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SILENT READING AND THE MEDIEVAL TEXT:
THE DEVELOPMENT OF READING PRACTICES IN THE EARLY PRINTS OF
WILLIAM LANGLAND AND JOHN LYDGATE

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This thesis is concerned with reading practices and the late medieval vernacular text. More specifically, it is concerned with the ways in which the medieval text was read and received in early modern England. The analysis focuses on two texts in their early modern instantiations: the late fourteenth century allegorical dream vision *Piers Plowman* by William Langland, and the early fifteenth century *Fall of Princes*, a translation of Boccaccio’s *De Casibus Vironum Illustrium* by Benedictine monk John Lydgate. The thesis considers the reception of these poems as they are reworked and reread by successive editors and readers during the shift from script to print, and from a culture of orality to a culture of silent reading. The reception of and editorial policy applied to these texts are considered in relation to the political and religious upheavals of the sixteenth century, and to developments in literacy and literary culture.

The editions selected for analysis range from an early manuscript of a B-text version of *Piers Plowman*, Trinity College Cambridge, MS B.15.17, through to an early seventeenth century print of the *Mirror for Magistrates*, an early modern reworking of Lydgate’s *Fall*, published in 1619. The thesis engages with Zumthor’s theory of textual *monyance* in that each edition is granted the authority of its own circumstances of production and reception. The synchronic analysis highlights the economic and political pressures which influenced and/or constrained editorial decisions. In charting the various editions through the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the thesis provides a complementary diachronic perspective which places each edition within the wider history of textual transmission and in relation to developments in literary culture.

The combined synchronic and diachronic analysis of the printed late medieval text provides an insight into developments in reading habits and changing attitudes towards authorship and the functions of literature more generally. The evidence for the development of reading practices can be found in the interaction between the text and its systems of punctuation and paratext. Systems of punctuation and features of paratext act as guide and mediator between the text and the reader; it is these forms and levels of mediation, and the relationship between them, which can indicate patterns of literacy and reader engagement. Thus, developments in the systems of punctuation and paratext interact with changing models of the reader and the various types of ‘literate activities’
available to them (Salter 2012: 67).

The late medieval period has been described as a culture of ‘literate orality’ (Sponsler 2010: 1) and its readers exhibited a diverse range of reading practices. The oral and aural characteristics of literary culture gradually declined in the late medieval and early modern periods but a ‘critical mass’ of silent readers did not emerge until the end of the seventeenth century (Jajdelska 2007). Adopting and adapting Jajdelska’s theory of the changing reader model, this thesis focuses on the chosen texts as they appear before the emergence of this ‘critical mass’. The analysis of reading practices, therefore, pertains to the period of transition during which readers negotiated existing oral/aural reading environments while moving towards a predominantly silent reading culture. The thesis demonstrates that the transition was gradual and that sixteenth-century literary culture was diverse in both its reading habits and reading practices.

The emerging discipline of historical sociopragmatics provides the theoretical and methodological bridge between the diachronic description of punctuation and paratext, and the examination of reading practices. Historical sociopragmatics allows established insights from sociolinguistics and pragmatics to be applied to the written historical text, creating new opportunities for the recovery and analysis of textual production, editorial treatment and reader engagement. This thesis brings the sociopragmatic concept of ‘situational contexts’ (Culpepper 2011: 4) to the analysis of the physical page and, more specifically, to the interactions between punctuation and paratextual systems. By applying a sociopragmatic approach to the concept of the reader model, this thesis demonstrates that systems of punctuation and paratext provide important evidence for the history textual transmission, reader engagement and the development of reading practices.
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Books must be treated with respect, we feel that in our bones, because words have power.

Bring enough words together and they can bend space and time.

Terry Pratchett
CHAPTER ONE

Pragmatics of the Page: Research Questions & Methodology

1.1 Research Questions

‘Criticism is increasingly fond of whatever is unstable, multiple, and precarious…’
(Cerquiglini 1999: xiii)

The ways in which the medieval text is reworked and reshaped over time can highlight both the developments and the continuities in the reading habits and practices of late medieval and early modern literary culture. As the functions of literacy and literary culture evolved, the developments simultaneously shape and are shaped by changing reader models. The thesis considers the following questions: how did the editors of *Piers Plowman* and *Fall of Princes* negotiate the politics of printing a pre-Reformation text in the Reformation and post-Reformation era? How did they negotiate the tension between authenticity and modernisation? How do the systems of paratext and punctuation interact in these texts, and how do certain features and conventions develop during the shift from script to print, and from uncertain beginnings to a stabilised publishing industry? What can this interaction tell us about the evolution of reading practices and modes of literacy? And what does the reworking of medieval texts indicate about the changing functions of literacy and literary culture over time?

It has long been acknowledged that the study of literature and reading habits offers an insight into the concerns, preoccupations and intellectual developments of cultures past and present. But while traditional discipline distinctions ensured literature remained firmly in the domain of the textual critic, more recent developments in book history scholarship have opened the door to inter-disciplinary possibilities. Books and their literary contents are no longer considered to be disconnected from documents of historical veracity. Instead, history itself becomes a textual landscape in which historical witnesses and works of literature are both legitimate forms of evidence and representation. Indeed, D.F. McKenzie has argued for broadening the term and scope further to reflect contemporary technological developments and a ‘text’ becomes any form of cultural output (McKenzie 1999). A computer storage device can, under this definition, be considered and read as a
As well as broadening the very concept of what constitutes the text, McKenzie’s approach to book history embraces the collaborative aspect of book production. Collaboration, by definition and practice, involves cooperation and produces a multi-layered text which has been shaped by a variety of factors and contributors. These influences may be technologically, economically or politically motivated; often, they are a mixture. This ‘sociology’ of the text describes both the complex, often haphazard, way texts are constructed and the myriad ways they are subsequently interpreted, or deconstructed, by their readers. Contemporary book history rejects the view of the book as an isolated and abstracted literary text or historical witness, and refuses to draw a line between bibliography and textual criticism. This thesis similarly attempts to bridge the gap between textual criticism and book history by engaging with the socio-historical factors which influence the editorial treatment of a text, in conjunction with close reading of the punctuation and paratextual systems within that text.

If book production is multi-layered, the reception of a book must be similarly nuanced and subject to a wide range of influences and motivations. The theoretical perspectives of twentieth century scholars such as Barthes and Foucault have allowed the focus of textual criticism to move away from the author and the restrictions of authorial intention (Burke 2008). The reader has now become the focus of much critical attention: who is ‘the reader’ and how does he/she interact with and interpret a given text within their own intellectual and cultural sphere? A recognition that any given text embodies, and every reading invokes, multiple meanings has influenced the area of textual scholarship in a variety of ways, perhaps most obviously in the acceptance of subjectivity as an unavoidable phenomenon of production, reception and editing. The bold and unashamedly subjective approach of scholars like Kane and Donaldson towards editing medieval texts continues to cause debate. Perhaps one of the most thought-provoking outcomes of their Athlone edition of *Piers Plowman* was a reminder that editors are also readers and are conditioned by experience and expectation (Kane & Donaldson 1988).

More recently, Paul Zumthor’s discussion of the mobility of the medieval text has provided the term *mouvance* and the impetus to shift the focus from authorial intention and
a strict adherence to stemmatic relationships and textual corruption which had previously shaped attitudes to editing and textual criticism (Zumthor 1992). The term *mouvance* and the concept of the adaptability of the medieval text underpins the theoretical perspectives of the thesis, and subsequent analysis and discussions aim to demonstrate how William Langland’s *Piers Plowman* and John Lydgate’s *Fall of Princes* were reshaped and received as they moved from the late medieval period into the early modern. More specifically, this thesis holds that textual *continuity* must be an aspect of textual *mouvance*; if texts are reworked to suit the expectations and requirements of the contemporary readership, elements of the text’s previous incarnation(s) must remain. These elements may be echoes of textual and/or paratextual features which suggest past reading practices and point towards new reading models. The echoes may also be found to reference, consciously or not, the cultural associations of the text and its history of transmission and reception.

The chosen prints of *Piers Plowman* and the *Fall of Princes* demonstrate the process of reworking, or *mouvance*, and the legacy, or *continuity*, of previous cultural and textual associations. From the fifteenth century through to the early seventeenth, the editorial decisions regarding the textual and paratextual elements tell us much about the changing perceptions of the text and its place in literary culture. Furthermore, this thesis aims to examine what the interaction between and development of the textual and paratextual elements indicates about reading practices and aspects of literacy. Particular focus is given to the punctuation practices employed which demonstrate the variety of pressures affecting linguistic form and function. As Parkes notes, the history of punctuation is also the history of literacy (Parkes 1992: 2), and literacy itself is a complex social phenomenon. The linguistic concepts of form/function and intra/extralinguistic factors are therefore interdependent and both must be acknowledged in order to build up a meaningful picture of past literary cultures.

