	planus	%	medius	%	velox	%	tardus	%	total instances of cursus
SL	6	6	-	-	92	90	4	4	102
OD	1	2	-	-	54	95	2	4	57
EAO	10	9	-	-	92	83	9	8	111
DC Ric II	6	4	1	1	134	95	-	-	141
WL	4	9	-	-	37	82	4	9	45
LB	1	3	-	-	32	97	-	-	33
Reg. Mart.	21	16	-	-	112	84	-	-	133
Reg. Melt.	4	4	-	-	100	95	1	1	105
Reg. Lang.	4	3	-	-	121	93	5	4	130
Reg. Lacy	4	5	1	1	78	92	2	2	85

other collections mentioned above all have percentages in the 80s or 90s. Abbot Whethamstede is the lowest with 82% velox endings. Tardus endings on the other hand are very rare: in Lydford's book, Richard II's diplomatic correspondence and Bishop Martival's register there are no examples at all and the largest number is in the university letters at only 9%. Planus endings are on the whole only slightly greater in number than tardus ones. This preponderance of velox is not surprising; in fact it emphasizes the obedience of these writers to the requirements of the theoreticians who were of the opinion that a velox should usually come at the end of a sentence;[1] this was, of course, most frequently the case at the end of the conclusio.[2] The medius is very rarely found which accords with the doubtful status given it in theory. There are only two examples found at the end of these letters: 'felónice/rápuit' in Bishop Edmund Lacy's register and 'fíeri cúpitis' in the diplomatic correspondence.

There were certain other licences which were variously permitted by some theorists. It was occasionally allowed, for example, to insert a planus all in one word,[3] so 'cóer/ceántur' from the Oxford university letter-book and 'cérci/orétis' from Bishop Roger Martival's register. There are similar examples in Stone, Whethamstede and in John Lydford's book. The caesura might be placed within a word to create the required effect. So 'desideratíssime per/fecciónis' from the university letters could be construed as a velox, as could 'maióris et com/munitátis' in Lydford. This occurs quite frequently in some collections notably Whethamstede's. Another

[1] This point is made in Denholm-Young, 'Cursus', 31, and Valois, 'Étude sur le rythme des bulles pontificales', 194-5; Valois adds: 'On remarquera que, dans ces divers systèmes, le cursus velox tient presque toujours la place la plus honorable; croyons-en l'auteur d'un Dictamen anonyme, qui soumet lui-même sa prose aux lois dont il vante l'efficacité : «Cursus tamen velox majorem orantum efficit et ideo a dictatoribus communiter acceptatur.» thus himself ending as Valois points out with a correct velox.

[2] One or two letters, however, as has already been pointed out in the case of Stone did run straight on from the conclusio to the subsalutatio. The ending of the subsalutation would show a far greater proportion of common forms.

[3] See Denholm-Young, 'Cursus', 29.

licence was to conclude with a polysyllable such as 'excommunicationem' or 'composicionem' instead of a regular ending;[1] in the university letters one finds 'universitatis' and 'retribucionem', and likewise 'emendacionem' in the letters of the Oxford dictatores and 'interpretationis' and 'peregrinationis' in Whethamstede's letters.

John of Garland in the thirteenth century explained the cursus in such a way that the combination 'conformáre/grátia' would be permitted,[2] and this rhythm too occurs in a few cases; Lydford has 'attemptári/fáciat' and 'círca médium' and there are single examples in the university letter-book and in Bishop Lacy's register. A further licence permitted the extension of the velox ending by one syllable[3] but of this there seems to be only one case: 'páriter et perfícuum' in a model letter from Trinity College Cambridge MS B 14 40. A more common licence, however, found in a few cases in all the collections is the combination 'virtútis operátio', or for example 'pósse/non ambígimus' in the university letters or 'legátur/constitúcio' in Lydford's book.[4] This rhythm was particularly popular in the use of compound clausulae, which will be described below. For the most part, however, these permitted forms even if they were all to be admitted would not greatly alter the total instances of cursus given above in table one. The exceptions are the university letters in which, if all the licences were considered, the instances of cursus would go from 87% to 94% and more notably Lydford's book which would move from 78% to 93% (there are six licences which take the total from 33 to 39 out of 42 possible) and Abbot Whethamstede's letters where, if the caesura was to be placed within words, there would be 52 instances of cursus giving 90%.

Compounds were the principal enrichments to the standard forms of cursus

1 Ibid.
2 Ibid. 35-6.
3 RL Poole, Lectures on the History of the Papal Chancery (Cambridge 1915), 93.
4 Ibid.

as described above; according to compound use the penultimate syllabic construction of a given cursus became the final construction for a preceding cursus, and in principle this could be extended back through the sentence giving three or more interlocking types of cursus.[1] So Gilbert Stone could end a letter with 'demeréntem/tam gráviter/offendísse' combining a tardus and a velox, or 'oratórem/amódo/contínue/persevéret' combining a planus, a tardus and a velox. Of Stone's cursus endings 42% can be made into compounds; this percentage is very similar to those for other collections, most of which are in the high 30s or low 40s (see the first two columns of table three). The different model letters of the Oxford dictatores are higher with 49% of their instances of cursus being compound while Whethamstede and Lydford are lower with 33% and 27% respectively. As in the case of final cursus, however, these figures would be increased if the licences described above were to be included; in fact sometimes the increase would be very considerable as licences were used more commonly in this part of the phrase. This would mean that in most of the collections the percentage total cursus giving double compounds would be about 50%, although Lydford would still be lower with 39%. On the other hand the model letters of the Oxford dictatores would give 58%, and since they used licences considerably in this position

[1] For compounds see particularly Toynbee cited in Murphy, Rhetoric, 252 in addition to the works cited in notes on 160-1 above.

Table three: instances of double and triple compounds

	double compounds	% of total no. of cursus endings	triple compounds	% of total no. of double compounds	% of total no. of cursus endings
SL	43 (50)	42 (49)	14	32	14
OD	28 (33)	49 (58)	9	32	15
EAO	46 (55)	41 (50)	10	21	9
DC Ric II	54 (74)	38 (52)	13	24	9
WL	15 (22)	33 (49)	5	33	11
LB	9 (13)	27 (39)	2	22	6
Reg. Mart.	54 (66)	41 (50)	29	54	22
Reg. Melt.	43 (49)	41 (47)	22	51	21
Reg. Lang.	60 (84)	46 (65)	24	40	18
Reg. Lacy	37 (51)	44 (60)	12	32	14

figures in brackets indicate changes if licences are allowed.

the registers of Bishops Langley and Lacy would move from 46% and 40% to 65% and 60% respectively.

The amount of triple compound forms is generally considerably lower (see the last three columns of table three). The percentage of doubles which go back to give triples is generally in the 20s or low 30s, although the registers of Bishops Martival, Melton and Langley are higher with 54%, 51% and 46% respectively of the compounds being triples. Calculated as a proportion of the total instances of cursus endings in the respective collections none of the percentages of triple cursus exceed 22% and in Lydford it is only 6% (that is two examples only). Licences do not greatly affect any of these figures. The proportions become smaller the further back in the sentence one goes, frequently because the length of the clause did not permit more than a triple or quadruple combination. It may not simply have been lack of inventiveness which prevented more frequent compounds, as dictatores do not seem to have approved of too many compounds in a letter;[1] the example of a triple from Stone cited above seems fairly balanced, but from BL Royal MS 10 B ix 'prosperióri/fortúna/temporálium/arridénte/celérimam/emendaciónem' gives a particularly heavy rhythm including a planus, a velox, a tardus and two of the licences mentioned above notably a concluding polysyllable. This would not make for a pleasing effect if

[1] See the comment in Denholm-Young, 'Cursus', 44.

Table four (a): types of cursus in double compounds

	planus	%	medius	%	velox	%	tardus	%	total no. of double compound
SL	2	5 (4)	10	23 (20)	3	7 (6)	28	65 (56)	43 (50)
OD	-	-	7	25 (21)	1	4 (3)	20	71 (61)	28 (33)
EAO	6	13 (11)	11	24 (20)	4	9 (7)	25	54 (45)	46 (55)
DC Ric II	-	-	19	35 (26)	3	6 (4)	32	59 (43)	54 (74)
WL	2	13 (9)	5	33 (22)	1	7 (5)	7	47 (32)	15 (22)
LB	-	-	2	22 (15)	-	-	7	78 (54)	9 (13)
Reg. Mart.	8	15 (12)	19	35 (29)	8	15 (12)	19	35 (29)	54 (66)
Reg. Melt.	1	2 (2)	11	26 (22)	1	2 (2)	30	70 (60)	43 (49)
Reg. Lang.	6	10 (7)	10	17 (12)	2	3 (2)	42	70 (50)	60 (84)
Reg. Lacy		-	13	35 (25)	4	11 (8)	20	54 (39)	37 (51)

Percentages in brackets indicate consequences of including licences.
Table four (b) is continued on next page.

greatly multiplied throughout a letter.

The types of cursus that could be used in compounds were limited; a planus could not be preceded by a tardus or medius, a velox could not be preceded by another velox or by a planus and a tardus could not be preceded by another tardus or by a medius. Since velox endings predominated, it is not surprising to find a majority of tardus and medius endings as the penultimate cursus in compounds. In Bishop Martival's register there is an equal amount of these endings before the velox (35% tardus 35% medius), but in the other collections there is more tardus, ranging from 47% in Whethamstede to 78% in Lydford's book, while the medius ranges from 22% in Lydford to 35% in Richard II's diplomatic letters and Lacy's register besides that of Martival (see table four a). These figures do not, however, take account of licences; the figures in brackets after the percentages in table four (a) show the changes effected by their inclusion. Since the restriction to the velox at the end of the sentence allows either a medius or a tardus as the first part of a double compound, it follows that this restriction does not prevent any of the four forms being potentially the first part of a triple compound; this means that particular forms would not necessarily be expected to predominate in those first parts. In fact the

Table four (b): types of cursus in triple compounds (continued)

	planus	medius	velox	tardus	total no. of triple compounds
SL	7	4	-	3	14
OD	2	1	5	1	9
EAO	5	2	1	2	10
DC Ric II	2	4	4	3	13
WL	1	-	-	4	5
LB	1	-	1	-	2
Reg. Mart.	12	1	8	8	29
Reg. Melt.	13	2	3	4	22
Reg. Lang.	11	2	7	3	24
Reg. Lacy	3	2	3	4	12

numbers of triples are probably not sufficient to give meaningful percentages or to talk of general tendencies. It is interesting to note, however, that in Stone, the university letters and the registers of Bishops Martival, Melton and Langley there are more planus endings than any other single ending (see table four b; it may be that a trisyllable at this point was considered favourably if some thought that too many heavy rhythms in combination were not pleasing.

On the whole the figures for the use of cursus at the end of letters are high; they are certainly well above the minimum of 60% set by Nicolau to indicate definite and deliberate use, albeit that the setting of an absolute standard does not take account of the sort of particular circumstances mentioned above.[1] Before, however, giving fuller consideration to the possible significance of the figures set out, some impression needs to be given of the use of cursus in the text of letters. From the writers already examined a cross-section of letters have been taken, amounting to between approximately a fifth and a tenth of the total collection, except in the case of the large episcopal registers where the proportion of letters examined is considerably smaller. In an attempt to make this a representative cross-section the letters chosen reflect the different types of correspondence to be found in the collections. From the episcopal registers as in Lydford's book there are only very few letters going out of the diocese, to the king, for example, or to a fellow bishop, and most of the material comprises diocesan commissions and mandates of various kinds. In the other collections however the letters may be distinguished according to different recipients. So in Stone for example there are three main categories: letters addressed to the pope, to English bishops and ecclesiastics and to Stone's personal correspondents. The main advantage of paying attention to the different types of letter is that it shows whether writers were more likely to use rhythm in particular kinds of correspondence.

[1] See above p. 164-5.

A comparison of the figures and percentages in table five with those in table one shows that *cursus* was less used throughout the letters examined

Table five: instances of cursus in the texts of letters

	number of *cursus* endings	number of licence endings	total no. of endings examined	% of *cursus* minus licences	% of *cursus* plus licences
SL	273	31	348	78%	87%
OD	135	19	175	77%	88%
EAO	250	38	330	76%	87%
DC Ric II	217	26	280	78%	87%
WL	98	11	144	68%	76%
LB	69	13	110	63%	75%
Reg. Mart.	184	17	227	81%	88%
Reg. Melt.	145	9	182	80%	85%
Reg. Lang.	114	14	177	64%	72%
Reg. Lacy	117	22	190	61%	73%

Note to table five

The endings for Whethamstede have been taken from BL Cotton MS Claudius D i, since as mentioned above the printed edition in the Rolls series is particularly unreliable with regard to sentence structure; while not so important for the final words of the letter this is crucial for determining the use of *cursus* in the text of the letters. In Lydford the total number of 110 comes from an examination of fifteen documents; the small number is partly the result of the legal habit of keeping punctuation to a minimum and of putting as much as possible in one sentence; for comments on this see the discussion of *cursus* in *Liber Epistolaris*, ed Denholm-Young, p. xxvi.
The letters examined for the above results are as follows: SL nos. 5, 15, 20, 22, 48, 69, 72, 81, 92, 99, 101, 120; OF ii nos. 9, 32, 43, 48, 76, 82, 90, 98, 106, 108; EAO i nos 9, 26, 37, 44, 78, 93, 110, 145, 147, 204, 206, 215; DC Ric II, nos. 6, 8, 41, 44, 48, 57, 64, 102, 119, 135, 158, 187, 214, 221; WL, fos 36, 6b-7, 8b-9, 10, 11b, 15-15b, 16b, 20b-21,21b-22b, 23, 27b-29, 29b, 33, 34-34b; LB, nos. 4, 6, 10, 30, 46, 57, 73, 113, 120, 147, 149, 157, 169, 178, 265; *Reg. Mart.* ii pts 1 and 2 pp. 183-4, 201-3, 215-6, 247, 254, 265-7, 275, 289, 355, 369, 387, 409, 491, 555, 565, 630 (all between fos 50 and 270 in the register of divers letters); *Reg. Melt.* nos. 3, 14, 36, 44, 81, 97, 157, 314, 321, 354 (all between fos 224 and 265 in the register); *Reg. Lang.* iv nos. 897, 909, 920, 955, 984, 1008, 1072, 1102, 1136, 1226, v. 1225, 1308 (between fos 174 and 250 in the register); *Reg. Lacy* ii. pp. 60-2, 80-2, 140-3, 174-5, 208-9, 266-7, 412-3, iii. pp. 12-13, 41-2, 83.

than in the final sentence alone by a mainly uniform 10% (only Bishop Thomas Langley's register has significantly a more substantial reduction of 16%). This means most obviously that the relative use of cursus in the different collections is almost unchanged: in Stone's letters, in those of the university of Oxford and the Oxford dictatores, and in the diplomatic correspondence of Richard II the percentages are around 76 to 78, while the percentage in Abbot Whethamstede is again notably lower. Among those collections which included a considerable number of diocesan business and legal documents, there is the same divide between the two from the early fourteenth century with the high figures of 80% and 81%, and those from the later period (including Lydford's book) which are in the low 60s, only just above the minimum set by Nicolau. These percentages would however all be higher by about 10% if the various types of licence already described were to be allowed; since licences were not very frequently found in the simple (as opposed to the first and second parts of compound) forms at the end of letters, taking account of them here would make the percentages much closer for the text and for the final words of the letter. All the licences described above are to be found to some extent, although the most common in all the collections was the construction of a correct ending by placing the caesura within one of the words rather than between them to give such forms as 'ádulatóriis dĭs/simulántes' or 'in nómin/e pátris'. These comprise about 45% of the licences.

There is greater variety in the types of cursus used in the texts of letters compared to the end of the letter (see table six). There is still a majority of velox endings used in all the collections (even if licences are considered as well, only the letters of the university of Oxford would fall just below 50% in their use of the velox). The sizes of the majorities, however, are not so overwhelming as was the case at the end of the letter, and there is also a greater variety between the different collections. The registers of Bishops Melton and Langley still have high proportions of velox at 88%

and 85%, but most of the others have percentages in the 60s or 70s; the university letters as stated are the lowest with 54% not including licences. The extent of the decrease of these figures from those at the end of the letter varies from the relatively slight 7% decrease in Melton's register, to the considerable drop of 31% from 95% to 64% in Richard II's diplomatic letters. Just as there is diversity in the use of velox so the use of planus and tardus, although obviously less frequent overall, is varied, sometimes markedly so, in different writers. Planus endings constitute only 4% (3% including licences) of the total in Bishop Thomas Langley's register, but they represent almost a quarter in the diplomatic letters and Bishop Edmund Lacy's registers (reduced to 21% and 19% respectively by licences). Tardus endings likewise range from only one instance in the letters and documents examined in Lydford's book to almost a quarter in the university letter-book (20% including licences); on the whole however there was less use of tardus endings, five of the writers having less than 10% (six if licences are counted). Medius endings only occur rarely, although the total of 23 instances is an increase on the solitary example from the end of letters; as has been said the medius was not allowed by some theorists and could

Table six: types of cursus in the texts of letters

	planus	%	%	medius	%	%	velox	%	%	tardus	%	%	total instances without licences	total instances with licences
SL	42	15	14	1	0.3	0.3	208	76	68	22	8	7	273	304
OD	17	13	8	3	2	2	96	71	62	19	14	12	135	154
EAO	52	21	18	6	2	2	135	54	47	57	23	20	250	288
DC Ric II	50	23	21	1	0.4	0.4	138	64	57	28	13	12	217	243
WL	15	15	14	5	5	5	69	70	63	9	9	8	98	109
LB	13	19	16	1	1	1	54	78	66	1	1	1	69	82
Reg. Mart.	39	21	19	2	1	1	129	70	64	14	8	7	184	201
Reg. Melt.	11	8	7	3	2	2	128	88	83	3	2	2	145	154
Reg. Lang.	4	4	3	1	0.8	0.7	97	85	76	12	11	9	114	128
Reg. Lacy.	27	23	19	-	-	-	76	65	55	14	12	10	117	139

The first percentage in each column is calculated without, and the second percentage with, the inclusion of licences.

be considered as a form of licence rather than as a form proper. Its greater use could therefore be seen as part of the overall increase in the use of licences in the text of the letter.

Theorists laid down rules, as has been said, about the different places in the letter in which the different forms of cursus were to come, although there was not complete agreement about the particular nature of these refinements. Most reserved the velox alone for the end of sentences, although at least one writer also permitted the planus at the period; some were prepared to allow the planus or the tardus indifferently for the lesser pauses, although others insisted on the planus for intervals after clauses and the tardus for the smaller intervals within clauses.[1] The problem of the consistency of punctuation used by the professional writers considered here makes a judgement on their obedience to these instructions difficult, particularly concerning the lesser pauses within sentences. It seems clear however that the velox was frequently used within as well as at the end of sentences, as is not surprising given its preponderance. The planus and tardus on the other hand, where they occur, are generally to be found only at pauses within the sentences, as most theorists seem to have wished. In all the collections with the exception of Bishop Langley's register, there are a small number of planus sentence endings (as permitted by at least one dictator) ranging from two examples in Archbishop Melton's register to seven in the university letter-book and nine in the diplomatic letters, while the number of tardus sentence endings, apparently never a permitted form in theory, was even smaller; two examples in Stone, one in the diplomatic letters and four in the university letter-book.

The instances of double compound forms in the texts of the letters examined are on the whole lower than at the end of the letter only. The percentages for double compounds in the texts are mainly in the mid to high

[1] Valois, 'Le rythme des bulles', 194-5.

30s compared to the 40s for the end of the conclusio (see table seven below). Bishop Langley's register still has a high proportion compared to other collections of 46%, while Lydford and Whethamstede still come at the bottom of the table with the latter having only 20% of the total instances of cursus as double compounds in the letters examined; on the other hand there is a higher proportion of compounds in the university letters and the diplomatic correspondence compared to other collections than was the case at the end of their letters, while there is a lower one in the model letters of the Oxford dictatores (36%, slightly below the average, compared to their leading 49% at the end of the conclusio). In the construction of double compounds as in simple forms of cursus a greater number of licences are used in the texts of letters; the effect of including them in the figures above would generally raise the percentages of double cursus forms to the 50s. This would then

Table seven: instances of double and triple compounds in the texts of letters

	double compounds	% of total no. of cursus endings	double compounds including licences	% of total no. of cursus endings	triple compounds	% of total no. of double compounds	% of total no. of cursus endings	triple compounds including licences	% of doubles including licences	% of total cursus including licences
SL	101	37%	156	51%	30	30%	11%	54	35%	18%
OD	48	36%	78	51%	12	25%	9%	25	32%	16%
EAO	94	38%	142	49%	27	29%	11%	42	30%	15%
DC Ric II	81	37%	128	53%	36	44%	17%	52	41%	21%
WL	20	20%	32	29%	5	25%	5%	5	16%	5%
LB	21	30%	32	39%	4	19%	6%	11	34%	13%
Reg. Mart.	60	33%	101	50%	16	27%	9%	45	45%	22%
Reg. Melt.	52	36%	81	53%	16	31%	11%	25	31%	16%
Reg. Lang.	52	46%	68	53%	9	17%	8%	9	13%	7%
Reg. Lacy.	40	34%	57	41%	11	28%	9%	18	36%	13%

The inclusion of a licence in the above table, means a licence present in any part including the final part of a compound. So a standard form plus a concluding licence in a double, or two standard forms plus a concluding licence in a triple are only included in a column which takes licences into account. It follows from this that the percentages of compounds including licences are calculated from the total instances of cursus including licences whereas the percentages which exclude licences are calculated as a fraction of the smaller total instances of cursus which also exclude them (as in table five).

make them broadly equivalent to the percentages including licences of compound cursus at the end of letters. The number of double compounds which can be made into triples is broadly similar to those cases at the end of letters, with the percentages in the 20s and low 30s (between 5% and 11% of the overall instances of cursus), except the diplomatic correspondence with a high 44% (17% of the total number of cursus endings). The effect of including licences in calculations for triple compounds would not greatly affect these totals, apart from a considerable rise in Lydford's book and Martival's register. In the registers of Martival, Melton and Langley there were however a relatively higher number of triples at the end of letters; this is not the case in the text, although Martival still has the highest if licences are allowed.

The types of cursus in compounds in the texts of letters are for the most part similar in preponderance to those in compounds at the end of letters (see tables eight a and b). In the first part of doubles there are still more

Table eight (a): types of cursus in double compounds in texts of letters

	planus	% 1	% 2	medius	% 1	% 2	velox	% 1	% 2	tardus	% 1	% 2	Total instances without licences	Total instances with licences	plus licences: Planus	Medius	Velox	Tardus
SL	12	12%	11%	25	25%	17%	8	8%	6%	56	55%	38%	101	156	17	27	10	59
OD	13	27%	18%	13	27%	17%	5	10%	9%	17	35%	23%	48	78	14	13	7	18
EAO	9	10%	10%	26	28%	20%	25	27%	18%	34	36%	26%	94	142	14	28	26	37
DC Ric II	5	6%	5%	25	31%	21%	21	26%	18%	30	37%	27%	81	128	7	27	23	35
WL	2	10%	6%	8	40%	28%	1	5%	3%	9	45%	31%	20	32	2	9	1	10
LB	-	-	3%	8	38%	25%	2	10%	6%	11	52%	40%	21	32	1	8	2	13
Reg. Mart.	7	12%	9%	23	38%	23%	5	8%	8%	25	42%	26%	60	101	9	23	8	26
Reg. Melt.	-	-	-	17	33%	21%	4	8%	5%	31	60%	40%	52	81	-	17	4	32
Reg. Lang.	6	12%	9%	21	40%	31%	2	4%	3%	23	44%	37%	52	68	6	21	2	25
Reg. Lacy.	5	13%	11%	10	25%	18%	5	13%	9%	20	50%	37%	40	57	6	10	5	21

tardus forms in all the collections, with medius coming next (although these are equal with planus forms in the Oxford model letters). The preponderance of tardus and medius is not so great, however, as in the conclusio, particularly in the model letters, the university letter-book and the diplomatic correspondence; since velox endings were not so overwhelmingly numerous throughout the letter as they were at its end there was a greater potential for the use of the planus and velox which could not come before a concluding velox. Licences would of course decrease the overall percentages for the main forms, even though their numbers would for the most part be somewhat increased, as in some cases a main form might be followed by a licence rather than vice versa. In the first part of a triple compound it is again difficult to make the sort of comparative statements possible in double and simple cursus constructions because of the smallness of the numbers involved. In five collections there is a predominance of tardus and in three more an equal preponderance of tardus with another form; this was not however the case at the end of the letter where if anything there was a slight overall preponderance of planus. The fact, as has already been stated, that there is no necessary predominance of a particular form for the first part of a triple, even if the concluding part was all of one form, means that it would be

Table eight (b): types of cursus in triple compounds in texts of letters

	planus		medius		velox		tardus		total instances without licences	total instances with licences
SL	9	14	6	7	6	8	9	14	30	54
OD	3	7	1	1	4	5	4	7	12	25
EAO	7	9	4	4	4	6	12	13	27	42
DC Ric II	7	12	9	9	5	6	15	17	36	52
WL	2	2	2	2	1	1	-	-	5	5
LB	-	2	-	-	2	4	2	3	4	11
Reg. Mart.	7	10	4	4	1	4	3	11	16	45
Reg. Melt.	4	6	-	1	4	4	7	8	16	25
Reg. Lang.	2	2	2	2	1	1	4	4	9	9
Reg. Lacy.	3	3	-	-	3	6	5	6	11	18

quite possible for a third selection of cursus endings to provide a different result again.