Shifting the emphasis from author to reader not only has consequences for the editorial process, but does it also alter what we conceive of as the ‘meaning’ of a text? Reader-focused textual theory and the perspectives of book history acknowledge that meanings are always multiple, regardless of authorial or editorial intention. However, it could be argued that accepting the collaborative nature of book production and the nuanced nature of its reception allows us to recreate a dynamic picture of past literary cultures. Studies in the history of reading run the risk of polarised reasoning. In an attempt
to recreate a ‘fully historicized’ account of reception, they may resort to idealised conceptions of the reader and the text being read. On the other hand, they may fail to produce a theoretical framework for analysing reading habits and practices due to the fear of imposing a restricted, simplistic view of production and reception. James Simpson, in a call to re-assess the strict medieval/early modern periodization divide, argues that we must transform traditional ‘philological historicism into scholarship unashamed of its own historicity’ (Simpson 2007a: 30). Such a move would foster a sense of continuity between the medieval and the early modern; we would see the early modern ‘in the light of the medieval centuries’ and the medieval would subsequently appear less distanced and alien (Simpson 2007a: 30). This assertion pertains to two main theoretical underpinnings of the present thesis: firstly, analysis of a text’s history of reception and interpretation forces an acknowledgement of our own critical and historical biases and allows a better understanding of how the early modern period conceived of its own relationship with the medieval past; and secondly, that these conceptions of past, present and identity can be found in the complex reworkings of medieval texts.

Under the broad scope of textual criticism the study of textual transmission and editing is well established and the various theoretical perspectives are discussed in more detail in the following sections. The distinct study of reader response or ‘reception theory’ is a development of the late twentieth-century and captures an interdisciplinary field (Holub 1984). Reading ‘habits’ and reading ‘practices’ are terms which are being increasingly employed to describe various aspects of reception and response. However, they are often used interchangeably and it is worth clarifying these terms and considering how they can offer different insights in the study of reading. Reading habits are shaped by the sociopolitical backdrop and affected by technological developments. Studies of reading habits will therefore focus on the extralinguistic factors which influence what people read, the changing format of the book, and the wider implications of the shift from orality to literacy in Western culture. Approaching the history of reading from a different angle, the study of reading practices involves a more intralinguistic focus, accounting for developments in stylistics and the implications of the silent reading model on syntax and punctuation. Although particular focus will be paid to the developments in punctuation practices and the correlation with developing reading practices and models of literacy, both angles will be considered within the current project.
The insights provided by existing scholarship are combined with independent analysis of the chosen texts by William Langland and John Lydgate in order to frame a theory of punctuation development which can be seen to interact with changing tastes, reading practices, developments in literacy, intellectual progress and the changing socio-historical landscape. Langland and Lydgate offer a fascinating comparison and contrast in terms of their unique histories of textual transmission and reception. Both were late medieval Catholic writers whose work enjoyed a wide circulation, as the extant manuscripts can attest. Langland’s poem developed associations with the contemporary political upheaval of the Peasant’s Revolt (1381) but evidence of the poem’s circulation suggests a broad readership, both popular and clerical (Middleton 1982). Langland’s poem experienced a revival of interest during the Edwardian era of the Reformation and Crowley’s reworking of the poem can be seen in the wider context of Reformation literature which sought to legitimise the Anglican Church and provide a history of reform stretching back to the medieval period (Kidd 1999; Simpson 2007b). Readers in the sixteenth century were encouraged by Robert Crowley’s 1550 print editions to see the echoes and continuities between the politics of Langland’s poem and the politics of the mid-sixteenth century reformers. The discussion of Piers Plowman’s textual transmission history and the detailed analysis of Crowley’s prints in the following chapters assesses the extent to which the sixteenth century editor manipulated the text to suit his own polemical agenda and what his paratextual framing of the poem can tell us about the interpretative responses he expected from his readers.

While Langland was being refashioned into a voice of early reform and dissent, John Lydgate’s work experienced a sharp and sustained decline in popularity. Lydgate is now acknowledged as the most prominent and prolific poet of the fifteenth century and his relationship with his Lancastrian patrons demonstrates the interaction between politics, literature and popular culture during the fifteenth century (Pearsall 1970; Nolan 2005; Scanlon & Simpson 2006; Flannery 2012). Despite Lydgate’s contemporary status, the sixteenth century found his role as a Benedictine monk problematic and his writings, which included a significant number of saints’ lives and Catholic devotional material, difficult to incorporate into the narrative of progress promulgated by the reformers. Scanlon and Simpson discuss this tendency to select medieval authors who could be modelled as heralds of the Reformation; Lydgate, in contrast to Langland, was dismissed (Scanlon & Simpson 2006: 3). This disparagement of Lydgate’s writing, argue Scanlon and Simpson, persisted up until the twentieth century, but his role in fifteenth-century public life and his
contribution to literature now generates new insights into Lydgate’s reception and the landscape of fifteenth-century literary culture more generally.\footnote{The revival of Lydgate’s poetry and critical interest in his politics and role as a ‘public’ poet is often considered to have originated from Derek Pearsall’s 1970 biography of the Benedictine monk.}

Lydgate’s poems did not disappear at the first hint of Protestant reform, however, and a small number of poems continued to be printed throughout the sixteenth century. The text chosen for analysis in the present thesis, the mighty *Fall of Princes*, was Lydgate’s translation of Laurent de Premierfait, itself a French version of Boccaccio’s *De casibus virorum illustrium*. This poem enjoyed steady print success during the sixteenth century and towards the end of the century the poem’s themes of Fortune and good governance were substantially reworked. During the late sixteenth century the literary tradition of the *Mirror for Magistrates* emerged which assimilated the structural and thematic features of the *De casibus* genre and reshaped it to better represent the political landscape and the concerns of the seventeenth-century readership. The sections specifically dealing with Lydgate and the *Fall of Princes* will interrogate the extent to which the themes of responsible governance and nation-forming appealed to the early modern readership and allowed this poem to survive while the majority of his canon sank into obscurity.

The reception and reworking of these two late medieval Catholic writers diverges in the sixteenth century, demonstrating a process of wider cultural refashioning in which medieval authors must be incorporated into the prevailing narrative of reform or risk dismissal. Langland is framed in Crowley’s print as a voice of dissent and a proponent of reform, and the perceived political continuity served to recommend the poem to early modern audiences. The lack of editorial and critical attention paid to Lydgate’s work in the post-Reformation period is itself a form of rewriting by omission. But both writers demonstrate the concepts of centrality and marginality at play in literary culture, and the lasting impact that can have on critical assessment of works. Lydgate enjoyed contemporary success and his role as a ‘public’ poet has been evaluated for what it reveals about late medieval relationships between author and patron, literature and politics (Nolan 2005; Scanlon & Simpson 2006). From a central, public poet to a marginalised one, Cooper and Mapstone argue that Lydgate has suffered from a ‘modern distrust of public poetry, of literature written from the centre rather than from the margins’ (Cooper & Mapstone 1997: 7). Langland’s poem was neither marginal nor insignificant in the late
fourteenth century but his politics or, more accurately, the interpretation of them, characterised Langland as a voice of reform amidst a landscape of corruption and inequality. Crowley rejects the notion of Langland as a prophet, including a prefatory warning to his readers to ‘Loke not upon this boke therefore to talke of wonders past or to com…’ (From the Printer to the Reader). However, the following chapters will consider to what extend Crowley identified with and manipulated Langland’s perceived role as a marginalised voice.

The life of a text and the transformations it undergoes reflects the changing attitudes and requirements of the contemporary readership. Texts are constantly rewritten and reworked by printers, editors and readers and are extremely sensitive to environmental changes, whether they be technological, social, political or religious. They act as a cultural barometer and how they are transformed by successive reworking can tell us much about the changing function of that particular text within society. These transformations can also provide an insight into the changing role of books and literacy in the early modern era. The sixteenth century and the broader period of the ‘Renaissance’ is often understood as bearing witness to the emergence of a recognisably modern culture. The religious and cultural upheaval of the Reformation, the intellectual developments of Humanism and scientific discovery, and the technological advancements of the printing press propelled early modern society further from the preceding medieval ‘dark ages’. It has been argued that the portrayal of medieval English society as an unenlightened, ‘static’ age was part of a self-fashioning by Renaissance commentators and thinkers (Hadfield 1994: 16); an attempt by sixteenth century society to define itself against the Catholic past and look forwards to a Protestant future.
1.1.1 Thesis Structure

The previous section has provided a summary of the main aims and objectives of the thesis. Section 1.2 discusses in detail the research which informs the broader theoretical approach taken here. Section 1.3 outlines the political context of sixteenth-century literary culture, situating the various editions of Langland and Lydgate within their transmission histories and comparing and contrasting their treatment and reception in print. Section 1.4 evaluates the existing scholarship relating specifically to punctuation development and reading practices, and outlines how these observations are applied to the analysis of the chosen texts. This section also outlines the ways in which existing scholarship is synthesized but also the ways in which the present thesis aims to contribute to the current understanding of punctuation development, the related role of paratext and the evolution of reading practices during the late medieval and early modern periods.

Chapter Two briefly surveys the history of textual scholarship and discusses the foremost theories relating to book history and editing, aligning the current thesis with contemporary perspectives which regard the book as a cultural artefact and acknowledges the concept of textual instability. The chapter also discusses the most recent studies pertaining to the medieval and early modern reader and the theoretical and practical challenges of reconstructing past reading habits and practices. The insights provided by book history, reception studies and philology will be applied to Piers Plowman in Chapter Three and the Fall of Princes in Chapter Four, and used to formulate an interdisciplinary theory which considers the relationship(s) between literacy and literary culture, between the changing reader model and textual production, between form and function.