So far no distinction has been drawn between the types of letter in a collection, although some writers were responsible for correspondence of various kinds addressed to different types of recipient. This does not of course apply for the most part to the episcopal registers or to Lydford's book, in which there is a considerable homogeneity in the entries. It might be possible in the case of Bishop Martival's register to distinguish between the ten documents described as for example mandates or commissions and the six letters, similar to some in Stone's collection, addressed to fellow bishops, other ecclesiastics and officials, and to the king. Such a division would not in fact produce any marked difference in the employment of cursus: in the former category (excluding licences) there is 82% use of cursus and in the latter category 80%, while the number of compounds employed in the letters is not very much greater in the first than in the second, 37% compared to 31%. In the entries examined from Archbishop Melton's register it would not be possible to make the same distinction (likewise in the other registers) but in Melton it is interesting to note that one of the entries selected is a set of decrees set out in note form; here the use of cursus is only 60% compared to 80% for the documents examined as a whole.

In Stone's letters although it is possible to compare letters addressed to the pope with other correspondence on behalf of his bishops and with his own personal correspondence, there are not very significant differences in the respective use of cursus. Letters written on behalf of Erghum and Clifford, both to the pope and to other recipients, have 79% use of cursus, while Stone's personal letters are only slightly lower at 76%; the latter figure is moreover affected by a low percentage in one particular letter. The number of compounds compared to the overall use, taking the same order, is 38%, 34% and 39% respectively. It is probably significant, however, that while in the final position there are only three licences in the four papal letters

considered, there are fourteen each in the other two categories; this may reflect a recognition of the stricter view of the use of the cursus traditionally maintained at the Roman curia.

Similar patterns may be found in the model letters of the Oxford dictatores, in the diplomatic correspondence and in the university letterbook. In the model letters the three divisions of letters to higher ecclesiastics including the pope, to patrons and to contemporaries or friends have 76%, 76% and 78% respectively of the possible endings as cursus, while in the diplomatic letters those to the pope or cardinals have 79%, while those to foreign kings and noblemen (as well as one to the town of Ghent and another to the general master of the Teutonic order) have only slightly less at 76%. In the university letters the four categories of papal, episcopal, royal and noble recipients have comparative instances of cursus of 75%, 74%, 69% and 79%. It is interesting to note that correspondence to the king seems to have had less cursus than that to ecclesiastical recipients; but the possibility of a distinction between ecclesiastical and secular would seem to be countered by the high percentage for noble recipients. It is worth remarking however that of the three noble letters examined, two were addressed to Humfrey duke of Gloucester, and that the high figure comes from these; the third was addressed to the duke of York and the cursus endings in it amount to only 58%. It is possible given the great interest shown by Duke Humfrey and his secretaries in epistolary style that particular care was taken with his letters.

In the use of compounds in the diplomatic correspondence and the model letters, as in Stone, there is only small variation. In the university letters, however, there is greater fluctuation: 47% compounds in papal letters, 42% in royal, 32% in noble and 31% in episcopal. Since this is an isolated example of variation, it does not necessarily suggest a deliberate choice; it is worth noting that the letters to Duke Humphrey and the letter to the duke of York both have 32%, which in the light of the differences

between them in the basic use of cursus further suggests that greater frequency of compounds was not necessarily considered to be a mark of better usage. In the employment of licences, however, the same marked pattern evident in Stone's letter-book is generally to be discerned, in the model letters of the Oxford dictatores licences add only 9% to the total instances of cursus in letters to higher ecclesiastics compared to 16% in letters to patrons and 13% in letters to friends and contemporaries. In the diplomatic correspondence licences in letters to the pope or cardinals add 8% compared to 13% in letters to foreign royal and political figures, and in the university letters 10% in papal and 5% in episcopal letters compared to 20% in royal letters. The university's letters to Duke Humfrey add only 5% in licences, but the figure in the other noble letter, more in keeping with the figure for royal correspondence, adds 17%. This adds further weight to the suggestion that it was less likely for licences to be used in letters to recipients familiar with the stricter theory and practice of the papal chancery.

Having set out the results above it remains to draw such conclusions as they permit about the use of the cursus. The figures - above 70% in most cases - comfortably exceed the minimum of 60% set by Nicolau to indicate deliberate use. Of course, as has been pointed out, the setting of an arbitrary figure to cover all periods is not necessarily convincing, and particular considerations such as the use of common forms most notably in the episcopal registers, could diminish the likelihood of deliberate use. On the whole however the extent of cursus would seem to exceed what could simply be copied from elsewhere. It is also notable that cursus is to be found in most cases throughout the letter, and not simply in introductions and conclusions.[1] Given the prevalence of the theory of the cursus and its association with

[1] For rare examples where there does seem to be a predominance of cursus in the early parts of the letter see SL no 15, OD no 43, Reg. Lacy ii. 174-5.

the ars dictaminis, the probability would seem to be that most writers were aware of its use in their letters, only occasionally neglecting it perhaps because their meaning prevented it, or on account of haste of composition.

Cursus with a small number of exceptions does not seem to have been used more noticeably in letters to some recipients rather than to others, although it is less common in certain kinds of documents such as notarial instruments in episcopal registers. The number of examples and collections considered is not sufficient to permit chronological comparisons to be made. It is tempting to make such a comparison between the two fourteenth century registers and the two fifteenth century ones, but as has been pointed out the markedly lower proportion of cursus in the latter may well be due to the greater number of 'technical' documents in the portions considered, rather than to the difference of period.

There is not only numerical evidence of cursus in these writers, but evidence that on the whole it was well used. It was unusual, for example, for a sentence to end other than with a velox as seems to have been recommended by most theorists, although the other main endings, the planus and the tardus, alternated with the velox in the lesser pauses.

This perhaps as much as the percentages of occurrence shows that the traditional system of the cursus was deliberately adopted. Compounds were constructed, but in accordance with customary taste were not excessively used. Licences were employed to a certain extent, but notably less so in letters to the curia in at least some collections, and altogether licences do not greatly increase the instances of cursus; only in a few collections would licences add more than 15% to the total percentages, and then only in compound forms.

Of course it has been assumed throughout this survey that if a writer was to use a system of cursus, it would be the simplest and most popular, an adaptation and extension of the system in use at the Roman curia. This is an assumption generally made in modern discussions of the cursus, and it

certainly seems to be justified with regard to the writers considered here. in the Rylands ars dictaminis attributed to Simon O, for example, only one of the thirteen forms could be represented in the Roman system as a velox and three as a planus. If in addition the caesura was to be strictly observed then the instances of cursus observed would be drastically reduced. Moreover, there is no equivalent to the tardus to be found in the Orleanist system of the Rylands MS, whereas some use of tardus is to be found in all the collections examined. But it should be noted that the treatise is followed by model letters, some of which are genuine and were not composed simply to comply with the teaching of this ars dictaminis. Most of the letters end with a velox which could be construed as no 5 in the treatise's system. The third letter in the collection (de rege ad papam) would appear to give approximately the same percentage (c 65%) under both systems. It is possible then that different systems, although recommending somewhat different rhythms, could be applied to the same letters, with substantially overlapping results.

The figures and percentages noted here, as the difficulty of making chronological comparisons emphasize, depends on a selection of letters which constitutes only a very small proportion within each collection, let alone of all the letters which survive in other collections from the fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries. The first of these difficulties is not so serious: there are of course variations in the amounts of cursus to be found in individual letters, a fact not always brought out by the combined totals and percentages given above, but these are not usually very significant. So, for example, although the four papal letters in Stone's collection have percentages which appear to be quite markedly different: 73% (no. 15), 70% (no. 92), 79% (no. 101) and 89% (no. 120), these are constructed from small totals which magnify the differences: 16/22, 23/29, 16/23 and 40/45 respectively. Likewise in the university letters the three papal letters have percentages of 73% (no 9), 83% (no 78) and 67% (no 147), constructed however from totals of 11/15, 15/18 and 10/15. The point that

cursus is used with a considerable degree of uniformity within the respective collections is made clearer if the letters selected are divided into halves: in Stone the instances of cursus in the first half would be 79% and in the second 77%, while in the university letters the first half would be 76% and the second 75%. For the most part the only notable variations to be discrened are between different types of documents in the episcopal registers, so it does not seem unreasonable to assume that the proportions discerned would be found to be repeated throughout the collections.

An attempt was made to select collections representing the different environments in which professional letter-writers worked, once the restriction to letters written in Latin had been made. It is certainly highly suggestive that strong evidence of cursus was found in all the collections considered, and that the figures for cursus in the texts of letters in collections composed primarily of letters of persuasion should be so similar: a difference of only two per cent between the highest and the lowest, excepting only Whethamstede's letters. These considerations encourage the conclusion that the cursus, albeit in origin not strictly speaking a part of the ars dictaminis proper, was nevertheless a part of the dictaminal tradition closely followed by professional letter-writers in fourteenth and early fifteenth-century England.

The cursus may well be seen as part of the medieval appreciation of system and regularity as opposed to free style. This is certainly emphasized by the succeeding tables and technical elaborations required to estimate the extent and nature of its use. It has of course attracted criticism; the humanists, for example, objected to it not because they disliked the notion of a system, but because they disliked its unclassical reliance on accent rather than quantity. Cursus may account on occasion for the solecisms noted by modern editors, as well as the obscurities of meaning

and circumlocutions for which the letters of this period have often been criticized. Despite this, it would be unjust to dismiss the cursus as a set of tiresome rules with the effect of rigor mortis on the medieval art of the letter. Whatever the considered effect, the cursus was intended as a means of securing a good style through a pleasing prose rhythm. Given the incidence of its use, it was an important skill for the writer in Latin who endeavoured to conform to the requirements of eloquent pursuasion which were the basis of his profession.

ii

Besides the parts of the letter and the cursus, the medieval ars dictaminis sometimes included sections on what were described as ornata verba or colores. Words like ornata, as noted above, could be used in general descriptions of the ars dictaminis and include references to effects such as the cursus, but they could also introduce sections on particular grammatical and rhetorical usages. The author of the ars dictaminis in the Rylands library concluded his treatise with a discussion of ornate language, described as sweet flowers; he particularly named the techniques of repeticio, conversio, compleccio, antimetobola and sinonoma to indicate the type of decoration he intended, although he commented on their apparently infinite number.[1] His

[1] 'Iam de exornacionibus verborum est amodo pertractandum. Nota quod exornacio verborum nichil aluid est nisi flores mellitus idemptitatem et equiparanciam continens sub cuiusdam pollencia radiosi coloris. Sed quia omnis prolata a sapiente sentencia aliquem contineat colorem, et plerumque sub eisdem prolacionibus plures concurrant flores, quibus in libris rethoricis diversa nomina attribuntur, ut repeticio, conversio, compleccio, anthimetobola, , et alii quasi infiniti, que propter novellorum tedium et fructum disscipline aridum iam detergo. Nam color nichil aliud indicari poterit, nisi quedam estivalis arborum virescencia, que post temperiem hiemalem dinoscitur coniungere: et ut nudi hominis honorificum est vestimentum, sic dicciones grammaticaliter et pueriliter pronunciatas, per misteria regine Rethorice sagaciter custodita in proferencias consuere possumus Tullianas ...' Pantin, 'Treatise on letter writing', 338-9. The explicit reference to Cicero is interesting since the first three examples, repeticio, conversio and compleccio are the first three figures of diction given in the supposedly Ciceronian Rhetorica ad Herennium, and are the first three colores rhetorici in many subsequent works on the subject; see Murphy, Rhetoric, 21 and ch. 4 passim. Antimetobola however (the juxtaposition of contraries such as 'You must eat to live not live to eat') is described in the Ad Herennium as commutatio while sinonoma (the use of synonyms) is called interpretatio.

practical examples are concerned with methods of turning bare statements into more decorated and amplified form: so 'Nunquam erat meus amicus, qui mecum cito irascitur' becomes 'Nunquam erat meus amicus precordialis, qui michi pro modico stomachatur'. In subsequent examples there are particular detailed instructions concerning the transformation of parts of speech from simple sentences to complex ones for the production of elegant circumlocutions. A consequence of the change from, for example, 'Ego sum puer et nescio loqui' to 'humanas nequio explicare raciones quia adhuc puericia dominatur' is that incidentally a cursus ending becomes possible in addition to the circumlocation.[1] Instructions on flowery style as well as being occasionally appended to artes dictaminis could also circulate in separate treatises, as evidenced from the works in an early fifteenth-century manuscript described as 'De coloribus verborum et sententiarum' and 'Tractatus de modo inveniendi ornata verba compilatus per Johannem Priorem quintum de Ingham pro novellis rudibus celeriter instruendis'.[2] In the latter treatise, as in the Rylands manuscript, the directions are for the elaboration of simple phrases and sentences: the author covers both indeclinable and declinable words, so he recommends that 'cras' become 'dies crastina' and 'ego video rem illam' become 'res illa se presentat aspectui meo' or even 'in rem illam oculorum meorum declinat intuitus'. He was obviously unconcerned that such elaborations be dismissed as too verbose or obscure, for he added: 'Notandum est hic notabilem quod in omni conversionem laudabilius est mutare obliquum verbum', so rather than change 'doleo' simply into 'dolor' he urges 'gemitus', 'lacrima', 'questus' or 'suspirium', and 'albus' should become 'lac', 'nix' or 'lilium' rather than the less imaginative 'albedo'.[3]

[1] 'Treatise on letter writing', 339-40.

[2] BL Royal MS 12 B xvii, fos 1-43b and 53b-57b respectively. For further treatises on rhetorical ornamentation see the work on colores by David Pencaer (BL Royal MS 12 B xvii, fos 53b-57b) and a Tractatus de coloribus rhetoricis (Corpus Christi College Cambridge MS 358).

[3] Ibid. fos 53b-54, 55, 55b.

The particular techniques of amplification mentioned in these treatises constitute only a small number of the tecnniques variously described as colours, schemes, figures or tropes and classified in varying ways by grammatical and rhetorical theorists. J J Murphy, referring to all these techniques, comments: 'whatever the motivation for the notice taken of figurae by authors of nongrammatical works, it is apparent that most medieval writers assume their study to be an elementary subject. It is regarded as something that every educated medieval person would have absorbed at an early stage of his training'.[1] This may explain why the treatment of ornata verba in the treatises mentioned above deals with only a few illustrative examples, combined with a short discussion of the underlying principles and recommended extent of use, rather than a systematic working out of all possibilities. It is interesting to note in this regard that the only known bequest of Gilbert Stone was his copy of the Catholicon of John of Genoa (Johannes Balbus de Ianua frequently cited as Ianuensis) which he left to Stone priory;[2] the Catholicon was a popular grammar and dictionary, mainly concerned with prosody, but which also gave attention to figures.[3] Its definitions and examples, drawn from Donatus, Priscian, the pseudo Ciceronian author of the Ad Herennium and Bede among others, provide useful indications of the variety of rhetorical figures to be expected in the letters of such writers as attempted the flowery style. Balbus divided his figures into fourteen

[1] Murphy, Rhetoric, 184. See ch. 4 particularly pp. 182-193 for an account of the different medieval interpretations of figures, tropes, schemes and colours.

[2] BL Burney MS 323; on the last folio was written: 'Liber iste Januenus alias dictus Catholicon liber est prioratus canonicorum regularium domus religiose sancti Walfadi martyris de Stone Coventris et Lichfeldensis diocesis ex dono magistri Gilbert de Stone, ecclesie cathedralis Wellensis canonici'.

[3] The Catholicon was one of the earliest incunabula, see Murphy, Rhetoric, 186 and Murphy, Medieval Rhetoric. For its use as an authority by late medieval English grammarians, see RW Hunt, 'Oxford grammar masters in the middle ages', Oxford Studies presented to Daniel Callus (Oxford Historical Society new ser. xvi 1964), and Brother Bonaventure, 'The teaching of Latin in later medieval England', Mediaeval Studies xxiii (1961), 12-13.

metaplasms, twenty two schemes and twenty nine tropes, in which categories be placed figures involving (technically vices against) respectively morphology, syntax and semantics.[1] In these he used the terminology of Donatus and Priscian; he then appended a list of fifty nine _colores rhetorici_, the terminology of which is in some cases similar to the figures of diction to be found in the _Ad Herennium_, and a number of which overlap, although differently titled, with the earlier schemes and tropes.[2] The _Catholicon_, certainly known to Stone and Whethamstede,[3] and given its popularity probably also familiar to the other writers considered here, provides useful definitions for an investigation into the influence of _ornata verba_.

It is convenient, however, to begin with the technique of _transumpcio_, of changing sentences by turning words into different parts of speech and more generally of elaborating simple sentences into more complex ones, since this was the sole or primary technique described in some treatises on ornamentation. Tracing _transumpcio_ is not necessarily an easy task; it is not immediately clear for example that a phrase like 'Iste vir propter infirmitatis angustiam quamplurimum iam senescit' lies behind 'Senex efficitur et nonomus is quem infirmitas devastat' although the elaboration from 'Nunquam erat meus amicus, qui mecum cito irascitur' to 'Nunquam erat meus amicus

[1] In this and following notes references are taken from the (unpaginated) 1971 republication by Gregg International Publishers of the British Library copy of the Mainz 1460 edition. John of Genoa's own phrasing of the distinction was: 'Metaplasmus enim respondet barbarismos qui est vicium diccionis. Scema soloecismo qui est vicium orationis. Sed tropus improprietatem sentencie est excusans.' An example of metaplasm is _sincopa_ which gives, for instance, 'audacter' for 'audaciter'. An example of a scheme is _anaphora_ which is the repetition of a word at the beginning of successive clauses, and an example of a trope is metaphor. It is interesting to note, given its frequency as a device in letter-writing as will be seen below, that _hyperbaton_, the overturning of work order, although with an obvious effect on syntax, was classified as a trope due to its potential effect on meaning.

[2] These are introduced as follows: 'Nunc de coloribus rethoricis et de quibusdam figuris que non ponuntur a donato vel pristiano sunt tamen in honore in theologia et possunt reduci ad scemata vel tropo mixtim videamus. Colores enim liciti sunt sermones et multi colores conveniunt cum figuris locucionis.'

[3] See Whethamstede, 437.

precordialis, qui michi pro modico stomachatur' is more obvious.[1] A useful point of reference is to take a phrase likely to recur in several letters, such as that introducing the peticio of the letter, and to compare its various treatments. In Archbishop Melton's register, for example, a petition is introduced with the phrase: 'unde paternitatem vestram humiliter deprecamur',[2] whereas in the register of Ralph of Shrewsbury bishop of Bath and Wells there is a lengthier introduction in a letter to the pope: 'Idcirco sanctitatis vestre provolutus sacrosanctis pedibus deprecacionem meam connecto implorans, primum suppliciter ...'[3] Likewise the petition of a letter from Richard II to Pope Urban VI begins 'eidem vestre sanctitati humiliter supplicamus ...',[4] whereas in John Lydford's book we find 'quamobrem dominacionem vestram supplicante exoramus quatinus ...'[5] and in the university letter-book 'Quocirca prelibate dominacioni vestre devota precum libamina effundimus pia mente unanimiter supplicantes ...'.[6] These examples show how verbs could be 'transposed' into a noun (as 'deprecacionem') or participles (as 'supplicante' and 'supplicantes'); they also illustrate that the grammatical change opened up the possibility for elaboration, since synonymous verbs (in the Catholicon this is described as the scheme of scesisnomaton) had to be supplied. Of course it is not immediately obvious that Lydford and the authors of the phrases in Shrewsbury's register and the university letter-book were consciously transposing and elaborating phrases such as those in Melton's register and in the diplomatic correspondence: the problem of deliberation in the use of ornata verba will have to be considered below.

In addition to elaborations of these kinds the phrases introducing the

[1] The first examples respectively of transumpcio and of an elaboration from the Rylands treatise.

[2] Reg. Melt. ii. 8.

[3] Reg. Shrewsbury i. 37.

[4] DC Ric II, 7.

[5] LB, 118.

[6] EAO i. 41.

petition were in some letters extended by the tropes of circumlocution (perifrasis) and metaphor as well as by the insertion of complete decorative clauses. Whethamstede on one occasion begins a request to the pope with 'Ad portas paterne beatudinis eo fiducialius pulsaturus ...', while in another letter he has:

> Eapropter ne igniculus paterne dilectionis olim erga tam singularem pastorem in sanctuario vestri pectoris ardenter accensus, quibusvis obloquis conatibus tepescere incipiat quod absit sicque cogatur pater sanctus ea in ipsum credere que alias forsan concipere non vellet has humiles testimoniales vestre sanctitati porrigimus flexis rogantes genubus quatinus ...[1]

Similar examples may be found in Stone's collection[2] and in the university letters.[3] The elaborative techniques of circumlocution and metaphor may of course be found at several points in the letter in addition to the opening phrases of the petition. It is common, for example, to find expressions of concern like Stone's 'cor meum alicuius tempestuose commocionis inquietudine conturbatur' in several collections of different kinds.[4] A summons in Mason's collection is rendered as 'quantum potestis celerius ad nos dirigere gressus vestros',[5] growing old becomes in Whethamstede 'quatinus viro illi cui iam advesperascit dies vitae',[6] in the diplomatic correspondence of Richard II 'we have heard' is rendered as 'non sine vehementi admiracione nostris

[1] WL, 368, 367.

[2] '... hec omnia mihi vestro obedientie filio sui gratia gratis fecit gratissima benevolencia paternalis cuius continuacionum protensis ad celum manibus devotissime genuflectens totis meis visceribus tenerrime deprecor et imploro ...' SL, fo 23b.

[3] 'Et propterea beatissime pater in materia qua de presenti movemur ad gemitum nostras preces licet indignas ad innate vobis clemencie januas confidencius animamur inducere, et coram beatorum pedum provoluti vestigiis humili spiritu unanimes supplicamus ...' EAO i. 33-4.

[4] SL, fo 31; 'dum mentis nostra arcana revoluimus ...' DC Ric II, 50; 'Cor paternum efficitur multipliciter tediosum et conturbantur viscera miserabilis genetricis quia ...' OD, 367-8; 'mens mea vehementer conturbatur et tristicia cor meum fortiter occupatur' which appears in the French version as 'moun ame grandement est destourbe et moun coer ove dolour fortement est ocupie ...' OD, 427-8; 'Turbat cor nostrum rumor dolorosus', Rymer, Foedera v. 310.

[5] ML, fo 18b; also 'Cum itaque pro defensione regni et jurium nostrorum concedente domino oporteat nos ad partes exteras dirigere gressus nostros', Rymer, Foedera v. 20.

[6] WL, 405.

iampridem est auribus inculcatum quod ...',[1] whereas in a model student letter pressing financial need is made more dramatic within the phrase: 'victualium regnat omnium caritudo'.[2] Expressions of thanks, as described in the preceding chapter, could sometimes constitute a separate part of the letter, and as a common feature they, like the beginning of the petition, provide an obvious opportunity for ornata verba. So phrases occur such as 'ad graciarum acciones assurgo',[3] 'dilatatur in gaudio', 'fraterne benignitatis cataractas aperiens'[4] and in an interesting phrase of Stone's: 'Quamobrem vobis domine mi ceterisque meis dominis et amicis domus vestre concanonicis regratior quantum possum ymo ut locucionis yperbolice typo fungar plusquam possum ex habundanti regratior pleno corde eciam vicibus milies repetitis'.[5] In this last example the giving of thanks is on the way to becoming a separate part at the beginning of the letter, like the paragraph specifically labelled as such in Harleian MS 670.[6]

It would be a difficult and lengthy task to describe all the different images and metaphors used by writers in amplification. However, certain stock methods of description which particularly recur are worth noting. Stone, for example, laments the murder of Archbishop Sudbury by the insurgents of 1381 in the following way:

1 DC Ric II, 135; also '... quibus ad vestre beatitudinis aures non tam fama quam eciam aliunde perductis ...' ibid. 95.

2 OD, 365.

3 Ibid. 368-9; also 'vobis assurgimus ad graciarum multiplices acciones', Reg. Shrewsbury i. 14.

4 EAO i. 22.

5 SL fo 26; this frank admission of hyperbole will be considered below. See also fo 9b: 'Et plane fateor quam innate gratitudini vestre mihi nuper mero vestre motu spontanee preostense, ad plenum regraciari non sufficio, eciam si iunctis manibus genuflectens vobis cotidie referre volvero millies millesies mille grates' and a similar example on fo 22b. There are twenty two letters in Stone's collection specifically described in their title as letters of thanks, and most of them begin with phrases of this type.

6 OD, 444: the paragraph begins 'Post votiuam utriusque vestri hominis prosperitatem ad debitam et deuotum cordialium graciarum copiam, O quam magna michi resultat materia ex mei cordis viribus persoluenda ...'.

> In quem quidem reverendissimum patrem primum pacificum et modestum, virum utique affabilem et benignum innocentem pariter et immunem cuiuscunque impositi criminis aut offense, filii sui degeneres et ingrati huiusmodi viri sanguinum et perdicionis alumpni multo peroris paganis ydola colentibus qui ritu suo suos honorificant sacerdotes velud canes rapidi et lupi rapaces cum furore nimio et tumultuoso latratu violencius irruerunt, nequaquam percentes preeminencie pastorali seu tanti presulatus gradui ordini aut honori, sed tanquam ipse iudei Crucifige Crucifige horrendo strepitu unanimiter conclamantes eundem patrem suum velud agnum mitissimum coram tendente silentem omnino absque culpa eiusdem patris quacunque, ad occasionem ducentes inhumaniter pertractarunt verberarunt ac crudelissime vulnerarunt.[1]

The description of an innocent victim as a lamb comes naturally, particularly after the allusion to the crucifixion, and the description of malefactors as dogs and wolves is standard in the composition of denunciations and excommunications. So, to give further examples, schism and heresy or sexual misdemeanors are often described in terms of contagion,[2] while several different kinds of university letter frequently talk of study as a fountain.[3] A particularly common set of metaphors, appropriately for florida verborum venustas, are those involving flowers. Stone for example writes in several places of the flowers of youth, looking back nostalgically from wintry old

[1] SL, fos 2-2b. For another letter on the murder of Sudbury, sent by William Courtenay as bishop of London, but originating with the monks of Christ Church Canterbury, see D Wilkins, Concilia Magnae Britanniae et Hiberniae A.D. 446-1718 (4 vols London 1737) iii. 153.

[2] For example 'que quondam scismatice pestis erant infirmata contagio' from EAO i. 32; 'Sanctorum patrum inherentes vestigiis convenit presidentes et pastores modernos ecclesie pudiccie patres et castitatis ferindas zelatores eorum corruptis et execrandis moribus oportunis remediis prepar' repulsam quos ineffrenate voluptatis tenebrosa caligo et putridum turpitudinis libidinose contagium indute continencie remige dissoluto verecundie modestiam regulatam extra pudoris terminos limitatos conantur flebiliter exulare ...' Reg. Repingdon i. 9. Later in the same document the image is made yet more graphic in the description of a puppy returning to its own vomit: 'velut catulus reversus ad vomitum tamquam de cibi levissimo nauseantes ...'. See also WL, 386 for the same image.

[3] '... scientes vestram universitatem prout fontem amenissimi licoris habundancius scaturire ...' and in the parallel French version: '... bien sachant vostre universite come un fontaygne dont sourt tresamesne licour ...' OD, 393-4. See also SL, fos 20b-21. A letter from Bodl. MS Auct. F 3 9, from a monk to a friend, contains the phrase: 'per certum tempus me ab abbathia mea absenturum et ubi studium viget litterarum moram trahere de fonte sapiencie margaritam haurire.' OD, 383-4; to drink the pearl from the well of wisdom constitutes a badly mixed metaphor, but perhaps by 'de fonte ... haurire' the writer means only to draw up from the source.

age,[1] and elsewhere he speaks of the flowers of contemplation.[2] In John Mason there is a reference to the sweet fragrance of the flowers of faith,[3] in Bishop Robert Hallum's register a mention of the flower of virginity,[4] while a letter supposedly from the king to the pope talks of the flowery youth of our university.[5] Close to these images are those of fruitfulness: John Lydford describes certain clerics as fruitful men of the church of God,[6] while a scholar writes of the fruitful use of a sum of money[7] and the letter already cited describing knowledge as a fountain, also portrays the university as a fruitful vine producing a rich crop in science.[8] Official university letters frequently combine the images of seeding, budding, flowering and fructifying, comparing the university to a fertile olive tree which, in its holy life, produces the scent and oil of catholic doctrine.[9] These metaphors in the university letter-book are occasionally prolonged so as to take up a

1 '... flores indomite iuventutis mee ...', SL, fo 19b, and see also fos 20b, 27b.

2 '... ad monasterium vestrum suavissime contemplacionis floribus redolens ...' SL, fo 22.

3 '... nostre plantacionis flores fida testatur assercio produxisse sue nos fragrancie suavitate nos reficuit ...' ML, fo 17b.

4 '... per suum voluptuosum egressum florem virginitatis violenter amisit ...' Reg. Hallum, 241.

5 '... florida nostre universitatis iuventus ...'; the metaphor is continued throughout the letter so that later one finds: 'Verisimiliter quippe nimirum licet bonus inter malos corumpatur, cum urtica suo veneno malicie rosarum fragranciam inficet et dehonestat ...' OD, 424-5.

6 '... viros ecclesie dei fructuosos ...' LB, 29.

7 '... dicte pecunie summam disposui adeo fertiliter in usibus fructiferis seminare ...' OD, 434.

8 '... necnon prout vineam fructiferam suis palmitibus uvas uberimas proferentem pariter scienciam copiosam ...' and in the French version: '... et come une visne furtifiante qi porte habundantement dez souces et meures grapes copiouse en sciense ...' OD, 393-4.

9 '... ut ipse in vitali ligno theologice facultatis decenter iam ramificans peramplius frondeat, frondescens germinet, germinansque floreat, et florescens fructificet in catholice doctrine semine ...' EAO i. 3; '... que nostri studii complantantur in agro, in scienciis floreant, in virtute fructificent, et ad honores frondeant testimonii gradualis: ut sic nostre universitatis fertili de campo olive oriantur fructifere, que sancte conversacionis diffundant odorem, oleumque catholice doctrine predicando multiplicent in ecclesia sancta dei', ibid. 22-3 inter alia.

substantial proportion of the letter. This is also the case in some of Whethamstede's correspondence in which there is a wide range of images; recipients are urged to drink from the well of compassionate charity, to wash in the river of mercy, to be bound with chains of peace and he writes of the orchard of pastoral rule, the light of truth appearing from the gloomy earth, the fire or the wounds of litigation, of the choking of the grain of the pure crop and of the descent from the city of peace to the town of dissension.[1] In a prolonged metaphor in a letter to the abbess and convent of Syon he wrote of holy buildings built with living stones, upheld by columns of fraternal charity, yet attacked by winds of earthly ambition and by a river of carnal licentiousness.[2] In another to the cell of Tynemouth he urges the monks to refresh the stomach of the mind with the sweetness of heavenly feasting, restraining within chains of modesty what is superfluous, the result only of avid desire, resting content with what is on the table and never complaining about the eating of the normal dishes or caring about what is to be eaten or drunk tomorrow.[3] This last passage could equally well have a literal meaning, and it is only the opening words which suggest that it is to be understood metaphorically.

The use of imagery as in these examples frequently has a scriptural base and their use, particularly in an exceptional writer like Whethamstede,

[1] WL, 366-7, 370, 375, 377-8, 382, 396.

[2] 'Inter alia sanctitatis edificia que vivis construuntur ex lapidibus illud pre reliquis in templum sanctum est excrescens in domino quod firma fide ponitur quod spe recta erigitur quodque circumcirca fraterne caritatis fulcitur columna, ac in eo lapide in quo Syon sancta solet subsistere non minus feliciter quam finaliter consummatur. Adversus utique hujuscemodi erectionis fabricam etsi flaverint venti ambitionis mundane si inundaverint fluvii carnalis lascivie ...' ibid. 372-3.

[3] '... attentius vos hortantes sic stomachum mentis celestis reficere epulationis dulcedine quatinus si quid superfluum et nequaquam victui necessarium avidior sensus vobis gustandum porrexerit cohibeatis vos infra fines modestie pleneque cum hiis que apponuntur contenti stetis et cum regularium ferculorum refectione nullatenus queruli aut solliciti quid in crastino manducabitis aut bibetis.' Ibid. 389. For further examples of Whethamstede's use of imagery see the translations in Jacob, Florida , 270-2.

cannot be sharply distinguished from the use of exordial material as examined in the preceding chapter. Biblical and proverbial allusions obviously also had the effect of 'colouring' the text. It is interesting to note that sententia appears as a figure of diction in the Rhetorica ad Herennium and as a colour of rhetoric in the Catholicon. The writer making use of a sententia was, therefore, obeying a requirement both of the ars dictaminis proper and of ornata verba.

The techniques of transumpcio, perifrasis and metaphora are methods of decoration which have been traced from the specific examples offered in works on colores which circulated in England, such as the Rylands treatise and the 'Tractatus de modo inveniendi ornata verba'; but Simon 0, the author of the Rylands ars dictaminis, made it clear that he was only highlighting certain useful techniques among a wide range of figures. Some of these are in fact evident in many of the examples already given, as well as in passages which are not the product of circumlocution or metaphor.

At first glance there would appear to be a great number of metaplasms (alterations in spelling) in most letters - they are particularly obvious in modern printed editions where the variations in spelling are noted. But in most cases editors of these collections are no doubt correct in regarding such variations as mistakes rather than as deliberate rhetorical flourishes; this is particularly obvious in some of the collections in the Oxford dictatores series which are the work of students grappling with Latin and French constructions. It is unlikely, therefore, that 'grant' instead of 'grante' before 'dispensacion' was intended as the metaplasm of apocopa, the deliberate subtraction of a letter at the end of a word, that 'vous' instead of 'vos' was the product of epenthesis, the adding of a letter in the middle of a word, and the sense of the passage is sufficient to suggest that 'volentes' instead of 'nolentes' is not an antithesis, the deliberate changing of a letter.[1] Occasionally obvious mistakes were corrected by the

[1] OD, 361, 373, 381.

writer.[1] On the other hand some variations from classical spellings are so common in medieval Latin that, although not mistakes, neither were they metaplasms chosen by individual writers; so the normal 'e' instead of 'ae' notably at the end of a word. The tolerance of different spellings, however, does mean that writers were able to introduce different forms such as 'set' instead of 'sed', 'aput' instead of 'apud'[2] or 'sencerius' for 'sincerius', 'delcedinem' for 'dulcedinem'.[3] Where unusual forms are chosen, as in these examples from Whethamstede and the university letter-book, it is possible that these were deliberate metaplasms; it is interesting that Whethamstede, who mentions the Catholicon in one letter, uses 'audacter' for 'audaciter', the specific example of the metaplasm of sincopa given in the Catholicon.

On the whole there is less ambiguous evidence of figures from the categories of schemes, tropes and colours. The figure which occurs most frequently and which is to be found in many of the examples given above, is the trope of hyperbaton the deliberate alteration of normal word order. In Stone there is 'amicis domus vestre concanonicis' and 'alicuius tempestuose commocionis inquietudine' (a double hyperbaton), in Whethamstede 'flexis rogantes genubus', in the university letter-book 'ad innate vobis clemencie januas', in the model letters of the dictatores 'victualium regnat omnium caritudo', 'ad graciarum acciones assurgo' and 'florida nostre universitatis iuventus', in Richard II's diplomatic letters 'ad vestre beatudinis aures' and 'nostris iampridem est auribus' and in Lydford's book 'viros ecclesie dei fructuosus'.[4] Examples of hyperbata occur in most of the letters in

[1] So 'mutuacione' is altered to 'mutacione', ibid. 367. In the university letters in at least one case 'ortodoxe' has 'h' written over it in the same hand, EAO i. 28 (this would be a more likely metaplasm).

[2] 'Set' and 'aput' appear regularly in Whethamstede, but in the Oxford dictatores both 'set' and 'sed' appear: compare for example OD, 357, 381, 384, 424 with 366, 432, 447, 448.

[3] These examples are taken from EAO i. 15, 23.

[4] SL, fos 26, 31; WL, 367; EAO i. 34; OD, 365, 368-9, 424; DC Ric II, 95, 135; LB, 29.

these collections; they can also be found, though not with such frequency, in bishops' registers.[1] These instances all involve the particular type of hyperbaton called themesis or word interruption in the Catholicon. The interruption usually comes through the placing of a genitive, a verb, or an adverb and verb, between an adjective and noun, or between a preposition and a noun. Occasionally this can take an extreme form as in the example from Mason's collection: '... a retroactis siquidem bone memorie predecessorum nostrorum temporibus' and in the university letters: 'Vestram igitur inclitissimam humillime implorando cordialiter quesumus serenitatem'.[2] Writers also occasionally introduced a double hyperbaton as in the example from Stone's collection quoted above; a double of a different kind is to be found in the diplomatic correspondence: '... circa predicti scismatis destructionem et ecclesie universalis unitatem ...', where the hyperbaton depends on a parallel construction rather than on interlacement.[3] A symmetrical double occurs in Bishop Robert Hallum's register '... quosdam in diversis catholicorum partibus festivos ...'.[4]

Another form of hyperbaton likewise placed among the tropes in the Catholicon is hysterologa, the alteration in the position of the verb; it is related to adiunctum, one of the colores rhetorici (a figure of diction in the Rhetorica ad Herennium), described as the placing of the verb first, or last, in the clause or sentence. This figure can also be found frequently in letters, particularly in the form in which the verb is postponed to a position following a number of dependent clauses. Examples from Stone and

1 '... discretioni vestre de qua plenam optinemus fiduciam ...' Reg. Melt. 5; 'Horrenda perversorum cupiditas ...' Reg. Mart. ii pt 1, 89; '... vobis assurgimus ad graciarum multiplices acciones ...' Reg. Shrewsbury i. 14; '... militans adiecit ecclesia ...' Reg. Hallum, 240; '... secundum iuris exigenciam ...' Reg. Bubwith i. 61; '... nonulli tamen eterne dampnacionis filii ...' Reg. Repingdon i. 7.

2 ML, fo 25; EAO i. 78.

3 DC Ric II, 50.

4 Reg. Hallum, 240 (from document 837).

the university letter-book, cited above, illustrate this technique.[1] An adiunctum from Hallum's register shows how the requirements to place the verb first or last could be combined: '... qui dum in carne vixerant tanquam clara in mundo luminaria lucuerunt, fueruntque eorum corpora ...'.[2]

A further set of popular figures comprise different forms of repetition. The first example of a colour of rhetoric mentioned in the Rylands treatise was repeticio, a figure of diction in the Rhetorica ad Herennium and a color rhetorici in the Catholicon (also described there as the scheme of anaphora). In repeticio the first word of a clause was to be repeated at the beginning of successive clauses, as in an exhortation from Stone's letter to Henry Bryan canon of Stone priory:

> Dicitur enim quod sepius confitentes licet minus veraciter penitentes frequencius celebratis, et alterius vicibus ab altari sanctissimo tam suam ad latibulum meretricis vestre tam fetidum et prophanum ... Ecce male lotus, Ecce male confessus. Ecce quod deterius est tantum sacrificium offerens indigne, et eciam ut apparet celebrans valde male. Ecce carissime vestre false devocionis ypotresis simulata. Ecce manducantis indigne damnacionis vestre summa iuste lata.[3]

In another form of repetition (the scheme of epirensis and the colour of epymone in the Catholicon) the word was repeated immediately, rather than at the beginning of clauses. A subsequent passage from the same letter illustrates the use of this scheme:

> Tali vero fuga amissus honor boni nominis reformatur dedicus eciam ignomine extinguitur et deletur, ac mortalis macula decorem anime turpitur diffurgas saltim in vero contrito celeriter evanescit fugite ergo carissime fugite et priusquam malum insanabilem in vos irruet repentinum absque more diffugio fugite fugite festinanter.[4]

In both these extracts the repetitions were intended to have a persuasive effect on the recipient; the same intention lies behind the technique known as gradatio in the Rhetorica ad Herennium and as the trope of metalensis or

[1] See above p. 193notes 2&3 . See also the comment of Jacob in 'Florida', 288.

[2] Reg. Hallum, 240 (from document 893).

[3] SL, fo 11.

[4] Ibid.

the colour of climax or gradatio in the Catholicon. A well-known example of this figure, which may be described as the repetition of words in a parallel progression, would have been the passage from St Paul's epistle to the Romans: 'quos autem praedestinavit, hos et vocavit; et quos vocavit, hos et justificavit; quos autem justificavit, illos et glorificavit' (Romans 8:30). In the university letter-book a phrase used in more than one letter, quoted above for its use of metaphor, also illustrates this figure: 'ut ipse in vitali ligno theologice facultatis decenter iam ramificans peramplius frondeat, frondescens germinet, germinansque floreat, et florescens fructificet in catholice doctrine semine ...'.[1] In Hallum's register a passage in a letter about the feast of the translation of St Edward begins with the same technique: '... se cunctis exhibvit effabilitate placidum, placiditate benignum, benignitate devotum, castitate laudabilem, morum venustate decorum, misericordia benivolum, pietate misericordem, et in rigore iustice non severum'.[2] In the second of the extracts from Stone cited above, 'fugite' is repeated at certain points before being used in the figure of epirensis; repetition of a word at intervals over a long passage but not necessarily in particular positions was known as the colour of traductio. In the same letter from Stone to Bryan another traductio is used in a notable passage warning about the terrors of the day of judgement.[3]

None of these forms of repetition were particularly widespread in the letters examined, indeed three of the five examples came from one particular letter in Stone's collection, which as mentioned in the preceding chapter has a different structure from most letters.[4] There are however figures of repetition which are found more frequently. In the first letter of John

[1] EAO i. 3; sometimes these words are used, but without metalensis as in ibid. i. 24.

[2] Reg. Hallum, 242 (from document 1017).

[3] 'Hec est siquidem illa dies magna et amara dies calamitatis miserie dies examinis strictissimi flebilis et horrenda, quando iudex summus fortis et terribilis impios interficiet spiritu oris sui.' SL, fo 10b.

[4] See above p. 145.

Mason's collection, written to the pope on behalf of St Augustine's Canterbury, the turbulence of the times is expressed thus: 'Porro modernis temporibus pacem istam quam super pacis filios quiescere voluit princeps pacis per discencionis et scandali seminaria turbata ...'.[1] The use of 'pax' in different cases is an example of what is described in the Catholicon as the scheme of poliptoton (the same word appearing in a different grammatical form). It occurs in several of Mason's letters[2] as well as in Stone[3] and Whethamstede[4], while it can also be found in certain set phrases in, for example, Lydford's book and in diplomatic letters of Edward III and Richard II.[5] Related to poliptoton is the scheme of paranomasia or the colour of agnominacio in which the stems or endings of words are similar, although the words themselves are different; the Catholicon gives 'Curia curarum genutrix nutrix' as an example. Under agnominacio the description

1 ML, fo 1.

2 See '... et duris duriora superaddens procedere non desistit ...', '... que ad preces celebris memorie progenitorum vestrorum et aliorum regni nobilium prefatum monasterium sustinuit et sustinet in presenti ...', 'Lux lucens in tenebris ...', ibid. fos 6b, 11, 15.

3 The passage in the letter to Bryan with the epirensis 'fugite fugite' has the same word repeated in different form over the preceding ten lines: 'fugientes ... fugite ... fugam ... fugam ... fugienti ... fugiens ... fugam ... fugiendo ... fuga ... fugite' SL, fo 11; see also the petitionary phrase already quoted above: '... hec omnia mihi vestro obedientie sui gratia gratis fecit gratissima benevolencia paternalis ...' ibid. fo 23b.

4 '... ad pedes paterne beatudinis provolutus jaceo, jacendoque humillime ac instantissime invoco et exoro ...', 'Verum pater etsi factiosus iste vulpecula vulpeculariter hoc dictum dissimulet ...', '... talia quippe pater sub penalissima penarum pena precise fuerunt ...', '... in criminoso criminaliter circumvento ...' WL, 368, 380, 474.

5 '... scienciis liberalibus quibus insistunt et insistere volunt et speratur imposterum proprie non suppetunt aut suppeterit ...', and an example of a triple poliptoton: '... per eandem visitacionem in ipsa ecclesia tam in personis quam in rebus corrigenda corrigere et singula reformanda prout convenit reformare pro et paterna affectu summe affectantes ...' LB, 29, 81; 'Super quo scire velit vestra benignitas quod pacem bonam cum eodem adversario nostro semper habere desideravimus et desideramus etiam in presenti ...', Foedera v. 772; 'Quapropter discrecioni paternitatis vestre et suadendo consulimus et consulendo salubriter suademus quatinus ...', DC Ric II, 40.

is simply 'similar sounds with different meanings'.[1] Another phrase from Stone's passage urging Bryan to flee from his sins has a juxtaposition of two words with the same stem: 'diffugio fugite',[2] as does the phrase 'qui et liberaliter escas tribuat ac distribuat' from Whethamstede.[3] If nouns and verbs with the same stem were also to be included at this point, rather than under poliptoton, then there would be further examples.[4] Whereas poliptoton was concerned with the same word in different cases, the scheme of homoeoptoton was concerned with different words in the same case.[5] A neat example, paraphrased from the gospels, comes in a letter of John Mason on entering the monastic life: 'petens accipiat querens inveniat',[6] and the opportunity for its use generally came when statements were combined in a series, such as 'castus in corpore prudens in opere modestus in moribus et sapiens in sermone'.[7] The scheme can thus also be found in those examples of metalensis from the university letter-book and Bishop Hallum's register quoted above.

Many of these figures of repetition also made possible the scheme of paranomeon of which a standard example to be found in the Catholicon was:

1 The definition in Rhetorica ad Herennium suggests that the similarity is to be produced by a specific change in one of the words such as a metaplasm - the possibility of metaplasm here does not seem to be envisaged in the Catholicon.

2 SL, fo 11.

3 WL, 366.

4 '... per ipsum admissa negocii eiusdem examinacio et examinati relacio faciende vestre circumspecte prudencie tradita extitit et commissa ...' ML, fo 5b; '... velut tocius mundi solem omnium graciarum radiis radientem ...' EAO i. 99; '... in fertili campo scienciarum predictarum sub cedrina vestra celsitudine teneri studiorum ramunculi crescant frondeant et floreat flores fructibus secuturis ...' ibid. 107.

5 This definition is to be found both in the Rhetorica ad Herennium and the Catholicon, although there are different interpretations offered in the Catholicon including one derived from Bede which makes it like poliptoton (the example 'ex ipso et per ipsum et in ipso sunt omnia' is given).

6 ML, fo 15.

7 WL, 376.

'tite tute tante tibi tanta tiranno tulisti' as well as 'machina multa minatur maxima muris'. None of the examples examined above can rival this, although there are perhaps more modest efforts: 'fugite fugite festinanter', 'pater sub penalissima penarum pena precise fuerunt', 'in criminoso criminaliter circumvento', 'floreant flores fructibus', 'sic inimica infestacio plebeica paveat potenciam principum' and 'celestis curie convicibus et collegis'.[1]

The multiplication of conjunctions in a passage was known in the Catholicon as polisintheton; this technique was likewise intended to produce an impressive cumulative effect, though by the accumulation of the words joined together rather than by the repeated words themselves. Polisintheton thus tended to lead to other effects such as double or multiple epithet, or the scheme of scesinomaton (interpretatio in the Rhetorica ad Herennium - the use of synonyms). The extract from Stone's letter on the murder of Archbishop Sudbury, given above, has examples of polisintheton; the cumulative effect of scesinomaton may be particularly seen in a letter of Bishop Oliver Sutton preserved among model forms in Cambridge University Library MS Dd vii 6:

> ... ab anxiis concertacionum et discordiarum turbinibus, que mentes contumultuancium summe lacerant et infestant, in grave periculum corporum et precipue animatum, semper in tranquillitatis et suavitatis pulcritudine cum omni solicitudine et cautela viis et modis quibus possumus diligentius preservare ...[2]

The repetition of 'non ... sed' in a passage could lead to the colour of contencio, the building up of contraries, as in a passage from the university to the bishop of London:

> ... quo has nostre supplicacionis fervide vobis immolamus primicias pro viro qui ingenio extat non chaos sed stella, moribus non urtica sed rosa, in studio non fucus sed apis fructifera, et in sue conversacionis exemplo non lignum aridum sed oliva ...[3]

[1] SL, fo 11; WL, 474; EAO i. 107, 122; Reg. Hallum, 240 (document 893).

[2] OD, 357. For further examples see EAO i. 99-100 and DC Ric II, 3-4.

[3] EAO i. 3. The opposite of polisintheton is given in the Catholicon as the scheme of asintheton (i.e. asyndeton, the deliberate suppression of conjunctions). It is less common than polisintheton, although 'petens accipiat querens inveniat' quoted above is an example.

All these different techniques of repetition give some indication of the range of rhetorical ornamentation to be found in some letter-writers. In only two cases, however, among the letters examined were specific comments made about the use of rhetorical figures - in both instances about the trope of hyperbole. Abbot Whethamstede admitted that it might seem hyperbolical to paraphrase the words of Christ in the garden of Gethsemane in a reply to the archbishop of Canterbury: he asked whether it was inappropriate to reply to a request to travel abroad, given the dangers, 'if it will not be possible for it to be done otherwise, then may your will be done'.[1] An apparent apology is also to be found in a letter of Stone to the prior and canons of Stone priory in which he conceded the use of hyperbole in the giving of thanks.[2]

All the figures discussed so far count as figures of speech or diction as opposed to figures of thought or argument.[3] Some very obvious examples of rhetorical persuasion used by these letter-writers belong however to the techniques of argumentation. Occasionally there is an explicit reference in a letter to a figure of thought, as in a letter of John Mason to the king on behalf of St Augustine's; towards the end of the letter he says: 'Et ut multa sub brevibus concludamus ...'.[4] In the Catholicon this is described as the colour of araciologia, in which many things are to be understood through few words. Other figures of thought are evident. In diminutio, for example, according to the Rhetorica ad Herennium 'we say that we or our

1 'Nonne palam constat quomodo propter formidinem itineris, fortiores de clero pugiles sub similate locutionis iperbola domino respondent Cantuariensi, Pater si alias fieri non poterit, fiat voluntas tua?' WL, 422-3. Whethamstede applied words of Christ to himself on more than one occasion, see Jacob, Florida, 270-1.