Chapter Three contains the detailed analysis of Langland’s Piers Plowman, including an overview of the poem’s textual transmission history and its editorial treatment from script to print. The editions of Piers Plowman selected exemplify the irregular textual transmission history of the poem which did not appear in print until Robert Crowley’s impressions of 1550 and, following Owen Rogers’ reprint from 1561, did not subsequently appear in a full edition until the beginning of the nineteenth century. Particular focus is given to Trinity College Cambridge MS B.15.17 and Crowley’s prints which provides an opportunity to compare the treatment of the poem in script and print. In addition to drawing conclusions about the development of reading practices based on the interaction
between punctuation and paratext in the poem, the chapter also challenges the notion of Crowley as a radical editor who ‘kidnapped’ the text for his own polemical ends (King 1976: 342). By analysing the paratextual material in relation to his role as one of the sixteenth-century’s ‘commonwealth men’ (Wood 2009: 33) and assessing recent studies of Crowley’s edition by Scanlon (2007) and Hailey (2008), the chapter will examine the various ways that Crowley framed the literary and political dimensions of the medieval poem for his Reformation readership.

Chapter Four takes a similar socio-historical and socio-pragmatic approach towards John Lydgate’s Fall of Princes by analysing a selection of five prints, the first by Pynson in 1494 and through to the emergence of the Mirror for Magistrates and Kyngston’s edition of 1619. Particular focus is given to Tottell and Wayland’s contemporaneous editions of 1554 and comparisons are made between their editorial treatment of a medieval text and Crowley’s approach. The chapter will also consider how Tottell and Wayland’s political affiliations differed from Crowley’s and shaped their own paratextual framing of Lydgate’s poem. The fate of Lydgate’s poem from the mid-sixteenth century onwards is an example of textual mouvance and the susceptibility of literature to contemporary political pressures. It may not have been possible to conceive of Lydgate as a medieval voice of reform and dissent but his poem, itself a rendering of the de casibus tradition, is significantly reworked and reshaped in the sixteenth century. Lydgate’s literary reflections on Classical and medieval fame and fortune becomes The Mirror for Magistrates, an early modern account of nation-forming and a chronicle of contemporary historical figures. The chapter investigates the literary and political continuity between Lydgate’s poem and the early modern reworking, and considers what the developments reveal about reading habits and practices.

Despite the divergent textual transmission histories of Langland and Lydgate, the prints considered in the present thesis intersect in the mid-sixteenth century and this period necessarily becomes the focus. However, the range of prints also allows the analysis of reading habits and practices to extend through the sixteenth century and into the start of the seventeenth century, as the silent reader becomes the predominant model of reader and the changing functions of literacy and literature exerts further pressure on the form of the medieval text. Chapter Five offers a summation of the analysis and a discussion of the implications of the findings for our understanding of punctuation development and reading practices, which move from a predominantly oral reading culture to the predominantly
silent. Based on the analysis of the preceding chapters, this section will argue that a reassessment of the function of punctuation in silent reading is due. Punctuation markings changed in form, quantity and distribution as they were increasingly required to act as a mediator between the text and the reader in the absence of a physical narrator. However, while the interpretative role of punctuation markings developed to reflect the needs of the changing reader model, the underlying function – pausing – remains consistent across reading practices. Punctuation and paratext can interact in complex and seemingly contradictory ways to produce various types of pause for the reader, both cognitive and visual. The printed medieval text demonstrates the heterogeneity of early modern reading practices through the frequent merging of scribal and print conventions and by the conflation of grammatical and rhetorical systems of punctuation.

This thesis, then, engages with a number of research questions relating to the development of literary culture and silent reading practices from the fifteenth century, with a particular focus on the sixteenth century as a period of intersection and transition. Developments in punctuation and the approaches of editors towards punctuating medieval texts provides valuable insights into the changing uses of literacy and reading practices from the early modern period. It is also argued that the shifting boundaries between paratext and punctuation demonstrates the changing needs and requirements of the increasing numbers of readers. Through close-reading and a qualitative study of the textual transmission histories of William Langland and John Lydgate the thesis proposes a theory of punctuation development which ultimately aligns with the concept of the ‘reader-model’ (Jajdelska 2007). The following analysis will show that the developments in punctuation practices were relatively gradual and print editions of medieval texts display a tension between the desire for authenticity and a need for modernisation. Subsequently, we can conclude that the early modern represented a period of gradual transition during which readers were encountering and employing a range of reading practices between and within editions of medieval texts. Reconstructing past reading practices is a means of understanding the historical reception of a particular text and, by engaging with the theory of textual mouvance, we acknowledge both the limitations and the potential of historicism.
1.2 The Critical Framework & Theoretical Approach

‘The scholar who pays attention to the book in which a text appears can be seen to historicize both that text and his or her criticism in the process’.

(Bahr & Gillespie 2013: 347-348)

As we experience a dramatic and omnipresent shift into the digital age the role of the book, in all its various forms, is brought into sharp focus. The study of books and their history has moved to the forefront of textual and cultural study and the ancient discipline of bibliography has undergone a number of significant changes. Traditional bibliography concerned itself with the study of books in their physical form; the description and evaluation of the size, parchment type, binding and script or type-face of the book in question. To interpret the meaning of these physical attributes or to discern the meaning of the text inside was certainly not the domain of the bibliographer. The interpretation of meaning was the province of the literary critic. Literary critics, in turn, could be dismissive about the effect of these physical details on the reception and interpretation of the text. Modern bibliographers and book historians aim for two outcomes: firstly, to unite the disciplines of bibliography and textual criticism so that their specialisms and perspectives might complement one another and allow for a more comprehensive approach to book scholarship; and secondly, that the study of book history recognises the entire, dynamic history of the text which is a product of the contemporary culture. The book becomes a cultural artefact in a state of mouvance, inextricably linked to the political and social pressures which shape its production, transmission and interpretation (McGann 1983; McKenzie 1992; Zumthor 1992).

This project aims to confront both issues debated in modern textual scholarship and the literature review provides an overview of existing criticism relating to book history, editing theory and punctuation analysis. The analysis of reading practices in this project bridges the traditional divide between textual criticism and close-reading on the one hand, and the history of the book and textual production, on the other. Close reading and historical contextualisation were often discussed as incompatible approaches in textual scholarship, with the former accused of failing to recognise the complexities of textual production and the various extralinguistic factors – social, political, economic – which can shape the text. The latter approach has been criticised for its focus on historical context while ignoring the aesthetic significance of the text. Bahr and Gillespie’s recent response to
this perceived ‘scholarly impasse’ advocates a reassessment of the theoretical implications and practical applications of both close-reading and historical contextualisation (Bahr & Gillespie 2013: 346). They propose that a renewed focus on form and aesthetics permits and encourages a close reading of the book as well as a close reading of the text. Close reading of the book can find “the literary” in unlikely places such as page layout and rubrication (Bahr & Gillespie 2013: 349).

This theory of comprehensive close reading which does not divorce the text and its literary interpretation from the material form in which it resides is applied in the current thesis. Readers do not simply read a Text, they read a Book; therefore, any attempt to understand how a reader might have understood and engaged with any given text must also consider the formal features which can generate meaning and shape interpretation. More specifically, it is argued here, a historical sociopragmatics approach which unites close-reading and historical contextualisation can be applied to the analysis of reading practices. The following chapters seek to understand and demonstrate how systems of punctuation and paratext interact within the book and the page, and how this interaction might be described and interpreted as evidence for the production and reception of the text. The relationship between the punctuation and the paratext, between the text and the book, and between the intra- and the extralinguistic illustrates the development of reading practices as the text moves through time.

Historical sociopragmatics is an approach which has evolved from wider historical pragmatic concerns, and demonstrates a similar desire, expressed by Bahr and Gillespie, to unite the study of form and historical context. Culpeper asserts that historical pragmatics has traditionally leant towards historical linguistics, with a focus on ‘particular linguistic forms and “internal” issues of language change’ (Culpeper 2011: 3). Historical sociopragmatics is more philological in approach and application, aiming to examine linguistic features in relation to the text in which they appear and the surrounding context(s) of that text. Uncovering pragmatic meaning through the ‘interaction between specific aspects of social context and particular historical language’, historical sociopragmatics follows sociopragmatics more generally in its focus on speech and associated forms of behaviour (Culpeper 2011: 1). However, the ‘historical’ requires the ‘(re)construction’ of contexts on the basis of written records in the first instance (Culpeper 2011: 4); this thesis considers how a historical sociopragmatics approach might be applied
to the analysis of the ‘page’ and the (re)construction of past reading practices. The ‘situational contexts’ (Culpeper 2011: 4) become the textual and paratextual features which interact on the page to produce meaning. By restoring these layers of meaning and applying the concept of mouvance to the chosen texts, we can attempt to historicize reader engagement synchronically and diachronically.

By focusing on the notion of multiple versions and multiple meanings, book history scholars of the late twentieth century shifted the focus from the author to the reader. While traditional textual scholarship had long concerned itself with reconstructing the authorial original through the analysis of codicological relationships and the identification of scribal errors, scholars such as D.F. McKenzie and Bernard Cerquiglini have argued for a form of textual criticism which acknowledges and respects variation and the layers of interpretation involved in the production of a text (McKenzie 1992; Cerquiglini 1999). Rather than disregard those features which are considered to be non-authorial, they become part of the history of transmission and reception, providing insight into the motivations behind editorial choices. The ‘hypnotic fascination with the isolated author’ not only overlooks the multiple layers of influence but also results, argues McGann, in an ‘undetermined concept of the literary work’ (McGann 1983: 122). Contemporary theories in book history provide the opportunity to connect the areas of bibliography and textual criticism and promote a more comprehensive and democratising view of textual production and reception. Printers and editors are credited with a role in the creative process and the ways in which readers interact with a text is now a distinct area of study. The application of the terms ‘printer’ or ‘editor’ is not solely an issue of semantics; the titles encapsulate how we view the early pioneers of print, expressing the perceived level of practical involvement in contrast to creative and intellectual collaboration.