2 SL, fo 29. For the text of this comment see above.

3 This distinction may be seen in the Rhetorica ad Herennium, although as Murphy points out some of the figures of diction there concern argument - they were placed among the figures of thought by Quintilian, Murphy, Rhetoric, 365-74; many of the colores rhetorici in the Catholicon concern methods of argument.

4 ML, fo 10.

clients possess some exceptional advantage, and in order to avoid the impression of arrogant display, we moderate or soften the statement of it.'[1] Stone used this figure on behalf of his bishops when he claimed in letters of pastoral correction that though the full force of episcopal censure could be used, the bishop desired rather to use gentler arts of persuasion.[2] On the other hand the figure of permissio was used in letters on behalf of Bishops Erghum and Clifford to the pope, where the subject of the petition was submitted completely to the will of the recipient; this was also a frequent device in letters to patrons in the university letter-book and in some of the model letters of the Oxford dictatores.[3] Another 'trick' in argument was, according to the Catholicon, the colour of occupacio (occultatio in the Rhetorica ad Herennium) in which 'we say that we are passing by or do not know, or refuse to say that which precisely now we are saying.'[4] Stone used this technique in a letter which was to be sent by the king to the pope on behalf of Bishop Waltham of Salisbury: '... quid aliud dicere possumus nos nescimus, nisi quod vobis pater sanctissime cuius inconstanciam arguere non audemus voce querula exprimere compellimur cum merore qui in intimis cordis nostri tante acerbioris punccionis aculio gravius contristamur ...'.[5] Reasoning by contraries (contrarium in the Rhetorica ad Herennium and the scheme of antitheton or the colour of contrarium in the Catholicon) is according to the Rhetorica 'the figure which, of two opposite statements, uses one so as neatly and directly to prove the other, as follows "Now how should you expect one who has ever been hostile to his own interests to be friendly to another's"'.[6] This

[1] Murphy, Rhetoric, 371.

[2] See for example SL, fos 4, 8b.

[3] According to the Rhetorica ad Herennium this figure was especially useful for evoking pity, Murphy, Rhetoric, 369.

[4] Ibid. 368.

[5] SL, fo 17.

[6] Murphy, Rhetoric, 366.

figure may be seen in the reproof addressed to the abbot of Muchelney in Stone's collection: 'How can one who is careless of his own soul attend to the souls of others? How can one who is living in sin correct others?'[1]

It is not possible to give examples of all the possible figures of thought and argument, because many of them affect not just particular passages within letters, but the whole letter. The frequency of techniques of repetition among figures of speech are sufficient to suggest the importance among figures of thought of commoratio, dwelling on the point; as the Rhetorica ad Herennium points out: 'There is no appropriate example of this figure, because this topic is not isolated from the whole cause like some limb, but like blood is spread through the whole body of discourse.'[2] Other colores rhetorici from the Catholicon and figures from the Rhetorici are obviously concerned with fundamental methods of argument. For example there is antipofora, response to objection; correcio, retraction of an argument and its replacement with something more suitable, hypofora, enquiry as to what can be said on the side of an opponent, pisancia, the reinforcement of an argument after the statement of the opponent's case and ratiocinatio, reasoning by question and answer.

Finally one of the favourite, or at least in certain collections one of the most striking, rhetorical devices was the use of exclamacio, the vocative appeal.[3] Such passages occur most obviously in the collections of Mason, Stone and Whethamstede, and they are particularly frequent in the

[1] SL, fo 22.

[2] Murphy, Rhetoric, 372.

[3] This is defined as a colour of rhetoric in the Catholicon; it is linked to apostrophe which in the Catholicon is limited to 'conversio locucionis ad aliquem per secundum personam', an example being in verse 8 of psalm 3 where God is spoken of in the third person and is then directly asked to bless his people. In the Rhetorica ad Herennium, exclamacio is described as 'the figure which expresses grief or indignation by means of an address to some man or city or place or object.' Murphy, Rhetoric, 365-6. In the following exclamacio has generally been understood in the looser sense given in the Catholicon.

university letter-book to arouse pity or indignation, or to express laudatio. To Duke Humfrey for example the university writes typically:

> O quid facerent fluctuantes in procelloso pelago si navicula dissolvatur quomodo staret basilica corruente columpna quo pergentes in tenebris tenderent si lux extinguatur ... O utinam vestra dignetur serenitas reminisci quod scienciarum studia ab inicio in quavis regione contingencia glorie ejusdem maximam excellenciam solebant presagire futurum.[1]

Exclamacio may be occasionally found elsewhere; in Bishop Bubwith's register there is a lament for the schism torn church: 'set ve ve proh dolor lacrime vidue ascendunt in excelsum, set Dominus exauditor non delectatur in illis que fuit ecclesie cum lacrimis penitencie locum, set jam per triginta annos et ultra clamans, non invenit eum scismate perdurato ...'[2] And in a letter from Bishop Richard Clifford's register as bishop of London, written on behalf of Archbishop Chichele, the victory of Agincourt is celebrated thus:

> O nempe consolatio ineffabilis nostris presertim temporibus omnique evo iocunda ac semper memorie revocanda christianissimi videlicet principis nostri Henrici regis Anglie quinti et sui exercitus in bello d'Agyncourt nuper in partibus Pycardie commisso gratiose victoria que in festo translationis dicti sancti ad laudem divini nominis et regni Anglie honorem ex immensa dei misericordia anglicis est concessa.[3]

It is clear from the extracts of letters mentioned or quoted here, that professional letter-writers made some use of grammatical and rhetorical figures, of exornationes verborum. From these lists of examples, however, there remain questions about variations in the extent of ornamentation between different letters and different collections and about deliberation in the use of some of these techniques. It is also necessary to consider, in relation to these questions, the possible development of a particular fashion for flores in the early fifteenth century.

Of these questions that of intention may be dealt with most briefly. The use of ornata verba, unlike the use of the cursus, is not so universal

[1] EAO i. 129.
[2] Reg. Bubwith i. 33.
[3] Foedera viii. 420.

as to foster the suspicion that they might have come to be used more or less unconsciously as part of ordinary composition. It is true that this may be said of some variant spellings, which might otherwise appear as metaplasms, but it does not easily apply to other figures or colours. Even the trope of hyperbaton, though it appears very frequently, does not in any instance overturn all the word order of, say, noun and adjective in particular letters, suggesting then that when it was used it was for the deliberate creation of a certain effect. More complicated reasons, however, govern the extent of decorative language used in different writers.

In all the collections examined there was at least some evidence of the use of figures or colores, but great differences emerge in the extent and variety of that use. In bishops' registers there are usually only a few isolated examples, while in the university letter-book rhetorical figures (often the same ones) are found in most of the letters.

In many cases the extent of ornamentation was determined, as with the presence of a traditional exordium, by the subject-matter of the letter. In bishops' registers it is sometimes possible to find such examples of circuicio as 'vobis assurgimus ad graciarum multiplices acciones' in standard business letters to officials and in other technical documents, but most of the examples from registers given in this chapter come from letters on particular types of subject which gave an opportunity for rhetorical amplification. In Hallum's register the letters chosen by the editor as illustrations of style, in which several figures and colours may be found, are a commission concerning the observance of Sundays and feast days, a mandate to the abbess and convent of Shaftesbury forbidding the nuns to leave their house except for good cause and two documents on the veneration of King Edward the Martyr. Likewise examples from Bishop Ralph of Shrewsbury's register came in a letter to the pope and from Bishop Philip Repingdon's register in a mandate of enquiry into immorality. In John Lydford's book the examples of rhetorical ornamentation came primarily from letters such as Bishop

Wykeham's concerning the foundation of New College. The distinction however between rhetorical and legal language should perhaps not be exaggerated. The letter of Bishop Oliver Sutton of 1288, excommunicating members of the university who were infringing the rights of the bishop of Lincoln, begins with a passage describing the lamentable state of affairs relying particularly on polisintheton and double epithet.[1] It continues with passages such as 'omnes illos qui de corpore universitatis predicte scienter et prudenter statuta et consuetudines consimiles decetero edere vel subintroducere clam vel palam, directe vel indirecte, expresse vel tacite ...'[2] This is not a passage of vivid description intended to persuade and there is no place here for circumlocution or metaphor, but polisintheton and the bringing together of word pairs either as synonyms or as contencio is evident. Some figures of speech as defined for example in the Catholicon and perhaps even more obviously some figures of thought and argument, despite the differences in intention, have a place in legal and 'technical' business language. Besides polisintheton, there are examples of the use of adjunctum, poliptoton and paranomasia in such passages.[3]

Different degrees of ornamentation are obvious in other collections. Although in Stone's letter-book notarial and legal business does not appear, there are still letters in which rhetorical devices play a greater part than in others; they are particularly obvious in those dominated by indignation or outrage as, for example, the letters occasioned by the murder of Archbishop

[1] See above, p.

[2] OD, 357.

[3] For example '... nos affectantes pro salute animarum vestrarum et relevamen domus errata corrigere et vicia extirpare, statuimus ordinamus decernimus ac in virtute obediencie et sub pena excommunicationis majoris quam contravenientes poterunt non immerito formidare precipimus iniungendo mandamus ...' Reg. Melt. ii. 12, '... per eandem visitacionem in ipsa ecclesia tam in personis quam in rebus corrigenda corrigere et singula reformanda prout convenit reformare pro et paterna affectu summe affectantes ut sanus ... quicquam ab aliis dictum vel ostensum fuerit exploret seu explorare conetur directe vel indirecte signo dicto vel facto palam vel occulte ...' LB, 81.

Sudbury or the execution of Archbishop Scrope, or in the letters of correction, chiefly of course in the exceptional letter to Henry Bryan. One of the reasons that figures and colours play such a conspicuous part in the official university correspondence is that, as already noted, so many of its communications were begging letters to patrons in which devices were required to convey the need of the university and to praise the munifcence of the patron. In an apparently tricky situation, however, when the university wrote to the king explaining why they could not comply with the royal wishes for the reinstatement of Master Morgan Philipp, there is a notable absence of extravagant metaphors describing the university or of apostrophe lamenting their plight. Philipp is exposed for his 'iniqua et perversa contumacia' but the vitipuration is for obvious reasons restrained.[1]

Differences in the extent and type of exornationes were also determined by the status of the sender and recipient as well as by the subject of the letter. This means that letters on the same subject can have different levels of ornamentation. A bishop writing to the pope to proceed with a case will use figures to convey humility which will not be used in a letter to his official or to an archdeacon asking them to proceed with a case. The same point is made in annotated letters in Harleian MS 670; a letter from the pope to the university is described as being ordinary ('sub mediocri stilo seu figura') whereas the reply is described as being more elevated ('sub graviori figura seu stilo'). In the latter the university is described as a handmaid, her prostrations to the pope are detailed, there is an apostrophe with paranomasia on the stilling of the storm afflicting the ship of Peter, and schism is described in terms of contagion, whereas the pope had referred more simply to 'ex agro Domini hereses extirpentur et ecclesia Dei in unitatis et pacis dulcedine conquiescat.'[2] In Stone's collection letters written to the pope on behalf of Bishops Erghum, Waltham and Clifford

[1] EAO i. 264-6.
[2] OD, 446-7.

are more profuse in the giving of thanks and the begging of favours, than the letters drafted by Stone to be sent in the name of the king. Indeed he glossed his letter to be sent by Queen Anne as having been written with the deliberate intention of revealing a certain innate enmity ('ex animositate innata') and an impatience with the progress of Bishop Waltham's case; here, as in other royal letters, the circumlocutions and dramatic metaphors of surrender were at the very least muted.[1] It is interesting in this regard that the tone is in general restrained in Richard's diplomatic letters, and that although there are occasional examples of the use of rhetorical devices, as has been seen above, there is less sustained use of figurative language, and no ornate metaphor or apostrophe in letters to the papacy and to foreign rulers and princes.[2]

It is also possible that in these latter examples there was also a certain difference of taste, or at least of what was considered appropriate, between ecclesiastical and lay writers. At a different level this point may be emphasized by the comparison of a letter in the Paston collection with a letter written in English in the university letter-book. In so far as a correspondence such as that of the Pastons was, as emphasized above, principally taken up with the exchange of news and information between members of a family, there was little call for the arts of persuasion. There are however some letters with a petitionary aim in the Paston collection such as the following from John Paston I to the sheriff of Norfolk in 1452:

> ... prayng yow, as we trust that ye wull tendere the welfare of this shire and of the jentilmen there-in, that ye wull lete owre seid lord have knowyng of owre entent in this, and after to send us answere wheder it please his Highnesse we shuld come to his presens and in what place, or to send owre compleynt to hym if more enformacion be though behoffefull ...[3]

[1] SL fo 16b; see above pp. 14-15.

[2] This is also true of later diplomatic letters of Henry VI, but because of their connection with Thomas Bekynton, and therefore with early humanist epistolography, these are discussed in the final chapter.

[3] Paston Letters and Papers i. 66.

This may be compared with a letter from the university of Oxford to the speaker, knights and burgesses of parliament in 1439:

> Worthy syres, for as moch that meny of yowr owne issu and also kynnesmen hath be, beth now, and shall be in tyme commyng tenderly and bisely noryshed and avanced with the rype frute of Konnyng in oure moder the Universite of Oxon ... Wherffore we beseche your sage discrecions to consider the gloriose yfites of the graciose prince ...[1]

The most obvious difference of style between these letters (addressed to recipients of similar status) is the image of ripe fruit in the university letter, clearly translated from the recurrent metaphor in their Latin correspondence. There is perhaps another stylistic difference, however, in the direct form of address in the Paston letter compared to the university's use of the more formal third person, which enables them to introduce further decorative description, even if not so elaborate as could be found in many of their Latin constructions. It would be a mistake to think however that laymen never wrote in the vernacular 'sub altiori stilo'; letters addressed to the king and petitions in the London letter-books for example employed on occasion highly ornate language.[2]

The reasons for differences in the extent and nature of ornata verba so far considered cover all the collections examined over the complete period; another possible reason, however, is the development of a particular euphistic fashion in the early fifteenth century. EF Jacob argued that the florida verborum venustas were a chief feature of Latin composition in the fifteenth century and that as 'pure and vigorous English prose' develops, so 'writing in Latin either becomes flowery and involved, or stiffens unmedievally with the imported classical forms of the early Ciceronian renaissance.' In a subsequent reference Jacob wrote more explicitly of the 'new pompous style'.[3] When Jacob published this article, his ideas were treated with

[1] EAO i. 184.
[2] London English, ed Chambers and Daunt, 64-89. See further ch. 7.
[3] Jacob, 'Florida', 266, 288.

interest by some students of English literature and literary criticism, who saw a parallel in some developments among the fifteenth-century Chaucerians, notably Lydgate. JWH Atkins wrote of '... the cultivation of an ornamental and flowery style, tortuous, obscure, bombastic, overloaded with imagery and classical allusion, and with special attention paid to unusual diction and to a florida verborum venustas'; he mentioned the Tractatus de modo inveniendi ornata verba, fifteenth-century Latin formularies or collections of letters, sermons and the like, and in particular the letters of Abbot Whethamstede.[1]

Was there a new fashion for ornata verba in the early fifteenth-century? One point may be made immediately. The Tractatus de modo inveniendi ornata verba, is from the point of view of writing on figures a very brief and somewhat elementary work, dealing only with grammatical mutations and some examples of emphasis and periphrasis.[2] Its existence may say something about the development of theoretical writing on composition and on the ars dictaminis, but the presence of all the devices it mentions in letters in the fourteenth-century is sufficient to show that it marks no new departure in the practice of composition, still less the development of a complicated and grandiose literary fashion. One of the points which influenced Jacob in his understanding of the development of a new style was a comment from the introductory and dedicatory letter of Stone's collection written in about 1407. Stone tells Prior John Langrysh, according to Jacob, that he attaches no importance whatever to complaints made by clever young men of more voluble eloquence who presume, in the ingenuity of their literary skill to deride his own efforts. After making a brief quotation, Jacob

[1] JWH Atkins, English Literary Criticism: the medieval phase (Cambridge 1943), 164-5. This work does not reflect the views of most recent writers on the relationship of rhetoric and English literature (on this see below and Murphy in Medieval Rhetoric: a select bibliography) but the critical judgments on rhetoric in Latin composition have not been extensively examined or questioned.

[2] See above p. 189.

described the passage as a 'diverting parody of the new pompous style.'[1] This is not, however, what Stone in fact wrote. He did not suggest that complaints had already been made, but wrote that if at a future time men 'of more fluent eloquence' were to mock him, their mocking would be of no importance.[2] This comment was placed in the context of a piece of permissio: Stone offered his work to Langrysh for his superior criticism (as he did in several other letters to different recipients) trusting in his friendship rather than in the possible criticisms of hostile men 'arrogantly presuming in the curiosity of their literary compositions'. This suppositious reference to the future appearance of 'eloquent men' does not suggest the recognition of a novel contemporary euphuistic rhetoric.[3] In fact, in the evidence examined above, there does not seem to be any marked escalation in the use of rhetorical colours and figures during the fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries. It is possible to find complicated figurative techniques in the early fourteenth-century, in the letters of John Mason for example, just as in the letters of Abbot Whethamstede, or in the university correspondence after 1420. Such differences as do exist cut across chronological boundaries, and they would appear to be best accounted for by the considerations of subject-matter, or of the status of sender and recipient as set out above rather than by the development of a particular fashion within the period. Letter-writers throughout the later middle ages in England were able to draw on doctrines of literary embellishment rooted in grammatical and rhetorical

[1] Jacob, 288.

[2] 'Et si plerique futuris temporibus viri facundioris eloquii, de suorum curiositate dictaminum elacius presumentes, meam simplicitatem satis rudem et indoctam depravando subsannent, forsitan inter altera sic dicentes. Ecce quomodo sue innitens prudencie compilator iners iste, papirum denigrans frustra in vanum laboraverat ydeota dum vento glorie volatilis intumescens talia nullius efficacie[ ]fatoria in unum memoriale pomposum satis inutiliter recollegit, affectans preconiis vane laudis attollit qui in iota minimo nequaquam meruit commendari.' SL, fo 1.

[3] Although Stone was probably unaware of the fact, his remark is however an accurate prophecy of the treatment such writers as himself were to receive from humanist critics, on which more will be said in the concluding chapter.

traditions and a constant of their literary education.[1]

iii

The primary aim of this study of the use of the ars dictaminis and of its prominent correlative stylistic features has been the closer examination of the literary skill detected as required of a number of secretarial officials in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. The chief conclusion is that epistolary skill was widespread despite the fact as evident from the first part of this thesis that secretarial officials were not members of a self-conscious consolidated profession or the exponents of a highly regarded professional expertise. But in matters of style, as in structure, the influence of the literary standards of epistolary composition was of two different kinds. There is a level of dictaminal influence evident in differing degrees but broadly of a muted or occasional kind in a range of technical, notarial and legal documents and non-persuasive correspondence, which may be presumed to have constituted the 'staple diet' of most of the secretarial clerks examined in the first part. This applies to the use of some of the structural rules of the ars dictaminis, though often developed and elaborated, as examined in the previous chapter, and also to the use of certain rhetorical figures, even if not those most obviously to be described as flowery. The most striking use of dictaminal tradition, at least in Latin composition, was however the apparent adoption of the cursus, evident to some degree in routine secretarial documents in episcopal registers and in entries titled appellacio, provocacio, monicio and libellus in John Lydford's book as well as in those headed littera. When Lydford therefore described documents as bona or formalis it is quite likely that he was thinking of rythmical composition.

[1] ER Curtius examines euphuism (described as 'mannerism') in its wider historical and literary context in European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages (London 1953; trans. from orig. German eds Bern 1948), ch. 15 and esp. pp. 273-4.

In these examples it is possible to trace a certain dictaminal influence, but in the more restricted composition of elegant letters of persuasion, the ars dictaminis and its related techniques were of definitive importance. This is primarily evident in terms of the use of the central dictaminal principle of the securing of benevolence, theoretically a task concentrated in the introduction to the letter but potentially extendable throughout. The structure of the letter generally, and more particularly the use of 'exordial' material, biblical, proverbial or common-place quotation were features of the ars dictaminis proper, evident to some degree in the collections examined devoted to letters of persuasion, but also evident in these were the use of the cursus, to a somewhat greater degree than in the non-persuasive documents, and in the use of rhetorical figures, fundamental to medieval literary composition. Even within this category of elegant persuasion however there were differences in the extent to which particular dictaminal techniques were used. A stricter view of the cursus in the curia may well have inhibited the use of too many licences in letters sent there, while special care may have been taken with letters to recipients known to have an interest in literary matters, so at least the university may have been more careful in its cursus when writing to Duke Humfrey. More importantly the use of exordial matter and of flores was clearly conditioned by the relative status of sender and recipient and by the requirements of subject-matter. It is far from clear however that the degree of elaboration depended on personal taste and still less on particular fashion. Abbot Whethamstede may have had particularly extravagant tastes, but it is unlikely that contemporaries would have read his letters to Archbishop Chichele with anything other than approval or have viewed a reply, very properly sub mediocri stilo from an archbishop to an abbot, as a concealed stylistic reproof.[1] So long as the ars dictaminis is viewed simply in terms of its

[1] Jacob, 'Florida.

most extreme manifestations, it will appear to be little more than a curious by-way, a colourful excrudescence. There was a sharper sense than might be imagined however of the appropriate, and greater evidence of flexibility. At the beginning of the first chapter it was asked whether Gilbert Stone's skill was a specialized, and purely decorative element in his professional world, or whether his career presupposed literary values firmly grounded and widely spread within the professional and vocational life of the period. The argument of these chapters has been that with qualifications there is truth in both of these judgements. The ars dictaminis if only in attenuated or hybrid form encouraged a wide sense of correct literary composition, while its particular application in eloquent persuasion was a more specialized if still necessary matter calling for individual skills and allowing for the development of at least modest reputations for eloquent composition.

At the end of the last chapter however it was argued that this literary skill, whatever form it took, was to be understood in the sense of a craft rather than an inspiration, and the evidence examined here would confirm this. In cursus and flores it is again the case that most of these letter-writers are the servants rather than the masters of their art, and as such may be compared unfavourably with writers of an earlier age. Giles Constable has written of the golden age of epistolography in the eleventh and twelfth centuries in which 'individual letters and collections took on a more personal and self-revelatory tone'. The development of the ars dictaminis he sees, however, as the tendency towards formalization:

> It is probable that the growing technical complexity of epistolography was one of the factors contributing to its decline in the thirteenth century. Leters were still written at that time, probably in as great or even greater numbers than before, but their composition was increasingly the work of professional letter-writers, and they lacked the variety and personal quality of the previous age. In the hands of all but a few of the greatest dictatores, epistolary style and content became both degraded and mechanical.[1]

[1] Constable, Letters and Letter Collections, 31-3, 36-7, and also Letters of Peter the Venerable ii. 36-8.

This view on the quality of letter-writing in practice is parallel to the view of a decline and stultification of the ars dictaminis as a theory in the later middle ages as it moved from theoretical vision to 'naked pragmatism'.[1] The evidence presented here for the most part confirms these verdicts. But they may still be in some senses unfair. For the development of the chartistic element within the ars dictaminis, the view that the letter was a document bound by rules (carta) rather than a free statement by an individual (oratio),[2] was in one respect a measure of its success. The elementary nature of the twelfth-century Rationes dictandi, or the treatises of Thomas Sampson and of John de Briggis testify to the importance of the art. It was able to provide 'chartistic' rules for business correspondence. At the same time it enabled writers to introduce albeit to varying degrees the range of literary techniques available to the skilled official who aimed to please and to convince.[3] Theoretical experiment and literary ingenuity were ruled out by the very requirements which made the ars dictaminis so influential, and until expectations changed and the status of the literary official, which was low in later medieval England was transformed, there could be little encouragement given to inspiration.

It is tempting to leave the matter here, to turn to men of superior eloquence, to the humanists who transformed the professional and more particularly the epistolary horizon. But more can and should be said about the consequences of the use of the ars dictaminis. The professional literary skill, examined here, though a craft rather than an inspiration, could still exercise an influence on the wider literary life of the period, both in the sense of works produced by officials and in the sense of a contribution to a wider rhetorical influence which was crucial for the development of English literature.

[1] Murphy, Rhetoric, 210-1, 220-1.
[2] According to Murphy this was 'an inherent unresolved conflict', Rhetoric, 261.
[3] Murphy himself makes this point: ibid. 268.