Within the current thesis the terms are used interchangeably in relation to the late fifteenth- and early sixteenth-century editions, a deliberate comment on the multidisciplinary role of the early printers. After an uncertain beginning for the publishing industry, the smattering of individual printers treading new commercial ground evolved into a stable publishing industry during the sixteenth century (Pettegree 2010). The associated roles and responsibilities became more specialised; Richard Pynson was both editor and printer in his 1494 print of the Fall of Princes while Robert Crowley’s role in publishing Piers Plowman was primarily editorial and the physical act of printing the book
was undertaken by Richard Grafton. Descriptions of these printers, publishers and editors therefore becomes less interpretative and more pragmatic as we move into the sixteenth century.

The wider notion of the ‘sociology’ of the text has effectively opened up new avenues for research and interpretation (McKenzie 1992). The persistent search for an elusive authorial original or archetype has given way to an acceptance of multiplicity (Cerquiglini 1999). While authorial intention is no longer the driving force behind all editing practice, it has not been made redundant and the intentions of the author continue to inform and influence editorial practice. The choice of copy-text(s) and the weight given to the various textual elements (orthography, spelling and punctuation) have long been debated. Aligning with Jerome McGann’s original call for the recognition of these ‘accidental’ features as a significant editorial consideration within the wider interactions of bibliographic and lexical systems, it is argued in this project that the accidental changes applied to the chosen texts by successive printers can provide important insights into the concerns and preoccupations of both the editor(s) and the readership (McGann 1983). Developments in title page design during the sixteenth century are particularly striking in this respect. Comparing Pynson’s 1527 edition of Lydgate’s *Fall of Princes* with both Tottell’s and Wayland’s editions printed less than 30 years later in 1554 illustrates a decisive shift in presentation. Pynson’s print opens with a large woodcut image depicting a presentation scene between a figure in ecclesiastical garments and noblemen, surrounded by a decorative floral border and prominent cross. The image does not represent Lydgate and was in fact repurposed by Pynson, having previously appeared in his edition of the *Shepherd’s Kalender* in 1506 (Gillespie 2006: 170). By contrast, Tottell and Wayland both opt for an architectural design in which the title and print details are surrounded by classical columns and figures. Both also prominently display Elizabeth I’s coat of arms at the top of the page, ensuring the Renaissance credentials of the edition. In addition, Richard Tottell utilises roman type alongside the dominant black letter, providing an example of overlapping styles and conventions present in sixteenth century prints.

Paratextual features, then, allow us to infer much about the political affiliations and intellectual ambitions of both the printers and their readers. In her study entitled *How the Page Matters* (2011), Bonnie Mak argues that a focus on the technological development of the book has divided the analysis into separate eras of manuscript and print and she calls
for an interdisciplinary approach towards paratextual description (Mak 2011: 9). The page, argues Mak is ‘an interface, standing at the centre of a complicated dynamic of interaction and reception’ (Mak 2011: 21). By engaging in close reading of the chosen texts and their punctuation systems, and relating them to the surrounding paratextual elements, the current thesis aims to provide such an interdisciplinary study which considers how the various elements interact and develop within the page, the book and across a series of versions.

Furthermore, this thesis will argue that the interaction between textual and paratextual features within a single manuscript or printed edition can also be used to chart and explain developments in reading practices. Partridge asserts that during 1350-1500 readers ‘came to expect…several elements that would either facilitate reading or help a reader find particular passages or topics’ (Partridge 2011: 79). These elements might be traditionally considered paratextual, separate from the text while guiding readers through it. The reading practice(s) ‘facilitated’ by these elements prioritises the practical and the navigational role of paratextual elements. This thesis will also consider the interpretative possibilities afforded by paratext, possibilities which expanded with the advent of print. The analysis in the following chapters will also seek to demonstrate the blending of the navigational and interpretative functions of punctuation and paratext that occurs on the page. Punctuation and paratextual elements can be analysed in isolation, but only when they are considered together can we gain a comprehensive insight into how readers may have engaged with and responded to the text, and the range of competing and developing reading practices at play.

Important studies by Brewer (1996), Gillespie (2006) and Echard (2008) discuss early print culture and issues of textual transmission in relation to Langland and Lydgate, and their theoretical perspectives provide crucial background within the current project. M.B. Parkes’ comprehensive history of punctuation in the West provides the principal reference work for the description of the developing forms and functions (Parkes 1992). Peter J. Lucas’ examination of fifteenth-century historian John Capgrave’s role as author and publisher demonstrates that reader engagement was a central consideration for Capgrave. His analysis of Capgrave’s own punctuation practices and his concern with ‘readability’ takes a similar reader-centred view of punctuation and presentation as the present thesis (Lucas 2007). The insights of Paul Saenger and Joyce Coleman relating to
the history of literacy and reading practices are well established and foundational works for any scholar working in the area (Coleman 1995; Saenger 1982, 1997). These insights are evaluated alongside Elspeth Jajdelska’s more recent innovative study *Silent Reading the Birth of the Narrator* (2007), which similarly influences the theoretical approach of the current thesis; her research convincingly demonstrates the link between changing reading practices and the developing prose styles of the seventeenth-century. Jajdelska argues that a ‘critical mass’ of silent readers had evolved by the end of the seventeenth-century and this change in reader model is reflected in syntactical developments (Jajdelska 2007: 3). Silent reading no longer involved a physical speaker and this prompted the development of a narrator embedded in the text who could mediate between text and reader. No longer able to rely upon the ‘reader-as-speaker’ for tone, emphasis and clarification, writers were required to embed textual clues in their prose which alerted readers to the spatial and temporal points of reference in the text, and there is a subsequent development in prose style (Jajdelska 2007: 4). Traditional views on this stylistic shift in early modern prose had tended to focus on attitudinal changes and social and intellectual developments as the catalyst; older texts were therefore rendered obscure and problematic to the contemporary readership due to developments in the intellectual and cultural landscape.

The current thesis takes into account changing literary taste and intellectual sensibilities when discussing the textual transmission history of *Piers Plowman* and *The Fall of Princes*, with particular focus on how these medieval texts were reworked and reconceived as they moved through the sixteenth century. However, Jajdelska’s research proves that the focus on attitudinal and cultural changes are short-sighted and reductive; we must also consider the development of the silent-reader model if we wish to fully understand the developments in reading practices and the subsequent effect on early modern prose style. Early modern editors were attempting to reconcile a number of factors with regards to accessibility and authenticity; printed editions of medieval texts often betray this tension through the textual and paratextual features. Robert Crowley’s opening editorial remarks in his 1550 impressions of *Piers Plowman* explain his desire to present an authentic and authoritative text. He consulted men ‘more exercised in the studie of antiquites’ and, by noting that ‘diuerse copies haue it diuerslye’ in relation to an excerpt from Passus VI, Crowley demonstrates a process of manuscript consultation. The medieval origins of the poem were also central to Crowley’s attempts to highlight the political continuities between *Piers Plowman* and his own reform agenda and, as such, editorial interference with the alliteration, verse structure and spelling is minimal.
This focus on authenticity is pitted against Crowley’s ambitions for the text’s circulation and his concerns for accessibility. In the same opening remarks section, Crowley feels the need to explain the structure of alliterative verse with the aid of an example from the text; once they understand the form of the metre, he assures his readers, they will find the verse ‘very pleasaunt to reade’. The reader’s perseverance will be similarly rewarded with regards to the language, the ‘sence some what darcke, but not so harde’ (The Printer to the Reader, 2nd impression). The punctuation practices are one strand within a tangle of competing influences and choices which demonstrate the tension which exists in the early printed book. As the following analysis will show, the ‘system’ applied by the editors is often unstable and can appear contradictory in light of other paratextual developments which have been deployed to aid the early modern reader navigate and engage with the medieval text.

On the subject of punctuation, Jajdelska reflects on the ways in which punctuation has been traditionally treated by editors and analysed by scholars. Mirroring McGann’s call for the careful consideration of accidental features within editorial frameworks, she is critical of editorial approaches which fail to acknowledge punctuation as an ‘authentic’ feature of any given text (Jajdelska 2007: 44). Furthermore, Jajdelska argues against analysis which assumes punctuation underwent a change in function during the transition from an oral to a literate culture and formulates her argument thus: ‘there is a continuity of function in punctuation marks used throughout the period. The marks continue to represent pauses of varying lengths, and the hierarchy of marks with respect to length remains stable’ (Jajdelska 2007: 46). The present thesis engages directly with this theoretical perspective and applies it to the analysis of the punctuation systems found in selected editions of *Piers Plowman* and *The Fall of Princes*. Traditional analysis has noted the change from rhetorical punctuation representative of an oral culture to a grammatical application of punctuation which reflected increasing literacy levels. However, this description can assume a change in the basic function of punctuation across reading communities in addition to a change in form. This project will argue that the underlining function of punctuation, the clarification of sense, continues to be signalled by a hierarchy of pauses. The act of pausing, physically or mentally, is central to comprehending syntax and underpins all systems of punctuation.
The expanding repertoire and distribution of marks developed in the sixteenth century was required to fill the space left by the speaker. Within the oral tradition, the ‘reader as speaker’ could be relied upon to mediate the meaning of the text for the wider audience through the use of tone, body language, emphasis, etc. In the absence of the physical speaker punctuation was required to act as the liaison between writer and reader. A larger array of marks allowed the writer to signal subtle semantic distinctions, and the responsibility of mediation and interpretation shifted from the speaker to the punctuation. Paratext continued to function as a reading guide through the use of chapter headings and tables of contents, but the addition of appended glossaries and more extensive prefatory material highlights a shift in reading practices. The consultation of detailed prefatory material is undertaken by a silent reader able to peruse at their leisure. The level of silent readers did not reach ‘critical mass’ until the end of the seventeenth century, however, and readers in the sixteenth century encountered both silent reading practices and residual orality. Accepting the continuity of the basic function of punctuation requires a re-evaluation of history and development which aligns with changing patterns of literacy and reader models. While Jajdelska’s research focuses on the emergence of the ‘critical mass’ (Jajdelska 2007: 3) from the late seventeenth century and the subsequent changes to prose styles, this project will apply the theoretical perspectives to the earlier period of transition. By explicitly acknowledging literacy as a complex social phenomenon, punctuation development is considered in relation to changing reader models which are themselves a product of intra- and extralinguistic processes. In this way, the current research aims to bridge the gap between analysis, interpretation and theory, bringing the study of punctuation in line with the theoretical perspectives and interdisciplinary direction of modern book history.

Evaluating the systems applied specifically to late medieval texts by early modern printers provides further levels of insight into the development of reading practices during the period of transition from oral to literate and script to print. Literacy did not eradicate the preceding oral culture overnight and the arrival of the printing press did not obliterate the established scribal culture. The chosen texts display a more gradual adoption of new punctuation conventions than might be expected given the rapid expansion of the printing industry and the dogmatic drive for literacy in the wake of the Reformation. The frequent overlapping of different systems within individual editions and individual texts, in reality, indicates a heterogeneous reading community with complex practices and expectations.
Through her analysis of the role of visuality in pre-modern reading cultures, Desmond adopts Zumthor’s theory of *mouvance* and the claim that all medieval texts, including the fragmentary and the ‘corrupt’, should be treated as ‘transcripts of an oral performance’ (Desmond 2009: 220). The printed medieval text, then, embodies a residual orality and performativity which comes into conflict with the relative fixity of print, and the development of textual and paratextual features geared towards emerging silent-reading practices.

The ‘inherent performativity’ (Desmond 2009: 220) of medieval texts relates to the current thesis and the chosen texts in more specific and compelling ways. Both *Piers Plowman* and the *Fall of Princes* embody oral and performative qualities which are integral to the structure and interpretation of the poetry. *Piers* contains many competing voices and dialogues vying for the attention of Will the dreamer and the reader. Scholars have noted the various ways scribes highlight the dialogic aspect of the poem through the deployment of titles, rubrication and textual divisions; the evidence for reading practices provided by these paratextual features is discussed in more detail in Chapter Three. The *Fall of Princes* is structured around a series of speakers taking turns to recount their tales of woe to an attentive Boccaccio, who proceeds to record their words in writing. The speech acts of the protagonists in the *Fall* are recorded in writing by Boccaccio; the medieval readers were likely to have engaged with the text as speakers or audience, reintroducing the aspects of orality and performativity to the poem. Sixteenth century readers were increasingly silent readers and the speeches were not physically recited or performed. Both texts have speech and speakers at their centre but as the texts move through the sixteenth century the treatment of this oral, performative aspect is not only subject to changing literary interpretations, but to developments in reading practices.

Medieval literary culture is described by Sponsler as a landscape of ‘literate aurality’, a term which acknowledges a broad range of reading practices and forms of literacy available to late medieval readers (Sponsler 2010:1). The term and, more generally, the concept of shifting and unstable reading practices informs the analysis of the editions in the thesis. Desmond argues that *mouvance* does not simply provide a theory of medieval poetics – it also allows a ‘critical approach to the performative qualities of reading, whether medieval or modern’ (Desmond 2009: 220). The theory of *mouvance* can be applied to the reader as well as the text; no individual or reading community employs only one type of
reading practice. Readers in the sixteenth century were particularly flexible in practice, as silent reading approached a ‘critical mass’ (Jajdelska 2007:3) but a broader culture of ‘literate aurality’ prevailed and shaped, and was shaped by, the innovations of the printing press. It is the aim of this thesis to examine how these interactions played out across the book and the page through the textual and paratextual elements, and what this can reveal about reader engagement.
1.3 The Politics of Reading & (Re)Writing in Reformation England: Langland, Lydgate & Textual Continuity

‘Every society rewrites its past, every reader rewrites its texts, and, if they have any continuing life at all, at some point every printer redesigns them’.

(McKenzie 1999: 25)

The works of William Langland and John Lydgate provide complex and contrasting transmission histories which demonstrate the impact of political change, religious upheaval, and intellectual developments in the literary landscape during the Renaissance and beyond. Lydgate, once the foremost poet of the Lancastrian era, experienced a gradual decline in print popularity during the sixteenth century and was excluded from the literary canon until relatively recently. While Chaucer and Gower were exempt from the 1543 Act for the Advancement of the True Religion aimed at censoring the press, Lydgate was not; the making of an ‘official’ literary canon had begun at an early stage (Simpson 2007b: 41). The print history of *Piers Plowman* is sparse and haphazard, and has suffered from an apparent reluctance among literary critics and editors to tackle the complexities of thematic content and manuscript circulation. Langland’s poetic masterpiece examines his own personal relationship with his faith and the institution of the Church, but it has also been interpreted as a reformist text due, in part, to perceived links with the political activism of the Peasants’ Revolt.  

Stephen Justice’s careful examination of the relationship between Langland’s poem and the rebels involved in the 1381 uprising argues, however, that the relationship was one of appropriation. Rebel preacher John Ball ‘asserted authority’ over the poem and its language, using the imagery and the figure of the plowman as a call to action (Justice 1994: 118). Ball, argues Justice, utilised the evasiveness and complexity of Langland’s poem to suit his political ends. Furthermore, Langland’s ‘susceptibility’ to such appropriations was a result of the poem’s ‘diffidence’ about reform; this ambiguity became an ‘invitation’ to those who wished to use the poem to justify or exemplify their own reformist cause (Justice 1994: 106). Anne Middleton argues that during the period of manuscript transmission the association with Wycliff was ‘cultural’, not textual; it was not until the mid-sixteenth

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2 Colchester chaplain and preacher John Ball had preached to the rebels during the 1381 uprising and was drawn, hanged and quartered in July of that year. His charges included following the heretical doctrines of John Wycliff (Justice 1994: 4). John Ball’s sermons and communications included mention of the figure of Piers the Plowman and Justice makes the case for Ball as a reader of the poem (Justice 1994: 110).
century that the poem was treated as a reformist text (Middleton 1982: 107). In other words, the links with reform were only codified by editors and commentators in print format and after the Henrician Reformation. Robert Crowley’s 1550 edition of Piers, which refashions Langland and his poem for the reformist cause, had a lasting influence on the way the text was treated and received by later editors and literary critics. Viewing the history of Piers Plowman in the late medieval and early modern periods in terms of its appropriation by various reformers can provide an insight into the reception of the poem and the attitudes of its readers. However, such analysis also raises the question of when and how ‘interpretation’ becomes ‘appropriation’, and how our critical evaluations of these terms might shape our responses to the text and its editors. Robert Crowley’s edition has often been considered as an example of appropriation, in which he utilised the late medieval Catholic poem to promote the mid-sixteenth century Protestant cause. However, this chapter will show that Crowley, the radical Protestant reformer, was first and foremost a reader. His engagement with Langland’s poem influences his editorial treatment, and his choices shaped and presented the text in more complex ways than straightforward appropriation could achieve.

In contrast to Piers Plowman’s ‘cultural’ links to reform, Lydgate’s association with Catholicism was ‘textually’ reinforced by reference to the ‘Monk of Bury’ in the majority of pre-Reformation manuscripts and prints. Alexandra Gillespie has noted a trend among printers for ‘visual and verbal representations of Lydgate’ in large editions which deliberately reinforced his association with monasticism. This subsequently made Lydgate and his works vulnerable to the religious and political upheaval of the Reformation and explains why elaborate editions of Lydgate ceased around the 1530s, but continued for Chaucer and Gower (Gillespie 2000: 69). The reasons for Lydgate’s significant decline in popularity has been variously ascribed to his Catholicism, his verbosity and prolixity, and a more general change in taste through the sixteenth-century. Unlike Chaucer and Langland, Lydgate could not be remodelled as a proto-Protestant for Renaissance society. However, James Simpson argues that the rejection of Lydgate was ‘less a matter of changing tastes and more a matter of political injunction and imperative’, a result of the ‘stark periodization’ of pre- and post-Reformation society which began in the sixteenth-century (Simpson 2007b: 42). Although Lydgate no longer held his place as a public poet and his impressive canon of religious poems essentially disappeared, several of his secular texts did survive the Protestant reforms. William Copland’s 1565 edition of Lydgate’s animal fable The Churl and the Bird appears anomalous due to the relatively late date and the
definitively medieval subject and genre. This thesis offers a re-evaluation of Lydgate’s sixteenth-century reception by presenting a detailed investigation of the textual transmission of *Fall of Princes*, Lydgate’s classically-inspired poem which thrived in the sixteenth century. This was a work which encouraged a distinct literary tradition stemming from the wider ‘de casibus’ genre and lasted into the seventeenth century. Clearly the sixteenth-century readership still had a taste for forms of medieval literature, supporting Simpson’s view that the decline of Lydgate was a result of political circumstance, not an overnight change in public taste.