Part Three

ELOQUENCE, LITERATURE AND HUMANISM

Chapter Six

SECRETARIAL OFFICIALS AND LITERARY WORKS

In the final part of this thesis attention will be paid to the contribution of the professional cultivation of eloquence as examined in previous chapters to the wider literary culture of later medieval England.

Connections between officials and literary activity in this period have been canvassed by a number of earlier writers on secretarial officials and on the ars dictaminis. Tout for example in an article published in 1929 argued that 'an appreciable proportion of fourteenth-century English literature came from the civil servants of the state', by which he meant books written by Englishmen in whichever language they were written. Tout found the explanation for this phenomenon in the education and professional skills of the civil servant which he typified as 'a wide acquaintance with official forms and precedents, the traditions of his office, the corresponding formalities and traditions of foreign courts and offices (and) skill in the art of dictamen or literary composition and form.'[1] Jacob and Denholm-Young in their respective articles on euphuism and the cursus gave more restricted and particular attention to a number of examples of the influence of dictaminal styles on English letters.[2]

In this chapter these observations will be taken up and examined in greater detail, and it will be argued that a number of secretarial officials who utilized their literary skills in compositions which were not directly related to their professional secretarial work, provide evidence which is important to the understanding of the status and nature of literary culture in later medieval England. In the following chapter a rather more difficult

[1] TF Tout, 'Literature and learning in the English civil service in the fourteenth century', Speculum iv (1929) esp. 368.

[2] Jacob, Florida, esp. 265-6; Denholm-Young, 'Cursus in England', esp. 45.

problem will be introduced, namely whether the world of Gilbert Stone and his contemporaries is appropriately extended to include major poets such as Langland, Gower, Chaucer and fifteenth-century Chaucerians notably Hoccleve; and in development of this question whether the professional use of the ars dictaminis constituted any influence on their poetry. In the final chapter there will be some discussion of the relationship of the world of Stone and his fellow officials to that of the humanists which was beginning to be of influence in England in the fifteenth century. The centre of this thesis has been the use and art of letter-writing, and since these present chapters constitute elaborations and developments of the theme, they are intended to be for the most part suggestions for further study. Answers to the questions posed here, however, point even if tentatively, to a wider significance of the cultivation of professional eloquence.

i

The literary works most commonly composed by secretarial officials, issuing more or less directly from their professional work, were largely of an historical kind and so this chapter will be mainly concerned with chronicles and with hagiography as a particular form of historical writing. Before considering such material however, it is worth enquiring whether the works which have provided the main source of evidence in previous chapters and which have been most closely related to the careers and expertise of eloquent secretaries, namely the manifold forms of the letter collection, were viewed by their compilers and owners in anything more than a pragmatic and functional way. The point at issue here may be focussed by quoting Taylor's comparison of letter-writing in later medieval England with the epistolography of the twelfth century:

> By the fourteenth century the great age of medieval epistolography was over. No contemporary Peter of Blois polished up his letters with an eye to publication. There are no letter collections which serve as vehicles of philosophical reflection or literary thought, nor do 'friendship letters' exist such as survive for earlier and later periods of history and which helped to promote the cult of letter writing in those times ... The more personal types of letter

> which had been written in Latin in an earlier century and which might include love letters are no longer found. Letters of spiritual advice are also absent in fourteenth-century England.[1]

It is difficult to be certain about the motives for the compilation of letter collections, because for the most part they were not given an introduction stating the purpose of the collection. In the rare cases where there is such an introduction, the stated purpose is indeed of a purely practical kind which seems to exclude any appreciation of the collection as a pleasing literary and aesthetic whole. So for example the first letter of the Combe abbey formulary (c1340), from Nicholas de W a monk of the abbey to a fellow monk, John de Bredone, describes the collection as comprising customary forms of letters which seem to have been written for the recipient and his fellow monks by Nicholas and which he declared to be collected together in a way designed to be useful and fruitful for them.[2] Likewise Gilbert Stone in his introductory letter to John Langrysh, prior of the Wytham charterhouse, appears to take a purely functional view of his collection. After customary expressions of humility concerning his poor style Stone told Langrysh that among many documents of no value he had managed to find a number of official formulae which he had collected together into a book.[3]

As already proposed in the first chapter of this thesis, however, it is likely that Stone took a higher view of his collection than the modesty formulae or the minimal description of the letters as prothocolla would

[1] Taylor, 'Letters and letter collections', 57, 66.

[2] 'Quasdam usuales litterarum formulas, non solum vestra set quamplurimum confratrum vestrorum devictus instancia sub diversarum rerum materiis, licet stilo rudi, leni tamen et intelligibili, compositas, gratanter vobis mitto, ... Ut igitur huiusmodi operis adoptati fructus et utilitas vobis ceterisque legentibus clarius elucescat, primo loco sanum duxi per ordinem apponere quibus modis scribitur ad prelatos etc..', OF ii. 283; see above, pp. 62-3.

[3] '... inter alia quasi nullius valoris, prothocolla hic et illuc dispersas invenire potueram in hoc modice quantitatis libello insimul recollegi, vestre transmittens amicicie quod promisi.' SL, fo 1.

suggest. A consideration of the relationship of the collection to his employment suggested that Stone viewed the work as a monument to his career as an eloquent secretary; for this reason, so it seems, he made a wide selection of the letters he had written professionally from those on pastoral and diocesan matters to the letters of impetration to the curia and culminating as the climax of his career with the provincial constitution on prayers for the souls of departed bishops which he composed at the request of Archbishop Arundel.[1]

It is scarcely to be imagined that Stone or anyone else made the mistake of thinking the collection to be a major literary work which served as an original vehicle for the intellectual activity of the period. Nevertheless it is interesting to note that Taylor describes the book as an 'ecclesiastical collection with a certain literary flavour.'[2] This literary flavour comes not simply from the fact that the collection contains letters which were designed to exemplify the proper use of the ars dictaminis, since most of the collections examined here would fall into this category, but from the overall construction of the collection which seems to have been dictated by aesthetic considerations rather than by utility or simply by random selection. So, for example, there is a marked difference between Stone's collection and the Combe abbey formulary where the letters were methodically arranged according to the status of the recipients for ease of selection,[3] or say the formulary of the Prophete-Felde circle where much of the content was entered miscellaneously by a number of compilers.[4] Stone ordered his collection according to a number of criteria which in their varied effect

[1] See above pp. 23-4.

[2] Taylor, 63.

[3] 'Ut igitur huiusmodi operis adoptati fructus et utilitas vobis ceterisque legentibus clarius elucescat, primo loco sanum duxi per ordinem apponere quibus modis scribitur ad prelatos et clericos seculares, secundo qualiter ad religiosos, et tercio qualiter invicem scribant cetere persone inferiores.' OF ii. 283.

[4] See above pp. 30-1.

would have made the collection very irritating as a quarry for dictaminal forms, but which can be readily understood as an expression of the desire to make the collection interesting and pleasing to one who was intended to read it through from beginning to end. The book has a rough chronological order, so that Stone's service to his three bishops may be followed in due order, but these letters are often leavened by personal letters or by correspondence undertaken for other friends or patrons, sometimes evidently placed out of chronological order. So the early Salisbury letters, dating from before 1388 are placed beside letters from Richard Clifford concerning the securing of a bishopric which date from c1399.[1] Episcopal letters to quite different types of recipient on different subjects are often put next to one another, as for example a letter from Bishop Clifford soliciting the assistance of a theologian, which is followed by a letter to a Welsh bishop about the sending of some hunting dogs.[2] Stone does however occasionally put a series of letters on the same subject together; thus most of the letters on the dispute between the bishop and chapter of Salisbury come together, presumably so the fortunes of the case can be followed through by the reader.[3] And elsewhere letters are grouped according to theme, for example those on absence from parliament.[4]

It is likely moreover that Stone intended the collection to be not only an aesthetically pleasing piece of work but also to serve as the vehicle for certain moral and religious values which he believed to be inherent in his career and in his friendships. These values are found most often in the pastoral letters of correction sent by his bishops, in his letters of spiritual advice and admonition sent to monks and other friends, and in the remarkable letters of counsel addressed to Bishop Clifford, the

[1] SL, fos 2-7.
[2] Ibid. fos 32-32b.
[3] Ibid. fos 15b-19.
[4] Ibid. fos 25b-27, 37.

prior of Stone and the archbishop of Canterbury. Most of the views contained in these letters are undoubtedly expressions, albeit often eloquent ones, of the conventional spiritual wisdom of the period, although the fact that he felt in a position to write on such matters to such recipients indicates that in his own eyes at least the eloquent expression of his moral and religious convictions was worthy of being heard by the princes of the church, among others, and by extension also by those who read through the collection. These convictions constantly reiterated through the collection are, and were most probably designed to be, the most striking theme to emerge from a reading of the letters. Thus he continually warned about eternal punishment as the just retribution for the sinful life and frequently painted a black picture of the failings of his own youth.[1] Against such a background he set a very high ideal of the bishop and pastor who was required to stand before God with all the souls placed in his custody safe from the ravening wolf.[2] In another letter to Clifford Stone expressed most clearly the view which emerges as the 'message' of his letter collection, namely that the

[1] He wrote for example to John Bathe, a childhood friend: '... tot et tantis meis excessibus inumerabilibus et plus quam millesies mille periculis pereundi animam peccatricem nuper unique circumdantibus ... ac mei senio iam confractum ...' SL fos 21-21b and to Thomas Warylowe canon of Stone priory: 'Transacte namque floride iuventutis mee insolencia ocio nuper dedita, me iam senem multum debilem et ignare reddit nimirum ...' SL fo 20b. His most vivid account of the judgement came in the letter to Henry Bryan: 'Quos sibi accumulabitur inde sue dampnacionis interitum alias eum in conspectu maiestatis divine et omnium sanctorum in illa die tremenda stabit ante thronum iusticie et illud altissimum tribunal terribile totus nudus tam de factis propris quam alterius cuiuscunque cui prius dederat occasionem procandi redditurus finalem, condigna peccati stipendia secundum id quod utrobique demerunt recepturus heu heu pro duplici demerito duplicis incomodo cruciatus, hec est siquidem illa dies magna et amara valde dies calamitatis et miserie dies examinis strictissimi flebilis et horrenda quando iudex summus fortis et terribilis impios interficiet spiritu oris sui ...' SL fos 10b-11.

[2] He wrote in a letter of advice to Clifford: 'Utinam ergo solius dei providencia memorata que vos tantum patrem et pastorem tanto dominici gregis regimini disposuit presidere agenda quecungue vestri pastoralis officii sit ad animarum salutem dirigat et gubernet quod in die novissimo coram pastore summo sic allegare valeatis veraciter et secure' SL fo 33.

whole world, as never before, was falling into evil and that the life of prayer of the religious was the only proper remedy,[1] based on a complete abandonment to the grace of God who came to call sinners to repentance.[2]

Gilbert Stone is apparently unique among the compilers of letter collections in later medieval England. No other, of those examined here, compiled a book composed entirely of their own compositions as a polished literary product designed to be both aesthetically pleasing and edifying. It is possible however that other compilers besides Stone took a pride in their compositions, and where they represented primarily their own work it is possible that like Stone they also saw them as memorials to their secretarial and administrative careers. John Lydford, according to his editor, was neither preparing fine forms for posterity nor preparing a text book of proper ecclesiastical administrative forms, yet she estimates that he took a certain pride in them.[3] In the nature of the evidence such a judgement remains an intuition, but the apparently haphazard arrangement of many collections and the seemingly needless repetition of forms which is occasionally a source of puzzlement and irritation to modern commentators,

[1] 'Et ex alio latere oculata fide perpendo quod sit modernis temporibus quasi totus mundus positus in maligno, cuius fallax prosperitas quotidie multas circumvenit nec dat finaliter quod promittit, si quos hodie mundus ditat, cras sinistrante fortuna depauperat, et qui sperantes diu vivere, omni solicitudinis studio circa lucra temporalia plus laborant, tandem nulla secum laborum suorum premia deferentes, tela vite dum quod huc ordiuntur ex in oppinato succisa subito transeunt vias suas ... Et ulterius quod soli deo et ipsius obsequiis cum omni celeritate possibili devocius solito totaliter iam insistam, cessantibus ab hac hora in antea, aliis occupacionibus quibuscunque. Expedit etenim et oportet.' SL, fo 33.

[2] From the exordium to the provincial constitution: 'Oriens ex alto splendor lucis eterne unigenitus dei filius summe iustus et misericors rigorem legis iusticie volens moderacius mitigari penam perpetua humane generi quondam in tenebris et in umbra mortis habitanti, pro preteritis iuste debitam in temporalem disposuit misericorditer commutari, quamdam viam nondum perfecte bonis seu mediocriter malis limitans mediocrem gloriosam et securam sed asperam minis valde a vestigiis tamen reproborum eminus segregatam ad quam viam mediam fidelis anima quandoque peccatrix in hac vita penitendo veraciter resipiscens ...' SL, fo 41b.

[3] LB, 17.

suggests that the motive of the practical use of the forms occasionally receded somewhat into the background and that letters were copied simply out of appreciation of their construction, or simply because letter collections were established as a conventional literary form so that examples of the genre were multiplied without conscious reference to, or awareness of, any specific utilitarian purpose. If these suggestions are correct, then here too it is the case that Stone is not so much an odd exception among his secretarial contemporaries but as before one in whom we see more consciously and deliberately and perhaps skillfully articulated literary appreciations and religious values that he held in common with them.

ii

In the remainder of this chapter attention will be concentrated on literary works undertaken by secretarial officials which were not directly related to their letter writing activity. Some of course composed technical treatises concerning other aspects of their professional work and some of these have already been mentioned in earlier chapters. An example of such a composition is the Liber Johannis de Schalby ecclesie lincolniensis canonici de episcopis lincolniensis et gestis eorum commonly called the Martilogium, a work primarily concerned with the dispute between the bishop and the chapter of Lincoln in 1312, but which is interestingly cast in the form of a history of the bishops of Lincoln from Remigius to Burghersh.[1] William de Dene, a notary public and archdeacon of Rochester from 1323 to 1359 constructed a history of Rochester from 1314 to 1350; like Schalby's Liber it is concerned with a specific series of events, in this case the election of Hamo de Hethe as bishop.[2] Other miscellaneous examples of

[1] For references to this work see above, pp. 41-3.

[2] Registrum Hamonis Hethe diocesis roffensis, AD 1319-1352, ed C Johnson (2 vols Kent Records iv pts 1 and 2 1914-38). The history can now be found in BL Cotton MS Faust B v, fos 1-101.

technical compilations may be given: Michael de Northburgh, king's secretary and keeper of the privy seal in the 1340s compiled a Concordancia legum et canonum which he described as his magnum opus,[1] John Carpenter, town clerk of London from 1417 constructed in 1419 the Liber albus a great collection of the archives of the city,[2] and it is likely that the author of the famous Modus tenendi parliamentum was a parliamentary clerk; William Ayermine, keeper of the rolls of chancery and later bishop of Norwich, has been proposed as a likely candidate.[3]

Greater interest however attaches here to works in which a potential dictaminal influence was likely to be more marked. There were for example a number of diocesan histories which do not seem to have been primarily concerned with legal matters.[4] Among these some appear definitely to have originated with episcopal secretarial clerks. Two particularly interesting examples in the light of Stone's connections are the Historia minor and the Historia major of Bath and Wells. The first of these ends with the death of Bishop Harewell in 1367, and given its particular concern with Bishop Ralph of Shrewsbury, it was probably written by one of Bishop Ralph's servants.[5]

1 BRUO ii. 1368-70 and Tout, Chapters v. 27-32.

2 T Brewer, Memoir of the Life and Times of John Carpenter (London 1856); Munimenta gildhallae londoniensis: liber albus, liber custumarum et liber Horn, ed HT Riley (Rolls series 1859).

3 Ayermine was keeper of the rolls of chancery 1316-1324 and was clerk of parliament as well; on one occasion he was referred to as the secretary of chancery. His possible authorship of the Modus is discussed in VH Galbraith, 'The Modus tenendi parliamentum', Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes, xvi (1953), 81-100.

4 Edmund de Hadenham for example wrote a history of Rochester from its foundation until 1307; an anonymous monk of Rochester compiled a similar libellus in 1360. An unknown monk of Worcester wrote the Annales of that church from its foundation to 1308; likewise a monk of Ely wrote a continuation of the history of Ely from 1169-1388, which was in turn continued by another monk to 1486. Thomas Stubbs a Dominican probably wrote the history of the archbishops of York to the time of Thoresby and an anonymous of Norwich wrote of that church from 1299 to 1446. See Reg. Hethe, intro. and J Taylor, Medieval Historical Writing in Yorkshire (Borthwick Paper, S Anthony's Hall publication xix 1961).

5 'The Historia minor and Historia major from the Wells Liber albus II', ed TF Palmer, Collectanea i (Somerset Record Society xxxix 1924). The two works may also be found in BL Cotton MS Vitellius E v.

The second work, which is largely but not entirely independent continues down to Bishop Bubwith's translation to Wells in 1408. The writer of the Historia major was warmly attached to the memory of Bishop Ralph Erghum and at the conclusion of the work he claimed to have written out of reverence for Erghum. There seem to be no specific grounds in the work for attributing it to Stone, at least on stylistic grounds, but he certainly had a deep and warm regard for Erghum and could have undertaken the work out of filial piety.[1]

Secretarial clerks and those whose training would at some point have included practice in the ars dictaminis were also responsible for a significant number of the more important histories of the period. In the first half of the fourteenth century a wane in the tradition of monastic historiography has been discerned so that secular clergy and laymen became more important as historians.[2] There were of course still famous monastic historians writing, notably in the partial revival of monastic historiography in the latter part of the fourteenth century and it is interesting to note that Ranulf Higden, monk of the Benedictine abbey of St Werburgh and author of the Polychronicon, was keeper of the monastic library and head of the scriptorium,[3] while Thomas Walsingham of St Albans, author of a history of England to 1392 designed as a continuation to Matthew Paris's Chronica majora, was at an early stage in his career precentor and scriptorarius.[4]

These works appear to be exceptions however to a new rule. The anonymous Vita edwardi secundi has been attributed to John Walwayn, clerk to the earl

[1] There are no apparent stylistic similarities between the work and Stone's letters; the former is composed in a terse cataloguing style, although of course this does not necessarily exclude the possibility of Stone's authorship. There are however other candidates: see for example Thomas Terry, another close friend of the bishop, Overton 'Ralph Erghum', 40-1.

[2] Antonia Gransden, Historical Writing in England ii: c 1307 to the early sixteenth century (London 1982), 2.

[3] Ibid. 43.

[4] Ibid. 152 and CL Kingsford, English Historical Literature in the Fifteenth Century (Oxford 1913), 12-13.

of Hereford and a government legal official in the period 1315-23, and although the attribution is not certain, the fact that the author's sympathies lie so conspicuously with the lower clergy suggest that he may well have held such a position.[1] Adam Murimuth, advocate of the court of arches in 1308, ambassador, and episcopal official in the 1320s and 1330s, was the author of a chronicle which continued the Flores historiarum.[2] Geoffrey le Baker, an Oxfordshire cleric with connections with Osney abbey, Sir Thomas de la More and the Bohun family, compiled two chronicals: a short one from creation to 1326 and a longer and more detailed one from 1303 to 1356.[3] Robert of Avesbury, who described himself as keeper of the registry of the court of Canterbury, compiled a history of the mirabilia gesta of Edward III to 1356 which was primarily a military account.[4] Thomas Favent, a clerk of the diocese of Salisbury, composed a political pamphlet called the Historia mirabilis parliamenti which concerned the merciless parliament of 1388.[5] William de Feriby, a prothonotary of chancery in 1397 and chancellor of Henry prince of Wales, has been credited with the authorship of a discourse on Richard II's fall which was included in a chronicle of the reign of Henry IV[6] and it has been proposed that the author of the account of the rising in 1381, used as part of the Anonimalle Chronicle, was very likely a clerk of the privy seal given the range of information at his disposal.[7] Adam of Usk, who had a particularly turbulent

1 Vita Edwardi Secundi, ed N Denholm Young (Nelson's Medieval Texts 1957), pp. xix-xxv; but cf Gransden, 31-32.

2 Ibid. 3, 30; BRUO ii. 1329-30.

3 Gransden, 37-38.

4 Adae Murimuth continuatio chronicarum. Robertus de Avesbury de gestis mirabilibus regis Edwardi tertii ed EM Thompson (Rolls series 1889), pp. xxii, 279-471.

5 Gransden, 185.

6 BRUO ii. 678-9; Kingsford, 25.

7 The Anonimalle Chronicle, 1333-1381, ed VH Galbraith (Manchester 1927), pp. xli-xliii; Gransden, 166-7.

career which included a time as chaplain and auditor in the papal court until 1405 and as an official in the court of the archbishop of Canterbury from 1411, was the author of a chronicle which has been described as the only one of any literary merit in the period.[1] From the same period the author of the anonymous Gesta Henrici Quinti has been identified as a royal chaplain with a good knowledge of the routine conduct of governmental business: he records for example the appointment of a keeper of the privy seal, mentions two stewards of the royal household and refers the reader for the text of documents to an official collection of records and to the archives of the archbishop of Canterbury.[2] Two further notable official histories were the Chronicle of the Rebellion in Lincolnshire, which was probably connected with the privy seal office, since there are detailed references to the king's correspondence and the History of the Arrival in England of Edward IV, which cannot be connected with any particular office, but in which the author described himself as 'a servant of the king's, that presently saw in effect a great part of his exploits, and the residue knew by the true relation of them that were present at every time.'[3]

In addition to all these, two of the most significant Latin writers of the period, Richard de Bury in the fourteenth century, the author of the Philobiblon and Abbot John Whethamstede in the fifteenth century, the author of encyclopaedias and histories, have some claim to be included in this list, for though neither were secretarial officials throughout their careers, they have provided important evidence about the use of the ars dictaminis.[4]

Apart from these, in this list of histories the authors were all clerks of one form or another, although the extent of their professional use of the ars dictaminis would also have varied in all probability depending on the

[1] BRUO iii. 1937-8; Kingsford, 32-5, 43 and Gransden, 175-7.

[2] Ibid. 195-9.

[3] Ibid. 261.

[4] N Denholm-Young, 'Richard de Bury (1287-1345)', Transactions of the Royal Historical Society (4th ser. xx 1937); Jacob, Florida.

element of secretarial work in their careers. The most obvious influence of their professions on their historical writing is in those cases such as the Gesta Henrici Quinti where their office gave authors access to particular sources. And it is possible that it was this access which prompted them, or which prompted others, to ask them to undertake the work. It is also possible however that the ability to write well was a motive.

Once again Gilbert Stone provides more definite evidence of what may only be surmised elsewhere. He did not write histories, unless he was the author of the Historia major of Bath and Wells, but he did apparently undertake the writing of hagiographies for different patrons. There is information about two martyrs' passions that he wrote. One of these was a hagiography of St Wulfhad, a seventh-century saint allegedly murdered by his apostate father, the Mercian King Wulfhere. Stone's passion no longer survives,[1] but a brief description of the work can be found in a letter in Stone's collection which he originally sent to the prior and canons of Stone priory. They had apparently first commissioned an account of the saint since he was their patron, and having completed it Stone sent it to them with a covering letter, apologizing for its rough composition but consoling himself with the thought that they would now be able to celebrate the feast of their patron in the proper way. He told the monks that he saw Wulfhad

[1] There is no reliable account of St Wulfhad; most narratives treat him together with his brother St Ruffin, although Stone concentrates on Wulfhad. According to the legend the brothers were put to death by their apostate father because they had accepted baptism from St Chad. The passions are all of a late date; there is a Latin account, perhaps of the twelfth century, now in BL Add MS 39758 which originally belonged to Peterborough abbey. It has been critically edited in Acta Sanctorum for 24 July (see GRC Davis, Medieval Cartularies of Great Britain: a short catalogue (London 1958), 87). There is also a mid fourteenth century passion now BL Lansdowne MS 436 where it is included with a number of other hagiographies: see P Grosjean, in Analecta Bollandiana lvi, 334-360. This work adds details on the canonisation of the saints and on the foundation of the priory which are not found in the earlier manuscript. It is too early to be connected with Gilbert Stone and it treats of the two martyrs where Stone only seems to have written about Wulfhad. Stone may however be more reliably connected with a fifteenth century English life; on this see further below.

among the several holy martyrs of the church such as St Thomas of Canterbury and he commented that he had tried to bring together several conflicting authorities but that a great deal was difficult to reconcile.[1] Although Stone's passion has not survived there is an English account from Stone priory in the early fifteenth century which is probably derived from it.[2]

Stone may also be associated more indirectly with another hagiography. In 1636 Richard James, a protestant divine, in a poem entitled Iter

[1] 'Dierum acta presencium ideo litterarum memorie frequencius commendant, ne fortassis labente processu tempore futurorum sub oblivionis umbraculo preterita delitescant, quorum expediret aliquando memoriter reminisci. Et pro tanto ad futuram rei memoriam certis ex causis me ad hoc moventibus inserere hic feceram hunc epistolam infrascriptam. Reverenda dilectissimi mei nondum transacto diuturni temporis intervallo, quorumdam confratrum vestrorum devotis precibus excitatus ad honorem dei et sui sanctissimi martiris Wolfhadi patroni vestri quoddam historice commemoracionis obsequium speciale taliter qualiter conceperam rudi modo quod in presenti conscriptum volumino pariter et notatum. Inter vos de tanto patrono vestro hactenus sic didice propriam historiam non habentes a modo annis singulis in festinitate eiusdem patroni vestri solemniter celebrandum si et quatenus deo placens et vobis expediens videatur sincere devocionis affectu vobis per presencium portitorem transmitto verunque inter ceteras santorum martirum commemoraciones que in ecclesia dei hodie solemniter celebrantur mihi videtur historia gloriosi martiris Thome Cantuariensis multum commendabilis et devota. Idcirco vires diligencius interposui ut immediatis et nota concordarent aliqualiter hec et illuc, verumptamen in ea parte longa et lata est differencia prout ineffabiliter ...' Here the letter breaks off abruptly as the following folio is missing from the manuscript. SL fos 1b-2.