These political circumstances, argues James Simpson, resulted in the sixteenth century becoming a period of ‘diminishing liberties’ (Simpson 2007b: 1) and he is sceptical of the notion that the Reformation and the Renaissance represented a liberation from the cultural constraints of the medieval past. The rapid centralisation of cultural and political power during the mid sixteenth-century ‘provoked correlative simplifications and narrowings in literature’ (Simpson 2007b: 1). The advent of print encouraged a set of specific simplifications with regards to the production and reception of literature. The administrative and commercial power of London centralised the language and regional literature found itself relegated from the mainstream to the margins (Simpson 2007b: 561). From this perspective, the press becomes an agent of limitation, curtailing the regional diversity of medieval literary culture. It recalls Eamon Duffy’s views in *The Stripping of the Altars* which also argues that the Reformation was an effective disruption of late medieval lay devotion, not the moment of liberation expounded by post-Reformation histories of reform (Duffy 2005). Both Duffy and Simpson are deliberately challenging established criticism and historical consensus. Duffy claims the Reformation suppressed the diversity of medieval religion; Simpson asserts that reform resulted in the simplification of cultural expression through literature more generally. Both are championing heterodoxy and taking a critical view of the perceived orthodoxy of the sixteenth century enforced by political circumstance.

According to both scholars, the Reformation and subsequent cultural shifts did not represent a revolutionary movement motivated by dissatisfaction amongst the lower classes who were enthralled by the democratising potential of Protestantism; rather, the political machinations of the ruling classes provided the drive. The Reformation was self-serving reform from above, not revolution from below. Furthermore, both are critical of the
unchallenged narrative of subsequent centuries of early modern historiography. Simpson aims to ‘historicize both the shift and the forms of understanding that flow from it’ (Simpson 2007b: 559); acknowledging these ‘forms of understanding’ requires a level of scholarly self-reflection and constant vigilance against restrictive periodization. By attacking perceived sixteenth-century cultural conformism, Duffy and Simpson are inverting the established narratives of reform and launching a defence of the medieval by highlighting its cultural diversity.

By examining the various ‘forms’ of understanding which emerge from social upheaval, Simpson acknowledges the multiplicity of meaning which can be uncovered in forms of cultural expression. In a broader sense, contemporary book history has similar theoretical aims; by contesting the idea that in textual creation, production and reception was uniform, the search for order is replaced by an acceptance of variance. The book becomes a central site of cultural excavation from which the multiple layers of intent and meaning can be extracted and interpreted. The acknowledgement of textual instability and the ungovernable nature of reader response wards against attempts to portray past cultures as any less dynamic and conflicted as our own.

Christianity undoubtedly played a central role in the development of literacy and book production from its inception. Literacy was central to exegesis and worship, and Protestantism envisioned the ‘religion of the book’ in a very literal sense. The printing of the vernacular Great Bible in 1539 could be seen as a fulfilment of the commitment to literacy by making scripture available to a larger audience. However, the decision itself was as much politically motivated as it was a concern for the democratisation of scripture. William Tyndale’s earlier translation was outlawed and he was convicted of heresy and executed in 1536. Previous efforts at Biblical translation by the Lollards over a century earlier, described by Rita Copeland as promoting a ‘hermeneutic of access’ (Copland 1991: 225), had been similarly branded as heresy. Although Henry did sanction the Great Bible, only a few short years later in 1543 he attempted to stem growing evangelical enthusiasm by prohibiting women (with a few high class exceptions) and the lower classes from reading the vernacular Bible (MacCulloch 2004: 203). The complex relationship between religious reform, cultural revolution and the printing press has been debated and dissected elsewhere (Eisenstein 1979) but scholars are now increasingly critical of the simplified narrative which views the shift from Catholicism to Protestantism in terms of the shift from script to print.
In his detailed study of early modern preaching, Arnold Hunt similarly challenges the assumption that Protestantism, literacy and the printing press emerged united and triumphant in the post-Reformation period. Many Protestant preachers were wary or sceptical of the effects of the printed sermon and, furthermore, Hunt argues that ‘for many Protestants, the spoken word of the sermon actually took precedence over the printed word of the Bible’ (Hunt 2010: 21). The following analysis seeks to demonstrate the various continuities between pre- and post-Reformation literary culture in terms of reading habits and practices as evidenced through the textual and paratextual features of the chosen editions. The thesis examines the polarised concepts of orality and literacy, and aligns with more recent studies which aim to disrupt the teleological view of literacy and silent reading developments (Coleman 1996). Nevertheless, it is axiomatic that the arrival of the press enabled wider access to both secular literature and, later, vernacular scripture. A reordering of England’s socio-economic status quo which resulted in the rise of the urban middle classes adds a further extralinguistic angle to consider in relation to literacy development and book production.

Aside from opposing triumphalist narratives of the Reformation and serving as a reminder of the pitfalls of historical bias, the views of Simpson and Duffy both firmly establish the political context and structures of institutional power as the driving force behind changes to the forms of cultural expression. From this perspective, the reading habits of the expanding reading community in the sixteenth-century were subject to the ‘sudden concentrations of cultural and political power’ which followed the Reformation (Simpson 2007b:1). This is literary history through the lens of social and institutional reform and it is necessarily focused on the extralinguistic factors which influence and shape the forms of cultural expression. The treatment and reception of Langland and Lydgate can be assessed from this vantage point allowing the reader response, both habits and practices, to be understood with reference to the contemporary political context. This approach is, of course, an attempt to historicise the reception of Langland and Lydgate, but any conclusions drawn regarding the socio-political context of reader response will be considered alongside the evidence gathered from linguistic analysis of the chosen texts.
While James Simpson surveys the history and developments of reading habits through the lens of social revolution and reform, Laurel Amtower attempts to consider how reading practices shaped and were shaped by the intellectual and economic ambitions of the readers. Amtower argues that assessing the middle ages through its institutional discourse does not provide an accurate or comprehensive representation of the reader. Changes which can be charted in the reading habits of the late medieval period reflect, argues Amtower, changing conceptions of the Self (Amtower 2000: 2). In defence of medieval readers who have often been portrayed as an unchallenging audience for orthodox political discourse and Church sanctioned devotional material, Amtower asserts that readers in the middle ages were capable of a ‘subjective or individual response’ (Amtower 2000: 1).

As books were no longer circulated solely within the confines of the Church and cloister or amongst the aristocracy they began to develop an ‘aesthetic value’ (Amtower 2000: 5) within a wider consumer audience. The economic implications of book ownership reflected the rise of the aspirational middle class and evidence gathered from wills and bequests indicate that from the mid-fourteenth century, the working middle classes – merchants, goldsmiths, scribes – were able to afford books and frequently did (Amtower 2000: 29). As books moved from the cloister to the home, the increasingly personal act of reading fanned the flames of intellectual engagement and allowed a certain ‘capacity for self-fashioning’ (Amtower 2000: 43). The desire to read was personally motivated but facilitated by the changing socio-economic backdrop of late medieval England. Books offered a means of self-improvement in the intellectual sense and the economic implications of book ownership represented a certain ‘keeping up of appearances’.

The production and reception of literature in the late medieval and early modern periods can tell us much about the personal aspirations and preoccupations of the readership. However, we must also consider reading habits from a wider social perspective, and the relationship between literary culture and a burgeoning national identity. Sixteenth-century England was indeed required to reconsider its position as a nation newly split from Rome and scholars begin to talk about the forming of a ‘national’ identity distinct from continental Catholicism during this time. The breakdown of distinct regional identities and a move towards national concerns involved a number of socio-political issues. Rapid urban growth beginning in the fourteenth century saw London expand to become a medieval
cultural and linguistic melting pot. Administrative affairs of state were now firmly located in the capital and the use of Chancery Standard by government scribes has been traditionally linked to the process of linguistic standardisation (Fisher 1996).

However, while recognising a level of consistency within government documents after 1430-35 (aligning with Samuels’ Type IV) Michael Benskin rejects the view that Chancery was deliberately promoted (Benskin 2004: 4-5). Arguing that Type IV was not the only form to be found within vernacular government documents, Benskin opposes a simplified account of the emergence of Standard English (Benskin 2004: 4). It is nevertheless reasonable to assert that a centralised administration and move towards a centralised spelling system reflects a desire for linguistic cohesion, in the bureaucratic context at least. As discussed by Simpson, the heterogeneity of literary models in the Middle Ages was replaced by a desire for unity and cohesiveness. For sixteenth-century England to come to terms with the new world order, an ‘aggressive physical and ideological demolition’ of the old order was required; this is the pattern followed by all cultural revolutions (Simpson 2007b: 1). As the old order was represented by the international community of the Catholic Church, an independent English narrative would be crucial for the consolidation of a new nation state split asunder from centuries-old papal rule.

Within the newly established Protestant tradition, claims were also being made about the true history of English Christianity, in contrast to the abuses and excesses of Roman Catholicism. John Foxe’s *Acts and Monuments*, first published in 1563, made the bold claim that the Christianity of the Britons was descended from the Greek Church, not the Roman (Kidd 1999: 99). Kidd asserts that sixteenth-century Protestants were attempting to ‘rehabilitate’ Saxon history as a means of back-dating the claims of the Protestant reformers. Matthew Parker, Archbishop of Canterbury during the first few decades of the reign of Elizabeth I, confidently claimed that the Saxon Church had not submitted to all of the corruptions of the Catholic Church; this was to come after the Norman Conquest in the eleventh-century. Parker even identified Aelfric as a proto-Protestant. Emphasising these connections to the ancient Britons and Saxons, Protestants could smugly respond to Catholic criticisms of illegitimacy (Kidd 1999: 107-109). Dissociated from the modern day connotations of flag waving or as a symbol of a right-wing political agenda, this is the flavour of national awareness that we see developing in the sixteenth century.
However, such attempts to write and rewrite history were rather more complex and inextricably bound with the personal, political and religious self-fashioning of the early modern period. In this sense, it is not unlike the preceding centuries of papal rule, in which identity was shaped by a shared religious perspective. However, early modern England was faced with defining itself in contrast to Catholicism and, perhaps more importantly, by looking back in its own history to uncover a narrative of reform and liberty. Despite the caution we must exercise when discussing an early modern national identity, our contemporary view still holds the sixteenth century as a cultural turning point in many respects. The early modern period witnessed the birth of modern Britain in a geographical and political sense, while philosophy and scientific enquiry pursued during the early modern period have formed the basis of modern intellectual thought. It is perhaps for this reason that texts from the early modern period are regarded as a point of reference for a society in formation.

The reworking of medieval texts gives a further level of insight; by analysing the various ways in which early modern society attempted to rewrite these texts and subsequently repurpose them for the contemporary readership, we can see how society attempted to define itself against the past and simultaneously incorporate it into a narrative of modern identity. James Simpson argues that the medieval period is consistently defined in Western culture ‘by contrast with both classicism and Protestantism’ (Simpson 2007b: 561). This leads us to ask how the early modern period attempted to define itself against classicism and the medieval. Le Goff considers the Renaissance to be a ‘brilliant but superficial interlude’ and asserts that there is ‘no such thing as re-birth. There is only change, in this case camouflaged as a return to antiquity’ (Le Goff 1992: 19). The reworking and rewriting of medieval texts in the early modern period demonstrates the motivations behind and consequences of this change. Society was both looking forward to forge a new identity and also looking back to the middle ages in order to rewrite its own history, and this can be traced though the developments in literary culture.

While Henry VIII tore down the monasteries and scattered the monks, and the iconoclasts zealously engaged in the physical eradication of ‘popish’ imagery, literary culture was also undergoing a certain restructuring. If the iconoclasts heralded this new age of religious enlightenment with weapons of mass artistic and cultural destruction, the
writers and publishers of the sixteenth century were more creative in their efforts, reworking medieval texts alongside new material. James Simpson argues that the sixteenth century witnessed a centralisation of power and that such ‘sudden concentrations of cultural and political power both permit and necessitate an aggressive physical and ideological demolition of the ‘old’ order’ (Simpson 2007b: 1). This ideological demolition manifested in various ways through the processes of textual transmission. While Chaucer was refashioned as a proto-Protestant and several spurious anti-clerical texts added to his canon, Lydgate’s role as a Benedictine monk was swept under the literary carpet. In a process of literary iconoclasm, visual representations of the author, a prominent feature of early prints, ceased after 1530. Gillespie has noted that printing ‘prompted a new paratextual enunciation of the book, and paratext was sometimes arranged around ideas about the medieval author’ (Gillespie 2006: 147-148). However, Lydgate’s role as a Benedictine monk was problematic and, while visual references to his monasticism ceased, the demand for authorial biographical information increased in general terms. John Kyngston’s 1561 edition of Chaucer’s Workes contains a striking full-page image of Chaucer framed by his aristocratic links and descendants. Paratextual material became a means to attract the growing number of readers in an increasingly competitive market.

As Lydgate’s undesirable associations were being erased, Langland’s were being textually reinforced in the first print edition by Robert Crowley in 1550. Despite the poem containing no satisfying evidence of Langland’s Lollard sympathies, Crowley’s own reformist interpretation framed Piers Plowman as an early reform text through the contextualising prefatory material and marginal annotations. By drawing the reader’s attention towards Crowley’s interpretative guide, problematic material could be sidestepped and emphasis given to the favourable parts of the text. In each case, the reworking and remodelling of the medieval texts for an early modern audience was a means by which early modern society could define itself against the medieval past. However, Greg Walker warns against portraying the political situation in Henrician England as anything other than complex. He argues that the notion of ‘faction’ has achieved unwarranted dominance within political historiography and this erroneously presents the Reformation as ‘a straightforward battle between ideologically armed camps’ (Walker 1996: 2). Furthermore, he criticises the historical bias which has traditionally pervaded post-Reformation narratives, maintaining that ‘the evidence for religious faction is provided primarily by those individuals with the strongest motives for believing in and discovering it’. Citing John Foxe’s Book of Martyrs as an example of writing as a form of
political manoeuvring, Walker describes Foxe’s desire to present, or indeed invent, a history of reform and protest as a means to counteract accusations of illegitimacy (Walker 1996: 12).

Colin Kidd’s perspective in *British Identities Before Nationalism* is similarly sceptical of sixteenth-century historiography and forms of political and religious propaganda. Attempts by figures such as John Foxe and Archbishop Matthew Parker to rewrite the history of the English Church is considered by Kidd in relation to changing perceptions of England as a nation newly split from Rome (Kidd 1999). In recent decades several scholars have taken issue with the triumphalist view which has pervaded the last four centuries of post-Reformation narratives; James Simpson and Eamon Duffy’s rejection of Whiggish historiography and their subsequent defence of the medieval has implications for the interpretation of early modern literary culture. The motivations of these scholars and the consequences when examining the social and political context of sixteenth-century literary production are considered in more detail in the following chapters.

Acknowledging the political context which shaped sixteenth century editions of Langland and Lydgate also allows us to evaluate the influence on subsequent generations of scholars and editors. Despite the subtle differences in treatment relating to both paratextual and punctuation features, the textual afterlives of both medieval authors illustrates the continuing legacy of the earliest printers and editors and the socio-historical context in which they worked. *Piers Plowman* for many years inhabited an unusual place in the English literary canon, subject to much discussion and comment with regards to its alliterative metre and politics, but little in the way of comprehensive editing. Despite its contemporary popularity confirmed by the extant manuscripts and the success of Crowley’s three print runs in 1550, the next full edition of *Piers* did not appear until Thomas Whitaker’s ambitious volume in 1813. The poem continued to pique scholarly interest within the Antiquarian community during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Bishop Thomas Percy’s *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry* did not print extracts of the poem but does devote a section of the anthology’s appendix to a detailed discussion of Langlandian metre and verse form. Charlotte Brewer describes Percy’s *Reliques* as having achieved ‘considerable notoriety’ among contemporaries and later scholars for its somewhat cavalier approach to the source material; however, it raised pertinent questions relating to editorial methodologies and the treatment of medieval texts in the eighteenth
Beginning with analysis of the punctuation and paratextual features of Trinity College, Cambridge MS B.15.17, Chapter Three of the thesis charts the editions of Piers Plowman from this early manuscript through Robert Crowley’s influential print in 1550, Owen Rogers’ thinly veiled act of plagiarism from 1561, the intimidating volume by Thomas Whitaker in 1813, and Thomas Wright’s comparably modest edition of 1842 (and 2nd edition of 1856). The unique circumstances of production and editorial motivations deliver unique editions. However, there is a level of textual and paratextual continuity which runs through each of the editions, and illustrates the lasting impact of cultural and textual associations.

In her study Printing the Middle Ages, Sian Echard argues that there are ‘particular imperatives’ which have influenced the redesign of medieval texts in post-medieval society, with the most important being the claim to authenticity and authority (Echard 2008: vii). Echard focuses primarily on the visual and paratextual aspects of the printed medieval text which were used to preserve the medieval characteristics of the text and imbue a level of authority. These attempts can be visual markers such as font or illustration, or reflect past book making practices, such as the continued use of the traditional colophon. Echard discusses the use of the plowman image which originated in Trinity College Cambridge MS R.3.14, demonstrating how the image is replicated several times in the course of the Piers Plowman tradition (see fig. I, pp. 234). It appears as late as 1842 in Thomas Wright’s edition of the poem, as an introductory illustration to the Crede. In his second revised edition of the poem from 1856, the illustration appears in a pull-out section facing the title-page.

The use of the original manuscript illustration to link a pseudo text dating from the sixteenth century with the Piers tradition in a scholarly edition dating from the nineteenth century is evidence of the poem’s complex history of interpretation and transmission. Echard’s study proposes that the notion of medieval textual authenticity continued to be linked with visual features, evidenced in the facsimile boom of the nineteenth century. Certainly, current trends for online facsimile editions may also be subject to the same interpretation and scholars are becoming increasingly critical of text-only editions which
are disconnected from the manuscript context. The present thesis considers the ways in which the editors of Langland and Lydgate confronted the issues of textual authority and authenticity, from the earliest prints towards the emergence of the critical edition. The analysis will consider the choices made with regards to textual elements and focus on punctuation and the use of paratextual material as a means of promoting the authenticity of the medieval text while simultaneously attempting to attract a contemporary readership.