[2] Now BL Cotton MS Nero C xii, fos 182-88. It is entitled: 'The Legend of St Wolfarde and Ruffyn'. According to GH Gerould the legend is very roughly fashioned in fifteenth century alliterative verse and has neither literary pretensions nor literary merit. It was designed to be written on a plaque and placed on the epistle side of the wall in the quire of the priory church, thus informing all who visited the priory of its patron saint; GH Gerould, 'The legend of St Wulfhad and St Ruffin at Stone priory', Publications of the Modern Language Association xxxii (1916), 323-37. The date of this work together with its place of origin suggests a connection between Stone's passion and this English work likely; Stone probably composed his work at some point between about 1395 and 1405, then around 1420 an English poem appears in the priory. It is reasonable to assume that Stone's work was the direct source for the poem. Besides relating the martyrdom of the saint the English poem concentrates on Wulfhad's burial in the priory and on the efforts of the canons at Stone to secure his canonisation. The poem (despite Gerould's title) treats only Wulfhad as a saint, while Ruffin is described simply as his brother; as already noted Stone apparently did the same.

lancastrense added a marginal annotation to the part of his poem dealing with a holy well near Flint Castle in which he wrote:

> Gilbert de Stone, being for the time a trimme man of his penne was sollicited by the monks there to write their founder's or Saint's; when he required summe memories of him, they had none at all. Wherefore in a letter of his, he says tis no matter, for he would write them notwithstanding a fine legend after the manner of Thomas of Canterburye.[1]

This letter does not seem to have survived, so it is not possible to say how accurately Stone has been represented by James (the reference is designed to lead up to the conclusion: 'and certainly moste legendes are written after the manner of Gilbert') but the brief mention does suggest that Stone's passion of St Wulfhad was not an isolated example.

The chief point of interest in these references to Stone's hagiographies is the evidence that his skills as a writer were sought out by these monastic patrons. Just as Prior John Langrysh and Archbishop Thomas Arundel sought his assistance in the drafting of letters on account of his reputation as an elegant writer, so these religious houses sought his assistance in the writing of the lives of their patron saints. This suggests that in the case of Stone, and of those for whom the same process may be imagined, professional secretarial work led to the development of skills of literary composition which flowed over from their professional activity into further literary undertakings.

The truth of this conclusion is best tested by a consideration (so far as this is possible) of the extent to which the forms of the ars dictaminis as variously employed in letter composition provided useful literary techniques for those engaged in the sort of work under examination in this chapter.

[1] Iter Lancastrense: a poem by the Revd Richard James, ed T Corser (Chetham Society 1845). The letter referred to may have been on the folio now missing from Bodl. MS 859. The monastery referred to, near St Winifred's well and beyond Flint Castle was presumably Basingwerk abbey; it is not clear to which saint James's remark refers. See A Jones, 'Basingwerk Abbey' in JG Edwards, VH Galbraith and EF Jacob (eds) Historical Essays in honour of James Tait (Manchester 1933), 169-70.

In his article on the use of the cursus in England Denholm-Young noted its extension beyond the composition of letters in the Latin literature of the fourteenth century: among chroniclers he particularly mentions the canon of Bridlington and Adam Murimuth as well as giving detailed attention to its use in the Philobiblon of Richard de Bury.[1] Of the chroniclers mentioned above two, Ranulph Higden and Geoffrey le Baker, do not seem to have made very significant use of cursus,[2] but it occurs more frequently in some other writers. A sample from the opening paragraphs of Thomas Favent's history of the Merciless parliament, suggests that he had about 60% cursus endings, the figure taken above as the minimum for deliberate usage and just over half of these were velox endings. A much lower figure however is evident from the closing paragraphs of the work.[3] The author of the Vita Edwardi Secundi had 68% of cursus in the opening pages of his work. The distribution of cursus in his work is interesting since it does not seem to demonstrate the customary overwhelming preponderance of velox among English writers with a secretarial training: there are 20 velox endings compared to 23 tardus, 15 planus and 10 medius.[4] Adam of Usk likewise began with a high percentage of 72% of which more than half were velox, but then in his case the percentage also seems to have declined in later parts of the work, at least such is the evidence of two subsequent samples.[5] The most interesting figure to emerge from a brief survey of the use of cursus is however in the Gesta Henrici Quinti, where in the first

[1] Denholm-Young, 'Cursus in England', 45.

[2] A sample of chapters 19-24 of book 7 of the Polychronicon gives just under 50% cursus: Polychronicon Ranulphi Higden monachi cestrensis, ed JR Luard (9 vols Rolls Series 1865-86) viii. The same figure comes from the opening of Baker's chronicle: Chronicon Galridi le Baker de Swyneboke, ed Edward Maunde Thompson (Oxford 1889).

[3] This figure is derived from the first four paragraphs of the work, 'Historia sive narracio de modo et forma mirabilis parliamenti ... per Thomam Favent clericum indictata', ed May McKisack, Camden Miscellany xiv (Camden Society 3rd ser. xxxvii 1926).

[4] Vita, sentence endings on pp. 1-13.

[5] Chronicon Adae de Usk AD 1377-1421, ed Edward Maunde Thompson (London 1904), sentence endings on pp. 1-15, 105ff, 117ff.

four chapters there is evidence of 84% of cursus; indeed all the sentences in the third and fourth chapters have cursus endings. Of these velox forms account for three-quarters of the total.[1] The fact that there are such a large number of cursus endings and such a preponderance of velox adds further weight to the suggestion that he was connected to one of the secretarial offices of government.

Besides looking for signs of prose rhythm it is worth considering the possible use of flores and exordial material, for though it would not be strictly necessary to be acquainted with the ars dictaminis to have access to such literary devices, it is likely that in so far as these chroniclers required an element of secretarial training for their professions, this training would have familiarized them with rhetorical devices for the embellishment of their prose style. The author of the Vita Edwardi Secundi is a good example of a chronicler who made good use of the Bible to assist his moralizing on the ills of the time and Gransden notes his partiality for aphorisms such as the statement that 'the love of magnates is a game of dice and the desires of the rich like feathers.' In a particularly impressive passage he warns Thomas of Lancaster of the perils of treachery, calling to his mind the examples of Joab, who despite his brave deeds lost his reputation because of his treachery to Abner and Amasa, Philotas, a soldier of Alexander the Great who was condemned as a traitor, Aeneas who was sentenced for betraying Troy and in more recent times Thomas Turberville who betrayed England to France and the earl of Atholl, Simon Frazer and William Wallace who were all executed as traitors.[2] Gransden also notes that Thomas Walsingham had a particular gift for the recording of contemporary events in colourful prose, such as the coronation of Richard II, Sir John Arundel's shipwreck and Bishop Despencer's crusade which is described

[1] Gesta Henrici Quinti, ed Frank Taylor and John S Roskell (Oxford 1975).
[2] Gransden, 33-4.

with reference to Horace's letters and the complaint of the children of Israel in Exodus 16:3.[1] Thomas Favent particularly enjoyed the use of rhetorical colours and literary allusions in his small pamphlet. Like the Vita Edwardi Secundi, it was composed to fulfil a moralistic function and it included numerous biblical references. Favent compared the three appellants hyperbolically to the three persons of the Trinity, claiming that they were inspired by the Lord to lead the realm into the way of peace. The purge of the government carried out by the appellants was compared to the eradication of thistles, thorns and tares, as well as to the sudden destruction of a squalid nest in a tree which put the badly injured birds to flight.[2] Favent also had a partiality for complex grammatical constructions such as 'nullam aut nullum occasionem vel vultum dantes resistendi ...' which included the scheme of paranomasia, the conjunction of words with the same stem, and he made frequent use of the trope of hyperbaton, the overturning of word order as in the phrases: 'sub clandestino taciturnitatis latibulo' and the pleasing 'barbam habens rigidam et robustam.'[3]

These chronicles, like the letters of the period, were composed in a variety of styles, and not all of them exemplify a rich euphuistic rhetoric. In the examples given above however there are some indications of the wider literary influence of the ars dictaminis, which resulted from the fact that an appreciable proportion of at least the histories of the period were composed by officials skilled in the art of eloquent persuasion. It remains to be seen whether the same may be said of the more renowned vernacular poets of the period.

1 Ibid. 152.
2 Ibid. 185.
3 'Historia' ed McKisack, passim.

Chapter Seven

POETS AND THE ARS DICTAMINIS

In this chapter there will be an examination of the possible influence of the ars dictaminis as practically employed on Middle English poetry in its period of greatness during the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries. This approach will for the most part sidestep the fraught question concerning Chaucer's and other poets' knowledge and use of major rhetorical treatises and traditions of an earlier period.[1] There is no intention to suggest that this problem which has greatly exercised students of rhetoric and English literature is after all an unimportant or misguided one, but rather to see in what possible ways the debate may be supplemented by an appreciation of the contribution of the applied ars dictaminis as studied in previous chapters to the literary culture which helped to condition the modes of expression used by poets just as much as by the writers already examined.

The method used in the previous chapter will again be employed here; there will first be an attempt to show that professionally most of the poets of the period either worked in, or had some close contact at some stage with, the secretarial and administrative world to which Stone and his fellow writers examined above belonged. The possible connections between professionally acquired skills of literary composition and poetic forms and styles will then be evaluated.

It is possible that all the four major poets active in the late fourteenth century as well as some of the minor ones had administrative careers of one type or another. Geoffrey Chaucer's profession as 'civil servant' is well established, and cases have been made, if with less certainty, for

[1] For a bibliographical and critical introduction to this subject see RO Payne, 'Chaucer and the art of rhetoric', B Rowland (ed.) Companion to Chaucer Studies (rev. edn Oxford 1979).

the involvement in or training for some clerical or administrative work of John Gower, William Langland and the anonymous Gawain poet.

Chaucer's career began in 1357 as a page in the service of the earl and countess of Ulster; he progressed to service as a valettus and later esquire in the household of Edward III and from 1374 he also maintained a connection in the household of John of Gaunt. As king's esquire he was employed on several occasions in foreign embassies. His main administrative positions were as controller in the port of London from 1374 to 1386, justice of the peace for Kent from 1385 to 1389 and clerk of the works from 1389 to 1391. He sat in parliament as a knight of the shire in 1386.[1] Some of these offices may have involved a certain amount of secretarial work: it has been suggested for example that Chaucer was the secretary for many of his foreign missions since he was frequently of lower rank than those he accompanied.[2]

John Gower's career in comparison with what we know of Chaucer's is poorly documented. His latest biographer has however estimated that before he settled at St Mary Overeys priory in the 1370s he held some legal or civil office.[3] This judgement is based on certain verses in the Mirour de l'omme:

> ... I am not a clerk,
> clothed in red or in purple,
> but I wear a garment with striped sleeves,
> I know little French or Latin.[4]

If this is the case then Gower's strictures on the legal profession come from an outraged member of the fraternity rather than an outsider.

[1] AC Baugh, 'Chaucer the man', Companion to Chaucer Studies; and see also the extensive collection of documents edited and annotated in Chaucer Life-Records, ed Martin M Crow and Clair C Olson (Oxford 1966).

[2] This suggestion is made in Gervase Mathew, The Court of Richard II (London 1968), 62; for lists of those on the embassies see Life-Records, 29-66.

[3] JH Fisher, John Gower: moral philosopher and friend of Chaucer (London 1965), 54-9.

[4] Ibid.

Confirmation for this suggestion has been sought in the poet's apparent familiarity with the training of a lawyer.[1]

The same kind of argument as this last one has also been used to argue that William Langland may have had some kind of legal training and even an official career; the charter for the marriage of False and Mede (Passus II, c.1.70) begins 'Sciant futures et presenti ...' and follows the form of a legal charter in each of its formal divisions. Besides this example there are many references throughout the poem to legal terminology and to specific kinds of legal document.[2]

In the case of the Gawain poet some attempts to discover his identity have been built on the premise that he was a household official; it has been suggested for example that he was a west midland clerk in the household of John of Gaunt. An attempt to be more specific and identify the Gawain poet as a Hugh or John Massey, a rhetorician in the household of John of Lancaster duke of Bedford, does not seem to have been successful.[3]

Among some of the lesser poets of the Ricardian period there is evidence at least as strong, and stronger in some cases for secretarial and administrative careers. Thomas Usk is a good example; he was secretary to John de Northampton mayor of London from 1381-1383. He has been described as conscious member of the new literary movement and he was the author of a prose work The Testament of Love originally thought to have been part of the Chaucer canon.[4] George Ashby is also worthy of mention among the later Chaucerians. He was a clerk of the signet and was the author of two moralistic

[1] Ibid. 57.

[2] See The Vision of William concerning Piers the Plowman, ed WW Skeat (2 vols Oxford 1886), p. xxxvi. I am grateful to both James Simpson and Hugh White for suggesting the possible inclusion of Langland here and for supplying references.

[3] See MJ Bennett, 'Sir Gawain and the Green Knight and the literary achievement of the north-west midlands: the historical background', Journal of Medieval History v pt 1 (1979), 66-7.

[4] Mathew, Court of Richard II, 54-5; A Book of London English, ed Chambers and Daunt, 18-31.

poems A Prisoner's Reflections and the Dicta philosophorum besides a work entitled The Active Policy of a Prince which marks him as the only notable writer of political verse in the fifteenth century besides John Lydgate.[1]

Undoubtedly the best and most significant example however is Thomas Hoccleve whose career as a privy seal clerk and author of perhaps the most useful office formulary has already been examined. He was active as a poet between 1402 and 1422 and he therefore provides the most definite evidence about what was likely to be held in common between the literary styles and techniques of a government office and verse composition and about the possible influence of the first on the second.[2]

In the light of such evidence it is possible to see that literary figures as has been claimed clustered in a circle about the inns of court, chancery and the guildhall which reached out into the staple and the custom house. The evidence of the 'court of good company', the literary dining club which met in the early years of the fifteenth century and included Hoccleve among its members, suggests that this could be a conscious literary fraternity.[3]

It is tempting to argue in the light of these connections that the same conclusions may be drawn about Chaucer and his fellow poets as were drawn in the previous chapter about Stone and some of the Latin historians of the period. The only difference would then be the unsurprising one that since most of the poets worked in lay households or in the offices of civic and royal government where French or English was used they wrote in the vernacular, whereas the historians who worked mainly in episcopal chanceries or in

[1] D Pearsall, 'The English Chaucerians', in DS Brewer (ed.) Chaucer and Chaucerians (Edinburgh 1966), 237; VJ Scattergood, Politics and Poetry in the Fifteenth Century (London 1971), 17.

[2] See above, pp. 99-101 and Selections from Hoccleve, ed MC Seymour (Oxford 1981) pp. xi-xxxiii and J Mitchell, Thomas Hoccleve: a study in early fifteenth-century English poetic (Illinois 1968).

[3] See Fisher, John Gower, 63 and for the reference to the dining club, Tout, 'Literature and learning', 388.

monasteries where Latin was still extensively used wrote their works for the most part in Latin.

It would be premature however to draw this conclusion. For in the case of Gilbert Stone at least it was argued that his literary activity, the writing of hagiographies, issued from his professional work. In his case there was a very strong and direct link between his secretarial career, his reputation for eloquence and his being asked to write certain hagiographies. But it was not clear that there was so direct a relationship for all those who undertook the writing of Latin histories, and although it might be imagined that Hoccleve for example made a more or less conscious decision to use his skills developed in the privy seal office to help him to supplement his income by petitioning patrons in verse, a similar strategy can hardly be imagined for say Chaucer, Gower or Langland. Indeed while the evidence cited above may have shown that they belonged or could have belonged to the same administrative world understood in rather a broad sense, it is far from clear to what extent these could be said to have had careers which involved them in the use of professional eloquence in the sense maintained here. Chaucer may have been an administrator and civil servant of sorts, but there is no hard evidence that he was involved in anything more than mundane clerical work: the enrolment of letters patent appointing him controller of the wool custom and wool subsidy in the port of London particularly mentioned that he was to write the rolls with his own hand and as clerk of the works he performed a number of administrative duties mainly involving accounting.[1] It is hardly surprising that some scholars have sought a sharp divide between the professional and the poetical Chaucer, So J Winny writes:

> Chaucer was a poet of such outstanding talent that his professional career interests us only as a foil to his still greater achievement as a writer. The task of reconciling these two aspects of the man, each demanding qualities at odds with the nature of the other, presents difficulties which Chaucer himself seems to have acknowledged ... Because the poet and the professional man are dissociated so completely, it is useless to expect Chaucer's poetry to

[1] Life-Records, 149-151.

> illuminate his biography ... While his professional self was superintending the business of the custom house or negotiating with Genoese merchants, Chaucer's imagination was exploring the Garden of Love under the guidance of Africanus, or being carried by the Eagle through the upper air towards the House of Fame. The two *personae* have no opportunity of meeting, much less of combining as a single individuality.[1]

It is possible to see however that ideas of a sharp divide such as that suggested by Winny, while they may have a certain *prima facie* appeal, are in fact wide of the mark. The complete disjunction between human experience and poetry which is basic to the argument would be opposed by many critics.[2] Of more specific relevance to the present argument is the fact that, as the evidence of Thomas Sampson and the schools of the Oxford *dictatores* cited above indicates, some of the most technical instruction on accounting and the *ars notaria* was not necessarily to be sharply distinguished from dictaminal instruction.[3] To be sure there is a far more distant relationship between the forms of professional work and poetic discourse in say Chaucer than in a minor figure like Stone. For those who followed careers which were more administrative or legal than secretarial, it is still likely that there was a literary element in their professional education which would have included some *ars dictaminis* and related rhetorical material.[4]

Having proposed a possible connection between the *ars dictaminis* and the forms and styles of poetic discourse, it is necessary now to examine some potential examples of literary influence. These are however intended to constitute only a broad opening survey. As has already been noted in dealing with letter writing in French and English, it is not necessarily a

1 M Hussey, AC Spearing and J Winny, *An Introduction to Chaucer* (Cambridge 1965), 14-15.

2 For the eloquent expression of a different point of view (although dealing with a more general life-poetry distinction and concerned with inspiration rather than craft) see FRH DuBoulay, 'The Historical Chaucer', Derek Brewer (ed.) *Geoffrey Chaucer* (London 1974), esp. 55-7.

3 See above pp. 116-7 and *passim*.

4 In addition to the evidence of the Oxford business schools see N Orme, *The Schools of Medieval England* (London 1973), 87, 100, 102.

straightforward task to translate the rules for Latin letter writing into the vernacular and this is clearly a subject that calls for further study. Nevertheless within certain boundaries which will become apparent as the analysis proceeds it is possible to make certain introductory connections.

Chaucer scholars have for example attributed certain very specific parts of his work to the dictaminal tradition, notably with regard to his verse epistles. Chaucer incorporated two letters in book 5 of Troilus and Criseyde (lines 1317-1422 and 1590-1631 as well as an allusion to a letter in book 2, lines 1005-8, 1062-85), an heroic epistle of sorts embodied in the Legend of Good Women, lines 1670-77, and the Envoi a Scogan and a Bukton.[1] Of these the first reference to the litera Troili has been particularly seen as mirroring the conventions of ordinary letter writing of the time in English. Davis has shown that while influenced by the similar letter in the versions of Boaccaccio and Beauvau, it had 'original subtlety and force'. So for example Chaucer's letter opens 'Richt fresshe flour'; the 'right while found neither in the Italian nor the French, is the most common beginning for an English letter among those surviving and is thus fairly assumed to be a formula immediately familiar to the poet's readers.[2] Such conventions are not however so obvious in the litera Criseydis except perhaps for the closing 'And fareth now wel, God have yow in his grace' (line 1631), nor in Troilus's first letter apart from 'in ful humble wise He gan hym recommaunde unto hire grace' (lines 1069-70).[3] These letters set the tone for a number of amatory verse epistles in the fifteenth century and indeed the love epistle has been described as the 'main

[1] J Norton-Smith, 'Chaucer's epistolary style', R Fowler (ed.) Essays on Style and Language (London 1966), 157.

[2] Davis, 'Litera Troili', Review of English Studies, 233-44; the formulas of the letter are here linked with actual practice and it is suggested that they compare better to the French rather than to the Latin dictaminal traditions.

[3] Ibid. 240.

conventional form during the fifteenth century'.[1]

The variation in some of these letters may be explained by the fact that as noted in chapter four,[2] various forms of salutation, sometimes very minimal ones, are to be found in surviving letters. Some of the most interesting forms of address from the present point of view are to be found in Hoccleve's poems. He included a letter to Prince Henry in the Regiment of Princes which begins with a salutation:

> Hye noble and myȝtty Prince excellent,
> My lord the Prince, o my lord gracious,
> I, humble servant and obedient
> Vnto ȝour estate hye and glorious
> Of whyche I am ful tendre and ful gelous,
> Me recommaunde vnto ȝoure worthynesse
> Wyth herte entere and spirit of meeknesse
> (lines 2017-2033).[2]

Perhaps more significant than this however is the fact that some of Hoccleve's balades, which were not cast explicitly in the form of letters, nevertheless because they were addressed to specific individuals contain introductory phrases as similar to a salutation as this example from the Regiment of Princes. This applies to at least six of the nine balades in Seymour's edition of the poems. One of the Balades to Sir Henry Somer begins 'Worshipful sire, and our freend special', the Balade to John duke of Bedford opens

> Vnto the rial egles excellence
> I, humble clerc, with al hertes humblesse

while two of the Balades to King Henry V open in familiar ways

> Victorious kyng, our lord ful gracious,
> We humble ligemen to your hynesse ...
>
> To yow, welle of honur and worthynesse,
> Our right Christen kyng ...

[1] RH Robbins, Secular Lyrics of the XIVth and XVth Centuries (Oxford 2nd edn 1955), 286; idem, 'Two middle English satiric love epistles', Modern Language Review xxxvii (1942); AK Moore, 'Middle English verse epistles', ibid. xliv (1949); Davis, 'Litera Troili', 240; Norton-Smith, 'Epistolary style', 159.

[2] This and the following quotations are taken from Selections, ed Seymour.

It is interesting to note that in these forms of address, while Hoccleve has used the second person salutation observed to be particularly common in vernacular letter-writing in chapter four, he has contrived to follow the injunction, which would certainly have been familiar to him from his work in the privy seal office, to place the name of a recipient of higher status first. The contrast in tone and structure is marked between these openings and the beginning of his Balade to Master John Carpenter:

> See heer, my maistre Carpenter, I yow preye ...

Hoccleve did not however open all his poems in this way; so for example in one of the Balades to King Henry V and in the Balade to Edward duke of York he employed variations on the 'Go little book' form of address:

> O litil book, who yaf thee hardynesse ...
>
> Go, litil pamfilet, and stright thee dresse ...

It is noteworthy however that in these cases, even though there is not a salutation, there follows, as indeed is also the case in those poems which do have a salutation, an introductory section which owes much to the use of the exordium in letters, or at least to the clause or set of clauses variously described in one of the manuscripts of the Oxford dictatores as the motiva, the regracio or the status affectus.[1] Certainly the poem to Edward duke of York continues with commendatory phrases with which very many letters began:

> ... Vnto the noble rootid gentillesse
> Of the myghty prince of famous honour,
> My gracious lord of York, to whos noblesse
> Me recommande with hertes humblesse ...

The letter to Prince Henry included in the Regiment and quoted above likewise has a commendatory form of exordium. The first of the Balades to King Henry V and the Balade to John duke of Bedford both contain exordial phrases which could be described as an excusacio, a humility formula which as already established was common in letters as for example in those of Stone;

[1] See above pp. 134-6.

so Hoccleve wrote:

> O litil book, who yaf thee hardynesse
> Thy wordes to pronounce in the presence
> Of kynges ympe and princes worthynesse,
> Syn thow al nakid art of eloquence?

and

> ... This book presente, and of your reuerence
> Byseeche I pardoun and foryeuenesse
> Þat of myn ignorance and lewdenesse
> Nat haue I write it in so goodly wyse
> As Þat me oghte vnto your worthynesse.

In another poem addressed to Henry V, Hoccleve included a phrase which could be aptly described as a motiva:

> ... We humble ligemen to your hynesse
> Meekly byseechen yow, o kyng pitous,
> Tendre pitee haue on our sharp distresse.
> For but the flood of your rial largesse
> Flowe vpon us, gold hath vs in swich hate
> Þat of his loue and cheertee the scantnesse
> Wole arte vs three to trotte vnto Newgate.

In the last two Balades to King Henry V the introductory phrases resemble the prayers for the well being of the recipient which were also a common form of exordium in letters:

> And to yow, lordes of the garter, flour
> Of chiualrie as men yow clepe and calle,
> The lord of vertu and of grace auctour
> Graunte the fruyt of your loos nat appalle.

and

> The Kyng of kynges regnyng ouer al
> Which stablisshid hath in eternitee
> His hy might, Þat nat varie he may ne shal,
> So constant is his blisful deitee,
> My lige lord, this grace yow graunte he,
> That your estaat rial, which Þat this day
> Haath maad me lige to your souereyntee,
> In reule vertuous continue may.

These examples show that Hoccleve and perhaps others to a more limited extent borrowed quite directly from the conventions and practices of contemporary ars dictaminis with which they were familiar. Hoccleve was no doubt encouraged in the making of this transfer, either consciously or unconsciously, by the fact that many of his Balades were requests for money and so called

for the same art of eloquent and appropriate persuasion as was required for the composition of many letters. It is likely therefore that the strong influence of ars dictaminis in the way outlined above will be found in those poems which deliberately used an epistolary form, or else which shared basic motives of composition with the letter.

Dictaminal influence however is not only restricted to these very specific examples; there are indications that some of the stylistic techniques associated with the ars dictaminis, even if not all unique to it, helped to shape the style of vernacular verse and prose.

Some have suggested for example that evidence of the use of cursus is to be found in some vernacular prose works, notably by Chaucer and Thomas Usk. Chaucer's Tale of Melibee in the Canterbury Tales seems to have been written with rhythmical effects and these may also have been used in the scientific works and in the Parson's Tale. Cursus has also been detected in Chaucer's translation of Boethius's De consolatione philosophiae. Thomas Usk's prose, which was mannered to a far greater extent than Chaucer's, was similarly rhythmical.[1] On one occasion Chaucer in fact make a direct reference to the use of rhythm: the eagle says to him:

> And never-the-lesse hast set thy wyt -
> Although that in thy hed ful lyte is -
> To make bookys, songes, dytees,
> In ryme, or els in cadence,
> As thou best canst ...
>
> (book 2 lines 620-4)

but the meaning of cadence is not made more explicit here, so it has been much debated whether it is intended to include prose rhythm and cursus.[2]

Indeed the use of cursus has been disputed in one work, the anonymous fourteenth-century prose work A Talkyng of ȝe Love of God, in such a way

[1] M Schlauch, 'The art of Chaucer's prose' in Brewer (ed.) Chaucer and Chaucerians, 140-63, and see further bibliographical references there.

[2] DS Brewer, 'The relationship of Chaucer to the English and European traditions', ibid. 37; PF Baum, Chaucer's Verse (North Carolina 1961), 5ff.

that the use of cursus in other middle English works is put into doubt. In the introduction to one version of the treatise it is said:

> Men schal fynden lihtliche þis tretys in Cadence. After þe bigynninge ȝif hit beo riht poynted & Rymed in sum stude. To beo more lovesum to hem þat hit reden.

Here too there has been disagreement over the use of the term 'cadence'. Some have argued that it refers to an imitation of cursus, but LK Smedick has shown that at the most generous estimate only about 44% of the endings of the treatise may be scanned as cursus endings. This is of course too low a percentage to support the arguments for its use,[1] and has been taken as support for the views of Sherman M Kuhn who argued not only that 'the so-called cursus in old English literature is nothing more than a natural part of the rhythm of the language', but that such a conclusion might also be reached for middle English.[2] It is possible that such analyses may be extended to such writers as Chaucer and Usk. It is notable for example that in the brief sample passage from the Testament of Love, quoted by Margaret Schlauch, four of the seven cursus endings have to be marked as questionable.[3]

It would be overhasty however to assume that the rhythms used by these writers, hitherto described as cursus, are simply 'part of the natural rhythm of the language'. Both Chaucer and the author of A Talkyng of þe Love of God after all make explicit references to 'cadence', which shows that they did use some form of deliberate rhythmical device. And even if they did use some form of deliberate rhythmical device. And even if they did not use directly or in toto a system which was intended for composition in Latin, and which therefore presupposed a language with a large number of

[1] LK Smedick, 'Cursus in middle English: A Talkyng of þe Love of God reconsidered', Mediaeval Studies xxxvii (1975), 387-403.

[2] SM Kuhn, 'Cursus in old English: rhetorical ornament or linguistic phenomenon?', Speculum xlvii (1972), 188-206.

[3] Schlauch, 'Chaucer's prose', 161.

similarly inflected trisyllabic and tetrasyllabic words, it is nonetheless conceivable that references to cadence are to be taken as references to a rhythmic system based on and suitably translated from some form of cursus. As in the case of vernacular letter-writing there is a need for further expert study of these texts. At the very least it may be suggested that the existence and practice of the cursus encouraged the attempt to find a suitable rhythmic style for vernacular prose.

Poetic language may have been affected in other ways by the ars dictaminis and by professional linguistic practices. On occasion this may have happened in very basic grammatical ways. MC Seymour has suggested for example that the phrase 'Regnynge which' in Hoccleve's La Male Regle:

> As for the most paart youthe is rebel
> Vnto reson and hatith hir doctryne:
> Regnynge which, it may not stande wel
> (lines 65-7)

may well be directly based on an administrative ablative absolute expression such as 'regnante Henrico' with which Hoccleve would have been very familiar.[1] Seymour identifies similar influence in two phrases from The Complaint of Hoccleve: 'Tho wordes, hem vnwar, cam to myn eere' and 'Me of his hast vnwar' (lines 91, 375). Administrative usage may also explain a phrase such as Chaucer's: 'Of sundry women, which lyf that they ladde' (The Legend of Good Women, line 276).[2] Such phrases may be best seen as part of a general formative influence which the language of business exercised on the whole development of the English language. It has been argued that chancery was of paramount importance in the emergence of standard written English for the latter was 'communicated throughout England by professional scribes writing in Chancery script, under the influence of Chancery idiom'. Also 'when Caxton returned to England in 1476, he established his press not in London, but in Westminster, under the shadow of the offices where Chancery

[1] Selections, 107.
[2] Ibid.

Standard was by that time the normal language for all official communications.' Not surprisingly then 'he printed in a language strongly influenced by Chancery Standard.'[1]

Besides this possible grammatical influence a more properly rhetorical influence, which was closely associated with the ars dictaminis, is to be found in the use of flores and in different forms of euphuism. This was not necessarily the dominant style of middle English verse; Chaucer for example has been described as employing a simple conversational style as even in the relatively elevated opening of Troilus and Criseyde:

> Now herkneth with a good entencion
> For now wil I gon streght to my matere
> In which ye may the double sorwes here
> Of Troilus in lovynge of Criseyde
> (lines 52-5).[2]

In the Envoi a Scogan and a Bukton the style of the letters is markedly different from that employed by Chaucer in the letters of Troilus and Criseyde; these 'genuine, independent, poetic epistles have been related to similar examples from Horace which are distinctive for an urbane, conversational tone, and which therefore in the tradition of English style are described as 'Augustan' rather than euphuistic.[3] Still Chaucer was on occasion capable of using the more conventional style of the period; so for example he used abnormal word order and periphrasis or circuicio at the beginning of the second book of the House of Fame. The Gawain poet on occasion employed the device of pleonasm, the use of superfluous description, to retard the pace and as a method of emphasis.[4] In the case of letter-

[1] JH Fisher, 'Chancery and the emergence of standard written English', Speculum lii (1977), 898-9. In an important article Fisher investigates the fourteenth-century background of chancery and notes the possible significance of the administrative careers of Chaucer, Gower and Hoccleve.

[2] See JA Burrow, Ricardian Poetry (London 1971), 16, 22-3, citing D Mehl, Middle English Romances of the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries (London 1969), 229.

[3] Norton-Smith, 'Chaucer's epistolary style', 162-5.

[4] See Burrow's chapter on Ricardian style, especially pages 12 to 23.

writing the extent of euphuism was determined as much by the proprieties required by the relative status of sender and recipient and by the nature of the subject matter as by the personal tastes and aptitudes of the writer. While audience and subject were far from unimportant in the establishment of poetic style, it seems at least from present studies of these poets, that personal taste was of great importance in the use of a particular style. John Lydgate, a court poet who began as a novice at the Benedictine abbey of Bury St Edmunds, was among the most euphuistic of poets and his obscure and excessively ornate style often means that his precise meaning is difficult to determine. His use of French and Latin vocabulary produces such effects as:

> O glorious uyole, O vytre inviolat
> Cristallin welle, of clennesse clere
> consignet, fructif olyve

and he frequently inverted the word order of sentences to secure particular emphases.[1]

Here too particular interest attaches to Hoccleve. It has been proposed that he regularly used such methods of amplification as apostrophe, personification, repetition and digression and that among the ornamental devices which were classified as 'easy' in some treatises he particularly made use of word-pairs which are to be found scattered throughout his work.[2] In the opening stanzas of La Male Regle for example there are several: 'O ground and root of prosperitee' (line 2), 'and now my body empty is and bare' (line 14), 'O now thyn help, thy socour, and releef' (line 55) and 'Fro me thurgh my folie and imprudence' (line 62). It has been suggested by Kurtz that Hoccleve 'contracted the habit in his scrivening of legal documents'.[3]

[1] WF Schirmer, John Lydgate: a study in the culture of the fifteenth century (translated from the original German eddition London 1961), 73-6.

[2] Mitchell, Thomas Hoccleve, 57-70.

[3] BP Kurtz, 'The relations of Occleve's Lerne to dye to its source', Publications of the Modern Language Association of America xl (1925), 268.

It is certainly possible to find word pairs in his formulary; in the section on safe conducts for example there regularly occur phrases such as 'nos protectioun et deffense' and in the section on grants, phrases such as 'come nous eons donez et grantez' and 'avoir et tenir'.[1] It is hard to know however whether this is a reasonable suggestion by Kurtz; Chaucer too used word pairs on occasion and they are very common in the poetry of Lydgate who was not a professional 'scrivener' like Hoccleve. The notion of direct professional influence is also weakened here by the fact that word pairing is very easy in English with its abundance of synonyms.

This problem of whether there is here a direct influence of ars dictaminis on poetic style, or simply a common dependence on rhetorical theories of the colores in fact extends to the whole of this discussion of style, and at least on the extent of the evidence so far examined it is a difficult one to decide. It is certainly not being suggested that in the use of flores and euphuism, Chaucer or other poets wrote with, as it were, one eye on the section on flores in artes dictaminis or with contemporary epistolary practice deliberately in mind. The only place where a case for a direct form of influence could be reasonably sustained is where certain rhetorical techniques were used by Hoccleve in those 'epistolary' Balades which in intention, construction and in the sense of a particular audience conformed so closely to letter-writing. In the Balade to Sir Henry Somer for example there is the familiar use of hyperbaton, the overturning of word order: 'To man so kyndly is and norisshynge', while in the salutation and exordium in the letter to Prince Henry from the Regiment of Princes, as quoted above, Hoccleve used the scheme of repetition in the double use of the titles prince and lord.

Having surveyed all these examples on the possible connections between the ars dictaminis and middle English literature, it is appropriate to

[1] 'Formulary of Thomas Hoccleve', 5, 8, 10 and passim.

attempt at least some provisional conclusions. It is at least clear that the influence of ars dictaminis and its related styles was far from uniform, depending in its most direct relation on literary considerations which approximated most to those of the letter. It is hardly surprising perhaps that Hoccleve has provided the best evidence of direct influence, since he most conspicuously of the poets of the period was at least to a certain extent an 'eloquent secretary' in the sense used in earlier chapters. There have however been some indications in other poets, in the possible adaptation of cursus, the use of flores, the following of prevailing stylistic custom and most basically in certain grammatical constructions of an influence which may have been less than a direct transfer or conscious use, but which functioned nonetheless as one of a complex set of literary and linguistic influences. A better understanding of the extent of this contribution would require closer study in the manner of Davis's article which compares the litera Troili not only with dictaminal practice but with the form of the text in the sources used by Chaucer. Moreover although the ars dictaminis was a significant branch of rhetoric it was not the only one, and in terms not only of form but also of content it has been shown that preaching, another important eloquent art, was of considerable literary importance.[1] It is also possible, although the point has been much disputed, that Chaucer and his contemporaries derived their rhetorical ideas and practices from a knowledge of the ars poetriae, and that this may have helped for example to develop Chaucer's poetic consciousness, his 'realization of himself as rhetor'.[2] Even if this is substantially true it should not be thought that an acquaintance with the ars poetriae as one of the traditional medieval divisions of rhetoric would have given Chaucer and his fellow poets access

[1] GR Owst, Literature and Pulpit in Medieval England (Cambridge 1933 reissued Oxford 1961) and see especially JB Allen, The Friar as Critic: literary attitudes in the later middle ages (Vanderbilt 1971).

[2] See RO Payne, 'Chaucer and the art of rhetoric' in Rowland (ed.) Companion.

to a tradition which was quite different from that exemplified for them by the contemporary practice of the ars dictaminis. It is apparently the case that Chaucer knew the Poetria nova of Geoffrey of Vinsauf in at least some form, but the extent to which this poetical tradition was 'pure' in the sense of being uncontaminated by practical business concerns or the degree to which it dealt with material which was completely different from that contained in dictaminal works should not be exaggerated. It is interesting to note that Vinsauf's Poetria nova shared nearly all its subject matter with the Documentum de arte dictandi et versificandi, a dictaminal work which was one of the most popular of those that circulated in England.[1]

However in the end the influence is delineated it is at least clear that just as there was not a very direct link, for the most part, between the careers of these poets and their being asked or choosing to write poetry, so their professionally learnt literary skills were not carried directly over into, nor were they necessarily a very major influence upon, their poetry in contrast to the connections suggested in the case of Stone and some of his fellow Latin writers. Yet even if it must be concluded that the poets of the period were engaged on a considerably more complex literary project and cannot be very easily positioned beside the writers examined in previous chapters, and even if they did not depend in any major way on the ars dictaminis, the fact that there has been shown to be some measure of overlap of all the major distinctive features of the ars dictaminis and its related styles with the forms and styles of poetic discourse, indicates that 'literary' is not being used in quite different senses in describing both professional letter-writing and the major literature of the period. This point stands even though it must be further admitted that, while most of the professional letter-writers examined in previous chapters were rather obviously the servants of their craft, the best of the poets of the period

[1] Murphy, Rhetoric, esp. 135, 168, 172.

and most notably Chaucer of those considered in some detail here, were clearly the masters of theirs.

This conclusion does suggest that in its business and professional structure later medieval England provided a measure of encouragement to literary activity. Still the general status of the types of literature considered here was not high, a fact which may explain the common diffidence about the poetic enterprise found especially in Chaucer. This point is brought out in comparison with some continental examples. In France Pierre Bersuire, a translator of Livy and author of the Reductorium, was for a short time a royal secretary of King John the Good.[1] Eustace Deschamps, the poet, was a royal diplomat and administrator, being at one time a master of the treasury,[2] and several writers had careers as secretaries at the courts of Charles VI and Charles VII. Among these were Gontier Col, a royal secretary, Jacques de Nouvion, secretary to the duke of Orleans, and Jean de Montreuil, secretary of the dauphin and of the dukes of Bern, Bourgogne and Orleans.[3] Alain Charties referred to himself as 'humble secretaire de Roy' in the dedication to his Quadrilogue Invectif.[4]

In Spain the earliest poet known by name, Gonzalo de Berceo, served as a notary in his monastery.[5] In the fourteenth century Pero Lopez de Ayala, an historian, poet and translator, was officially chancellor of Castile,[6] and in the fifteenth century secretaries for Latin letters such Juan de Mena and Alonso de Palencia were important literary figures.[7] In

1 See the reference to him in B Smalley, English Friars and Antiquity in the early Fourteenth Century (Oxford 1960), 261-4; it is likely however that he was secretary only nominally.

2 Mathew, Court of Richard II, 9-10.

3 Ibid. 10; A Coville, Gontier et Pierre Col et l'Humanisme en France au temps de Charles VI (Paris 1934).

4 KJ Holzknecht, Literary Patronage in the Middle Ages (Cass 1923; 2nd edn 1923).

5 CB Faulhaber, 'The Summa dictaminis of Guido Faba' in Murphy (ed.) Medieval Eloquence, 111.

6 AD Deyermond, A Literary History of Spain: the middle ages (London 1971), 122-4.

7 Ibid. 186-8; A Mackay, Spain in the Middle Ages: from frontier to empire 1000-1500 (London 1977), 207.

these circumstances it is hardly surprising to find that dictaminal theory and practice had a considerable literary importance. Artes dictaminis entered Spain in the thirteenth century and combined with classical rhetorical works to provide an important base of literary theory. In the fourteenth century these continued to have a greater influence than the artes poetriae and artes praedicandi. The ars dictaminis probably had an important influence on the works composed at the court of Alfonso X in the late thirteenth century. More particularly the Dictaminis epithalamium of Juan Gilde Zamona, perhaps secretary to King Fernando III and closely connected to the court of Alfonso X, had an influence on the development of Castilian prose.[1] The best known examples of the influence of the ars dictaminis on vernacular literature are the great Italians Dante and Boccaccio, both of whose works have been studied with regard to cursus as well as to other dictaminal forms.[2]

There is a definite sense in which figures such as Bersuire or Juan de Mena and Alonso de Palencia held more consciously literary positions than any of the English officials considered. This is partly, but not entirely, to be explained by the fact that some of these writers were under humanist influence. Thus in France the circle of Gontier Col, Jean de Montreuil and Nicholas de Clamanges, among others were members of an early humanist movement, and so one would expect to find among them a more highly self-conscious sense of themselves as literary figures.[3] And in Spain both Juan de Mena and Alonso de Palencia have both been described as humanists.[4] In Italy of course figures such as Coluccio Salutati and Leonardo Bruni were

[1] CB Faulhaber, Latin Rhetorical Theory in Thirteenth and Fourteenth Century Castile (California 1972), esp. 98-9, 103, 105-21, 138-9, 140-1.

[2] Faulhaber, 'Summa dictaminis', 110.

[3] See Coville, L'humanisme.

[4] Mackay, 207.

humanist secretaries in the fullest sense of the expression.[1] Very gradually in the fifteenth century the importation of Italian humanism into England produced certain changes in the self consciousness and practice of the eloquent secretary and this will be the subject of the concluding chapter.

[1] D Hay, The Italian Renaissance in its Historical Background (Cambridge 1977).

Chapter Eight

SECRETARIAL OFFICIALS AND EARLY HUMANISTS

In this final chapter there will be some consideration given to the nature and the extent of the transformation of the secretarial official of fourteenth and early fifteenth century England into the humanist secretary of the renaissance. As in the previous chapter this consideration can aim only to offer certain critical comments on the work of previous scholars on the subject in the light of the conclusions of this thesis and to point to some of the areas of the subject, notably the epistolography and the Latin scholarship of the late fifteenth and sixteenth centuries which, following what is written here, seem ripe for further study.

Some historians of medieval thought have been very impressed with a definition of humanism which sees it as according a high place to rhetoric in the art of communication, to classical study and to more or less precisely defined 'humane' moral and aesthetic values, and seeing these as all constituting an important development in human civilization, they have not without success attempted to find important deposits of this humanism in the medieval period.[1] It is easy however for a descriptive concept such as 'medieval humanism', which may be appropriate in certain contexts, to be unhelpfully extended in such a way that the description becomes so broad as to be confusing. It is certainly rather tempting to describe significant Latin writers of later medieval England such as Richard de Bury or John Whethamstede as early or as medieval humanists. Abbot Whethamstede for example could refer with relish to pagan deities, mythology and ancient

[1] MD Knowles, 'The humanism of the twelfth century' in The Historian and Character (Cambridge 1964) and RW Southern, Medieval Humanism and other Studies (Oxford 1970).

history.[1] John Lydgate, the English poet, has been described as a follower of 'the early humanists who wrote in Latin' and his knowledge of classical writers has been noted.[2] It might be enticing to follow this temptation and to describe Gilbert Stone and perhaps some of his fellows as medieval or early humanists. In the case of Stone, one might point to the evidence examined in chapter six on the way his literary interests and abilities flowed out from the strict confines of his business concerns in letters of friendship and spiritual counsel, in his apparent overall conception of his letter collection as not only a collection of forms for practical imitation but also as an aesthetic, moral and religious work, and in wider literary works. In these respects there are some similarities with the activities and the circles of friendship encouraged by the renaissance humanists.

Most, if not all, historians who have concerned themselves with the matter have agreed however that the temptation to describe these writers as medieval or early humanists is best resisted. In contrast to some of the major writers of the twelfth century, no product of an English 'business school', as Denys Hay has put it, emerged as a truly important scholar, as a great intellectual of the time.[3] It may be even more significant that none of them were considered by their contemporaries to be such on the basis of their use of eloquence. This point will be discussed in greater detail below. The contrast between the writers examined in this chapter and their immediate successors, the humanists of the renaissance, is even more marked. PO Kristeller has observed that 'the humanists were not

1 In his Granarium on the etymology of town names he cites as authorities Livy, Sallust, Solinus, Justin, Virgil, Ovid, Josephus, Eusebius, Jerome, Augustine, Jordanes of Ravenna, Godfrey of Viterbo, William of Tyre, Orosius and Boccaccio. See Jacob, Florida, 273-8.

2 Schirmer, Lydgate, esp. 76; A Renoir, The Poetry of John Lydgate (London 1967).

3 D Hay, 'England and the humanities in the fifteenth century' in HA Oberman and TA Brady (eds) Itinerarium Italicum: the profile of the Italian renaissance in the mirror of its European transformations (Leiden 1975), 314.

classical scholars who for personal reasons had a craving for eloquence, but vice versa, they were professional rhetoricians ... who developed the belief, then new and modern, that the best way to achieve eloquence was to imitate classical models, and who thus were driven to study the classics and to found classical philology,'[1] Indeed the distinction between the writers considered here and the humanists is best seen, at least initially, as lying in their latinity and in their attitude to classical civilization. None of the former show any signs of maintaining or developing the sort of cult of antiquity which was a hallmark of the humanists. Lydgate's knowledge of classical writers was drawn from anthologies or from Latin grammars[2] and the attitude of an encycopaedist such as Whethamstede was such that he placed side by side not only classical but also modern - ie medieval - authorities. This lack of periodization was typified by the group of classicizing friars at the beginning of the fourteenth century who have been distinguished from the humanists by their tendency to be 'friendly to the whole past of mankind'.[3] Together with the new cult of antiquity, indeed if Kristeller is correct, initiating it, went a new concern for the inculcation of a proper Ciceronian style; the consequences of this for the composition of letters will have to be considered in greater detail below.

In addition to these changes humanism entailed a new attitude to the place of the pursuit of eloquence in the basic structure of intellectual endeavour, and in potential as well as to some extent in actual achievement, this was its greatest consequence. As noted in several places above, and

1 PO Kristeller, 'Humanism and scholasticism in the Italian renaissance', Byzantion xvii (1944-5), 353.

2 D Pearsall notes that the fact that Lydgate read a little Ovid, Virgil and Cicero 'can hardly be called "humanism", except in a sense of the term which destroys its reference and its usefulness', and he adds 'one of the remarkable things about fifteenth-century literary tradition, in fact, is its resistance to the new humanism which in the end had to make its way into England through writers in Latin, not in English', D Pearsall, John Lydgate (London 1970), 14-15. It will be argued here that, given the nature of humanism and the literary-rhetorical structure of later medieval England this fact is not at all surprising.

3 Jacob, Florida; Smalley, English Friars, 306.

notably in the conclusion to chapter three, the profession of the eloquent secretary was not a highly self-conscious one, nor was the pursuit of eloquence accorded a high status as a field of study. Theoretical treatises on the ars dictaminis certainly circulated in England as has been seen and Bishop Thomas Merke made an original contribution to the subject, but the ars did not amount to more than a minor theme in prevailing scholastic enquiries. When the university praised Merke in typically hyperbolic fashion, they did not mention his concern for eloquence, but commended him for his lecturing, preaching and disputing in the schools, adding: 'In scholastic disputes and in blocking heresies he is another Augustine; in morals he is another blessed Pope Gregory: and in both he is another Cardinal Jerome'.[1] At the level of the trivium dialectic and logic so dominated the later medieval curriculum that it has been said that: 'rhetoric was driven out'.[2] It was certainly subordinated to and encompassed within dialectical argument. This explains for example the popularity of the De differentiis topicis of Boethius, and particularly of book 4 of that work which argued that rhetorical topoi derived their force from the abstract propositional rules provided by dialectic and which therefore made rhetorical argumentation a subordinate part of dialectical theory.[3] It is against such a background as this that the enhanced and more self-conscious status accorded

1 'Nam in armis scholasticis et in destruendis heresibus nobis ut alius Augustinus, in moralibus vero beatus papa Gregorius et in utraque Ieronimus cardinalis', OF i. 201 and Murphy, 'Rhetoric in Oxford', 17-20.

2 This remark is made by Murphy in 'Rhetoric and dialectic in The Owl and the Nightingale' in Murphy (ed.) Medieval Eloquence, 230.

3 JA Weisheipl, 'Curriculum of the faculty of arts at Oxford in the early fourteenth century', Mediaeval Studies xxvi (1964), 168-70, 176-85; idem, 'Developments in the arts curriculum at Oxford in the early fourteenth century', ibid. xxviii (1966), 51; Murphy, 'Rhetoric in Oxford'; RJ Schoeck has challenged Murphy's conclusions, but although he argues powerfully that the study of rhetoric was not neglected he does not aim to produce any evidence to overturn the view that rhetoric played a subsidiary role: 'On rhetoric in Oxford', 214-225. MC Leff, 'Boethius' De differentiis topicis, book IV', Medieval Eloquence, 9-15, 22-4; see also JO Ward, 'From antiquity to the renaissance: glosses and commentaries on Cicero's Rhetorica', ibid. 44, 50-2. Ward has however noted two periods of 'rhetorical upsurge' - in the twelfth and again in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries as well as a shift from northern Europe to Italy between these two periods, 36-8.

by the university of Oxford to its chief secretarial official and on the wider question of the prevailing structure of intellectual study that the new educational programme of the humanists assume their proper significance.[1]

In addition to these differences between the world of Stone and his contemporaries and that of the humanists there was a marked shift, at least partially encouraged by humanist thought, although undoubtedly a more complex social phenomenon in the relationships between ordained and lay and in their relative educational and literary opportunities and achievements. It would certainly be incorrect to say, as is clear from what has been written above, that laymen were entirely cut off from the profession of the eloquent official, but with a small number of late exceptions they were for the most part to be found in the lay households and in the institutions of civic and central government and their work was mainly in the vernacular. It is ironic, given subsequent judgement on their relative achievements, that Stone and his fellow ecclesiastical letter-writers would have looked down with a certain clerical disdain on those who wrote letters and other works in the vernacular.[2] In contrast sound education of the laity in Latin and in classical literature was a prominent ambition of the humanist educational programme which was realized, sometimes prominently, from the late fifteenth century.[3]

The preceding paragraphs have not attempted a detailed examination of English humanism - indeed further substantiation will be required for the aspects which touch on the status and style of letter-writing - but rather the intention thus far has been to propose a working definition of humanism and to argue that given such a definition Stone and his fellow letter-

[1] See above66-7and Hay, 'England and the humanities', 321-2.

[2] Such an attitude is apparent in a number of Stone's letters, notably in his letter of advice to Archbishop Arundel.

[3] RL Storey, 'Gentleman-bureaucrats' in Cecil H Clough (ed.) Profession, Vocation and Culture in Later Medieval England: essays dedicated to the memory of AR Myers (Liverpool 1982); Hay, 'England and the humanities', 321-3, 335-9, 342-8, 360-2.

writers are not, despite the odd similarity here and there, felicitously to be described as early humanists. Such a conclusion probably accords with the self estimation of John Whethamstede who may well never have attempted to be a humanist,[1] and if the proposal in chapter five was correct then Gilbert Stone too would have wished to distance himself emphatically from such a description.[2]

Even if it is agreed however that this description would be inappropriate, it is not thereby excluded that there should be some form of relation between the secretarial official of the fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries and those who were responsible for the introduction and reception of humanism into England. PO Kristeller in a famous and somewhat controversial thesis propounded the view that in Italy, the cradle of renaissance humanism, the first humanists were the direct heirs and successors of the dictatores. He wrote:

> When we inquire of the professional position of the humanists, it is often asserted that they were free-lance writers who came to form an entirely new class in Renaissance society. This statement is valid although with some qualification, for a very small number of outstanding humanists like Petrarch, Boccaccio and Erasmus. However, these are exceptions, and the vast majority of humanists exercised either of two professions, and sometimes both of them. They were either secretaries of princes or cities, or they were teachers of grammar and rhetoric at universities or at secondary schools. Moreover, as chancellors and as teachers, the humanists far from representing a new class, were the professional heirs and successors of the medieval rhetoricians, the so-called dictatores, who also made their careers exactly in these same two professions.

Kristeller then went on to point out that while the types of profession were the same, the style of writing and the subjects studied were markedly different, since the study and imitation of the classics which was of little or no importance to the dictatores was the major concern for the humanists.[3]

[1] For a vigorous statement of this view see Howlett, 'Studies in Whethamstede', 120ff.

[2] Above, p. 216.

[3] Kristeller, 'Humanism and scholasticism', 356-7; for some criticism of Kristeller's thesis see Hanna H Gray, 'Renaissance humanism: the pursuit of eloquence', Journal of the History of Ideas xxiv (1963) and G Vallese, 'Retorica medievale e retorica umanistica', Delta new ser. i (1952).

Kristeller's thesis cannot simply be taken over and applied to England, because the dictatores in England did not occupy the same academic positions as in Italy before the humanists. Moreover the writers considered here did not naturally transform themselves into humanists, since humanism was an Italian import into England until at least the reign of Henry VII. Nevertheless Kristeller's theory may be appropriately adapted to suit the English evidence and thus properly be used to explain the relationship between the secretarial official and the early humanist. Secretarial officials may indeed be seen as ancestors and forerunners of the humanists, at least in the sense that they were the representatives of a professional and literary structure without which there would have been no motive for the introduction of humanist style and thus of the humanist programme into England.

The fact that the 'new learning' was introduced into England in this way has not gone entirely unrecognized by historians. It is rather surprising, considering the very dismal view he took of English Latin culture before the humanists, to find that Roberto Weiss in Humanism in England during the Fifteenth Century gave the matter at least passing mention. Weiss's knowledge of Latin literary activity in England in the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries seems to have been derived primarily from Jacob's article on the florida which he used, continuing the humanists' own parodies, to portray the utter darkness which prevailed prior to the humanist dawn.[1] Yet in the midst of this attack Weiss noted:

[1] So he argued that 'in England during the first quarter of the fifteenth century there prevailed a taste for writing Latin in an extremely flowery and "euphuistic" style. This fashion was more a symptom of decadence than a novelty. It generally heralded a decline in literary values. Obscurity and involution in style, extravagance and over-elaboration in imagery and metaphor, an obvious painstaking care in diction, were its principal characteristics, convenient if not attractive substitutes for lack of original inspiration.' Humanism, 28.

> However slight the value of the stylistic attitude prevalent in some English literary circles, at least since the days of Richard de Bury, one merit cannot be denied to it: it developed sensibility towards style, to use a colloquial expression, it made scholars "style conscious". It aroused the curiosity of men of letters for other literary ways. Therefore the writings of Italian humanists could not avoid commanding attention once they became available in England.[1]

Weiss made here an important point, but it is one which needs to be freed from the context in which he put it and the matter of style consciousness needs to be examined more closely, before its importance can be properly understood. In the remainder of this chapter there will be an attempt to initiate a fuller exploration of the relationship between the introduction of humanism into England and the professional and literary structures in which the secretarial official worked.

Humanism is first found in the households of a number of 'enlightened' patrons. Thus Henry Beaufort bishop of Winchester prevailed upon Poggio Bracciolini to serve in his household for four years from 1418.[2] Likewise Duke Humfrey of Gloucester employed Tito Livio Frulovisi as secretary from 1437 for about a year and Antonio Beccaria in the same position from about the end of 1438 until 1445 or 1446.[3] Frulovisi was also known as the duke's 'poet and orator', a new title, and his duties included writing at least part of the duke's correspondence. He also wrote two Latin comedies during his stay in England and composed the Vita Henrici quinti.[4] Beccaria likewise carried out some of Duke Humfrey's correspondence and translated into Latin some Greek works, as well as Boccaccio's Corbaccio.[5]

[1] Ibid. 29.

[2] Ibid. 13-18; WF Schirmer, Der englishe Fruhumanismus (Leipzig 1931), 17-24.

[3] Weiss, 42-6; Schirmer, 40-4.

[4] Weiss, 42-3; Schirmer, 40-2; Gransden, Historical Writing in England, 210-13.

[5] Weiss, 45-6; Schirmer, 43-4; the titles on the translations from the Greek read 'Cest liure est a moy Homfrey duc de Gloucestre, le quel Jay fait translater de grec en latyn par Antoyne de Becaria Veroneys mon seruiter' and the same, apart from the last words, which read: 'par vn de mes secretaires Antoyne de Beccara ne de Verone', BL Royal MS 5 F ii, fos 91b, 131b.

There were other Italian influences at this time: papal officials visited England and a few Englishmen visited the papal curia or Italian universities. Duke Humfrey corresponded with Leonardo Bruni and through Zenone de Castiglione he was connected with a number of Italian scholars such as Pier Candido Decembrio.[1] For Italian scholars to come to England meant for them a journey to a cultural desert,[2] but it was from firmer institutional arrangements that the greatest potential for influence came, since they brought humanist scholars into a working relationship with native secretaries in the households of the great patrons. This was of greater long term importance for the domestication of humanism than the specific scholarly works undertaken by visiting Italians. So it seems that Poggio had at least some influence on such clerks as Nicholas Bildestone and Richard Petworth in the household of Henry Beaufort. Bildestone was Beaufort's chancellor in 1427 and probably for some considerable time before that date. He acted on at least one occasion as a vicar general and he was employed on several royal embassies. In 1424 he was appointed for six months to be king's orator at the papal curia. Bildestone does not seem to have undertaken any major classical studies himself, but his household connection with Poggio does seem to have excited his interest. In 1424 in Rome the Italian helped him in his search for Petrarch's Latin works and a letter of 1436-7 suggests that he owned several classical books.[3] Richard Petworth, a notary public, was Beaufort's secretary from at least 1415 until 1435. He remained in correspondence with Poggio after the latter's return to Italy, and Poggio's replies suggest that Petworth and Bildestone had together been particular associates of his while in England. Petworth later

[1] Weiss, 22-70; Schirmer, 16-59.

[2] This was notably the experience of Poggio.

[3] BRUO i. 187-8; Weiss, 19. Poggio described him as 'Nicholas Bildeston legum doctor, orator regis angliae homo est perhumanus, et familiarissimus mihi', Poggii epistolae, ed T de Tonellis (Florence 1832) i. 170.

requested copies of some of Poggio's works, and he arranged to have these made known to various sympathetic Englishmen.[1]

In Duke Humfrey's household there were likewise a number of clerks who through the duke's employment of Italian secretaries had an opportunity for contact with humanist style and thought. For some of them a contact with humanism can only be surmised,[2] but a well known example is Thomas Bekynton. He became Duke Humfrey's chancellor in about 1420 and in 1423 he became dean of the arches. His subsequent career included a number of embassies and from 1437 until his promotion to the see of Bath and Wells in 1443 he was the king's secretary. Besides likely contact with Frulovisi in Duke Humfrey's household, Bekynton met and corresponded with other humanists; from 1441 for example he was in touch with Flavio Biondo, primarily to secure his assistance in his provision to Bath and Wells, but they also wrote on literary matters and Biondo sent him a manuscript of his Decades.[3]

Adam Moleyns was another secretarial and administrative clerk with a highly successful career. He began working at the curia, first as papal chamberlain and clerk of the camera, which positions he held by 1435. He was also a king's proctor at the curia and was later in 1439 appointed an apostolic prothonotary. By this time he had returned to England and he was clerk of the council from 1436 until 1442. In 1445 he became bishop of Chichester. His early stay in Rome helped to form his intellectual outlook and throughout his career Moleyns associated with several others interested in humanism, including Petworth, Bekynton and Poggio. Unfortunately little is now known of his library, although it was sufficiently noteworthy to attract the attention of Oxford university whose library benefited from the

1 BRUO iii. 1471; Weiss, 19-20; Schirmer, 20-6.

2 KH Vickers, Humfrey Duke of Gloucester (London 1907), 388; Schirmer, 51.

3 See above p.104 for fuller references to his career; for the details of his correspondence with humanists see Weiss, 71-3, Schirmer, 66-73 and Bekynton Correspondence i. 169, 170, 172, 240, and for further details of his literary interests A Wilmart, 'Le florilege mixte de Thomas Bekynton', Medieval and Renaissance Studies i (1941-3).

collection after his death.[1] A final example of an official attracted to humanism in the middle of the fifteenth century is Richard Bole. A notary public, he went abroad in 1442 as secretary to William Grey later bishop of Ely, and they both matriculated at the university of Cologne. In 1449 he was one of the king's orators who accompanied John Tiptoft earl of Worcester to the papal curia and in the 1460s he was official to the bishop of Ely.[2] He gave twelve books to Balliol College; a mixed collection including such traditional works as the Oculus sacerdotis, the Summa de rebus ad monasticam sive spiritualem spectantibus and a copy of Provincial Constitutions. He also owned the Policraticus of John of Salisbury while recent humanist works were represented by manuscripts of Petrarch, Poggio, Barzizza, Servius and Bruni.[3]

These names have been listed here to show that in terms of their careers these figures, who are all associated to some extent with the introduction of humanism into England, occupied the same type of positions as the secretarial and administrative officials examined above. So far their humanist interests have been seen in terms of their contacts with certain Italian scholars and in their ownership of some humanist and classical manuscripts. It is also necessary however to see to what extent their new interests affected their own literary productions. None of the officials mentioned thus far in fact undertook any major scholarly or literary work - perhaps this was due to the pressure of professional work as has been suggested, but it may simply be that the new ways of thought and method had not had long enough to produce so complete and successful a change as to enable the production of major humanist works.[4] There are however a small number of

[1] BRUO ii. 1289-91; Brown, Early History of the Clerkship of the Council, 24-33; Weiss, 80-2; Schirmer, 103-5.

[2] BRUO i. 213-4.

[3] Weiss, 96-7; Catalogue of the Manuscripts of Balliol College, Oxford, comp. RAB Mynors (Oxford 1963), pp. xlvi-ix and passim.

[4] The first of these suggestions is made by Weiss, 73 and 83.

personal and official letters which provide some evidence of new literary values.

About some, no more than an informed guess can be made. So it is said of Nicholas Bildestone: 'one suspects that he may have used his familiarity with polite letters to improve the standard of his diplomatic language.'[1] There are a few more details in the case of Beaufort's secretary, Petworth; at least one letter of his survives which shows some attempt on his part to follow the humanist style. There are some grammatical mistakes, judging the letter by a classical standard, and the style is somewhat euphuistic, but Petworth deliberately chose to use tuus rather than vester forms throughout, which was a particular stylistic concern of the humanists. Petworth does seem to have collected some of his letters although they do not survive now, but they found admirers at Christ Church, where part of his correspondence seems to have been transcribed during the first half of the fifteenth century.[2]

Thomas Bekynton however illustrates the new style more successfully. Weiss comments: 'it was reserved for him to raise the standards of official epistolography in this country by following classical models and by a disregard of the formalities of medieval epistolary practice.'[3] It is interesting to note that in a letter to Richard Cauton, Bekynton warmly recommended the study of oratory: 'Vale, mi frater, vale felicissime: et studio quaeso artis oratoriae, quae diebus his summe floret et apud vos maxime, tete dede.'[4] This comment indicates the extent to which the novelty

[1] Ibid. 19.

[2] The letter to Poggio begins: 'Colendissime pater et celeberime doctor Regens, accomodasti mihi sex panes de medulla tritici et adipe frumenti in tutissimam pastam digestos et confectos qui devocionem meam diu quam doleo tenuem et sompnolentam, parcat mihi deus, aliqualiter erexerunt ...' printed in Schirmer, 23; see also Weiss, 20.

[3] Ibid. 71.

[4] Bekynton Correspondence i. 231.

of a cult of eloquence struck Bekynton and it is noteworthy that no previous exponents of eloquence in their many references to the bona littera had so confidently referred to the study of oratory. A harsher aspect of Bekynton's adherence to classical Latin was his correction of grammatical mistakes in letters sent to him. Thus he wrote to Abbot Whethamstede about the latter's use of the word vellitis asking him where in the connugation of volo such a form occurred, and he included a similar comment in a letter to William Millington.[1] Grammatical precision was as important as elegance of style in the cultivation of an appropriate classical atmosphere.

Adam Moleyns came even closer than Bekynton to the humanist ideal of Latin composition. Poggio praised him warmly in a letter to Richard Petworth and Aeneas Sylvius Piccolomini, at the time a secretary in the imperial chancery and later Pope Pius II, complimented him in their correspondence for his good Latin. He believed to to be the best written in England since Peter of Blois - indeed it was better.[2] It has also been said by a recent historian that his records of council proceedings during the time that he

[1] To Whethamstede he wrote: 'Rogo, pater, construe latinum hoc, quod literis mihi missis inscripseras, Ipsum juvare vellitis in sancto devotoque proposito suo. "Vellitis": pater, quae pars? si verbum hoc, declinando verbum Volo, nullibi reperias, quid prohibit, concludere, quod incongrue sis locutus? Helas! pater, helas! ubi ferula? ubi virga, quibus tam incongrui correctoris temeritas feriatur?', and to Millington: 'Magister, adiectio haec, "et se ad observandum statuta" et "cum juramento astrinxere" tua, non mea est; nec eam tu in meis literis invenisti ...' ibid. i. 116, ii. 172-3.

[2] 'Reverende pater ac domine mi. Regius tabellarius ex Anglia dudum reversus tuam mihi epistolam reddidit, cujus tot sententie fuerunt quot verba. Legi cupide, que scripsisti miratusque sum Romanum facundiam in Brittaniam usque profectam esse. Sed fuerunt et alii apud Anglos Tulliane cultores eloquentie, inter quos venerabilem Bedam nemo non posuit. Petrus Blesensis longe inferior fuit, cujus epistolis hanc tuam perbrevem antepono. Congratulor tibi et Anglie, quia jam verum dicendi ornatum suscepisti, sed magne ob hanc causam referende sunt grates clarissimo illi et doctissimo principi, Clocestrie duce, qui studia humanitatis summo studio in regnum vestrum recepit, qui, sicuti mihi relatum est, et poetas mirifice colit et oratores magnopere veneratur ...' Der Briefwechsel des Eneas Silvius Piccolomini, hgb. R Wolkan (Fontes rerum austriacarum lxi 1909), 324-5.

was clerk give the impression 'of a man of great energy with a good conceit of himself',[1] and in this too he was a worthy representative of the humanists.

From about 1450 there emerged one or two scholars who were able to devote themselves more completely and permanently to humanism. John Free was the first Englishman to take up humanist studies as a career. He studied at Balliol College, at Ferrara and at Padua, where he met John Tiptoft earl of Worcester who employed him as his secretary. Free dedicated some Latin poems to Tiptoft and he undertook a translation for him of Synesius's Laus calvitii.[2]

Of more importance than the contributions of individual scholars was the fact that humanism began to influence the programme of studies at the universities, first at Oxford and later at Cambridge. The gift of Duke Humfrey's books as well as the presence of other Italian texts had a certain effect as did the disposition to humanist studies of such men as Thomas Chaundler who through cultivation of Italian learning 'gave new life to the jaded Oxford erudition'. At Cambridge from about 1478 signs of humanist study appear and scholars like John Doget were among the first to introduce the changes.[3] Symptomatic of new interest in the universities was the concern with the conduct of their correspondence and the humanist interests of the university scribes. John Manyngham who was registrar from 1448 to 1451 is known to have copied a humanist miscellany.[4] John Farley who was registrar from c 1458 until his death in 1464 was competent in humanist script and his letters for the university show the same changes as some of

1 Brown, History of the Clerkship, 29.

2 RJ Mitchell, John Free: from Bristol to Rome in the fifteenth century (London 1955); BRUO ii. 724-5; Weiss, 106-22; Schirmer, 121-34; for his surviving letters see JE Spingarn, 'Unpublished letters of an English humanist', Journal of Comparative Literature i (1903).

3 Weiss, 131-40; Schirmer, 73-81.

4 Duke Humfrey and English Humanism in the Fifteenth Century (Bodleian Library Oxford 1970), 11.

those mentioned above.[1] At Cambridge Caius Auberinus was employed from about 1483 as a lecturer and letter-writer.[2]

It has been argued that by the last quarter of the fifteenth century humanist study was generally established at Oxford,[3] and that the foundations had been laid in even more important places in secondary schools and in the inns of court where the common lawyers received their education,[4] for the domestication of humanism in England. This story of the introduction of humanist style, values and studies into England, if without the particular emphases given here, is well established. It would of course be possible to exaggerate the extent of the conversion of England to humanism during and indeed after the fifteenth century; there have been some indications already that sometimes, particularly at the beginning of the fifteenth century the attachment to humanism, while it produced certain immediate and superficial changes, coexisted with older methods of procedure and habits of thought. The exordium of Petworth's letter quoted above, for example, looks very similar to many that have been studied here and it contains words which would not have appeared in a vocabulary of Ciceronian Latin.

A considerably more interesting and extensive collection of letters is contained in the sixteenth-century letter-book of the university of Oxford. This collection illustrates the extent to which letter writing in the period of humanist maturity was properly classical in diction and inspiration. Its recent editor notes that the vocabulary was indeed basically Ciceronian with some contributions from Plautus and Terence, but there were still a considerable number of medieval words and 'novelties of all sorts

1 Ibid. 16; Weiss, 136-7.

2 Ibid. 163; Schirmer, 170.

3 Weiss, 178.

4 Hay, 'England and the humanities', 342-8, and 'the basic importance of Henry VII's reign is that it saw the emergence of a new kind of secondary education which was to impress itself on the grammar school curriculum until the end of the nineteenth century.' 360.

appear continually'. From the perspective of the dictaminal customs examined above it is particularly interesting to note that full and ceremonious forms of address survived despite the fact that these were abominated by the humanists, and likewise the university scribes did not feel able on many occasions to relinquish the practice of placing the name of the recipient of the letter first, even though it was a humanist requirement that the writer's name should always be placed first. Equally interesting is the fact that a sample of the letters taken by the editor indicates that the writers of the letters did not apparently adopt a rhythmical system based on quantity, but rather continued to use the despised cursus. On the evidence provided however they achieved a more balanced use of the different types of cursus than most of their medieval predecessors. This survival of medieval forms was no doubt the result of a dilemma which faced many who wished to put their humanism to practical effect. Mitchell concludes: 'the task imposed on the writers of the letters was a highly artificial one, for they could not produce anything approaching classical prose without severing themselves mentally from the kinds of Latin most familiar to them.'[1] Late medieval Latin may well have been a very poor relation grammatically and rhetorically to the Ciceronian ideal - although most commentators have been unduly unsympathetic to some of its shades and subtleties - but this merit cannot be denied to it that in its dictaminal form it represented a language and a style adapted over a considerable period to suit very practical purposes which were to be effected, if sometimes only conventionally, within a Christian context. Since many of these purposes remained unchanged and since the context was supposedly to be retained, it is perhaps not surprising that many of the forms of the ars dictaminis nurtured by Stone and his fellows could not be so easily discarded.

On the wider question of the transformation of English academic life

[1] Epistolae academicae 1509-1596, ed WT Mitchell (Oxford Historical Society new ser. xxvi 1980), especially the very valuable introduction on epistolography pp. xv-xxii.

it is likely that a more nuanced view is also necessary. At any rate the forthcoming history of the university of Oxford in the sixteenth century suggests that the curriculum continued to be determined by a number of influences, not all of them humanist.[1]

These remarks are not however meant to challenge Weiss's central conviction that 'if we compare the state of English learning at the beginning and end of the fifteenth century, a very marked fifference will be perceptible.' Rather the evidence examined here has been arranged in support of the contention that secretarial officials may properly be seen as ancestors and forerunners of the humanists. They were such, not in the sense that they sponsored an inept and doomed euphuistic revival in the fifteenth century which nevertheless made them conscious of style, ready for the light when at last it dawned upon them. Rather they were ancestors and forerunners because they belonged to a professional and literary structure which humanists could not fail to use. Gilbert Stone and his fellows wrote in the way they did because it was according to the contemporary fashion, not just a sudden fashion, but a long and well developed set of customs which were known to persuade. When humanism changed these set of customs then employers and secretarial officials had to begin to adapt their practice so far as they were able. As Hay has put it there was an element of 'keeping up with the humanist Jones's':

> The pope had a librarian with Platina in 1475 and his successors. Henry VII had to have a librarian and we find Latin secretaries in the English court and laureate poets if not poets laureate at about the same time.[2]

This comment may be suitably adapted to the practice of Beaufort and Duke Humfrey who did not want, any more than Erghum and Clifford had wanted, to be without the profession and art of eloquence, and who had therefore to try to adapt their households as the profession and the art had adapted.

[1] See particularly the introductory chapter by James McConica.

[2] Hay, 'England and the humanities', 340.

In the process, they placed of course a higher reputation and a more self conscious status on this profession and more was expected in terms of academic interests and achievements, but the family resemblance is still apparent and in fact more of the family customs survived than has sometimes been imagined.

No attempt has been made to suggest that those studied here were men of significant literary genius or achievement, but the humanists and some of their historians might have done well to heed the advice of Ecclesiasticus 44:1 to praise not only the famous men but the fathers that begat them. Even with all due qualification the cultural achievements of Gilbert Stone and his contemporaries were important in later medieval and early modern England.

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