If the early transmission of *Piers Plowman* is a narrative of unintentional associations and political hijacking from John Ball to Robert Crowley, Lydgate’s work suffered precisely because of its associations. During the fifteenth century Lydgate was a successful poet receiving high profile patronage and composing an impressive array of verse, from the scholarly to the ceremonial. The abandonment of visual representations of Lydgate, Monk of Bury, after the 1530s is hardly surprising given the tumultuous political situation, but his Catholicism was not the only factor in his declining popularity. The rise of the silent reader prompts changes to syntax and the applied systems of punctuation; Lydgate’s aureate diction and trailing paratactic verse style proves difficult to accommodate. Lydgate’s work is also deeply rooted in oral and aural culture and he produced verses which were intended for visual display and dramatic performance (Sponsler 2010). The diversity of genre and presentation is perhaps an overlooked aspect of Lydgate’s literary output, and his larger, classically-inspired works have traditionally received the most critical attention.

Claire Sponsler’s study aims to re-evaluate some of Lydgate’s lesser known works and consider them in relation to their physical location and methods of presentation. Sponsler notes that what we might think of as discrete categories - writing, song or dramatic performance – were less clearly defined in the late medieval culture of ‘literate orality’ (Sponsler 2010:1). Many of Lydgate’s texts were composed with a level of orality and visuality in mind and Sponsler demonstrates the variety of occasions for which his poetry was commissioned, including coronations and pageants. Furthermore, these verses could be displayed and performed in diverse ways and she asserts that *Of the Sodein Fal of Princes in Oure Dayes* was intended to accompany ‘pictorial representations, processional presentation, or a mumming’ (Sponsler 2010: 2). The diversity of Lydgate’s verse is reflected in the diversity of the modes of transmission but we must also acknowledge the diversity of reception. Lydgate’s contemporary readers were encountering texts outwith the confines of the codex and the broad process of reading involved the decoding of images,
movement and drama which accompanied his aureate verse.

A significant portion of Lydgate’s poetry was clearly composed with a range of ‘readers-as-speakers’ in mind but he was also writing during a period of increasing literacy levels and during which the book was becoming a more accessible symbol of socio-economic status (Amtower 2000: 5). Lydgate’s texts which do survive during and beyond the early modern period play to Renaissance concerns with Classical learning: the Siege of Thebes was conceived of as an addition to the Canterbury Tales and therefore maintains a link to Chaucer; Troy Book is classical and The Fall of Princes is both classical and engages with contemporary issues of good kingship. The ‘ephemeral performance pieces’ discussed by Sponsler fall from favour (Sponsler 2010: 5). The abandonment of images of Lydgate in his own texts can be interpreted as a fairly straightforward reaction to his problematic monasticism, but the disappearance of the majority of his literary output can be viewed in relation to wider political developments which shaped sixteenth-century literary culture.

Eamon Duffy is forceful in his argument that the Reformation was an effective disruption of late medieval lay devotion and that the ‘flexibility and variety’ of religious life was aggressively curtailed (Duffy 2005: 3). This specifically included feasts, miracle plays and processions; forms of cultural expression Lydgate was closely associated with. Gillespie asserts that Lydgate and his texts were rendered vulnerable to such curtailment due to his own monastic associations but this offers only a partial interpretation of the political and economic pressures bearing down on literary culture. In addition to the ‘suppression’ of miracle plays and other forms of religious expression from the mid-1560s onwards (Duffy 2005: 68), the growth of literacy and the desire for personal and intellectual advancement was centred on the ‘book’ (Amtower 2000: 2). Acknowledging the range of extra-linguistic factors can help explain the decline of Lydgate’s poetry strongly rooted in the late medieval culture of ‘literate orality’ (Sponsler 2010:1) and the survival of texts which could be incorporated and/or reworked into the Renaissance literary canon.

Literary culture, as experienced by fifteenth and sixteenth century readers, was dynamic and varied, often a fusion of visuality, performance and text. John Lydgate’s texts are necessarily rooted in this culture and his output demonstrates his flexibility. Today he might be considered a creative polymath: poet, dramatist and visual artist. Aside from
demonstrating that rigid contemporary categorisations are ill-suited to describing the sheer diversity of medieval literary culture, this perspective also reminds us that printing a medieval text requires more than a change in physical form. Reproducing a text from an earlier period is an act of translation from one culture to another, a process of *translatio studii* (Copeland 1991). Acknowledging the socio-historical circumstances under which the text was conceived and (re)produced facilitates this process of translation. We are given an insight into the motivations and imperatives – aesthetic, intellectual or political – which shaped the text’s composition, physical presentation and subsequent re-workings. Through the process of historicisation we can attempt to re-contextualise a given text and, furthermore, gain an awareness of the imperatives and intellectual frameworks which inform our own contemporary editorial approaches. Re-contextualisation, in many ways, is akin to a desire for authenticity. Modern editorial projects, increasingly focused on digitisation, can claim a level of ‘authenticity’ which text-only editions cannot by presenting the original paratextual features alongside the textual. The technology has both encouraged and allowed a re-evaluation of visuality and materiality as mediators of meaning.

However, digitisation has its own methodological implications with regards to usability and accessibility and the theoretical perspectives are changing almost as quickly as the technology (Shillingsburg 2008). Yet the notion of ‘authenticity’ has remained a constant concern for editors down the ages, from manuscript to digital. The importance of visual and paratextual elements in communicating a level of authority within printed editions of medieval texts demonstrates a desire not just to reproduce the text, but to reproduce the features which link the text to the culture in which it was created. Robert Crowley’s prefatory material suggests his use of ‘aunciente copies’ and consultation of men knowledgeable in the ‘studie of antiquities’ affords his edition a level of authority (3rd impression; from ‘The Printer to the Reader’). He is clearly interested in the origins of the poem, establishing its place and time of composition and naming one ‘Roberte Langelande’ as the author. However, perhaps Crowley’s claim to authority and authenticity is disingenuous; he subsequently utilises the paratextual features at his disposal to frame Langland’s poem in his own reformist terms. On the other hand, Crowley was responding to the existing ‘cultural associations’ which had surrounded *Piers Plowman* since the Peasants’ Revolt in 1381, an interpretation his edition codifies and strengthens (Middleton 1982: 107). If we accuse Crowley of inaccurate reading and find his interpretation inauthentic, we resort to demanding the recreation of an idealised, authorial
text uncorrupted by the process of textual transmission. Crowley’s politics and the extent of his textual manipulations are examined in detail in Chapter Three. The analysis is aligned with recent scholarship by Scanlon (2007) and Hailey (2008) who both assert that his editorial treatment is more sensitive and nuanced than has been traditionally acknowledged.

The tension between ‘authenticity’ and modernisation is apparent in prints dating from the sixteenth century and it is an issue contemporary editors must still confront, both in terms of their own editorial approach and the methodologies for evaluating older prints. Modern book history offers a solution of sorts; by encouraging scholars to democratically embrace the various layers of interpretation, authenticity is no longer constrained by the concept of authorial intention. The theory of intentionality can still prove helpful in analysing the process of revision and correction, and in determining details of textual transmission, but should not, argues McGann, overshadow the social aspects of literary production and reception (McGann 1983: 121-122). Stephen Reimer is critical of modern editions which isolate the textual and ‘extract it from the stream of meaning’ and suggests that encountering a manuscript text deprived of its original paratextual framework results in an inferior reading experience (Reimer 2004: 171). Reimer attributes the dominance of the text-only edition, in part, to scholars who are unwilling to encroach upon other disciplines, reiterating Bonnie Mak’s call for an interdisciplinary approach towards the description and evaluation of paratext (Mak 2011). By asserting that paratext provides a fully engaged reading experience, Reimer’s essay reminds that paratext has both an aesthetic and functional role. Systems of paratext can be primarily decorative or primarily practical but they are ultimately both; even the most decorative of chapter headings serves a navigational purpose.

The years 1350 to 1500 represented a defining period in the development of paratext design and reading practices. In his essay Designing the Page, Stephen Partridge asserts that Readers ‘came to expect in an English book several elements that would either facilitate reading or help a reader find particular passages or topics’ (Partridge 2011: 79). Page layout and typography in the earliest printed texts deliberately imitated manuscript conventions but, as the industry asserted itself, the printed text became a medium in its own right. Andrew Pettegree regards the first half of the sixteenth century as the most creative in terms of book production, and argues that developments such as the title-page,
dedications and index meant the printed book had ‘finally broken free of its roots in the
manuscript world’ (Pettegree 2010: 65). While descriptions of paratextual development
necessarily include references to the printing press, technology does not invent nor govern
itself. Partridge’s notion of ‘expectation’ crucially acknowledges the role of the reader in
shaping the design of the book and the relationship between the commercial book business
and the growing number of readers keen, and financially able, to line their library shelves.
Partridge’s approach sees the design of the page as subject to ‘a pragmatic challenge and a
commercial expectation’ (Partridge 2011: 79), a view which aligns with McKenzie’s theory
of the sociology of text and the haphazard nature of textual production (McKenzie 1999).
It also connects with Jajdelska’s assertion that ‘reader model’ was the driving force behind
syntactical developments in early modern prose; this thesis extends the concept of reader-
driven mechanism to paratextual material which can be seen to interact with the intra- and
extralinguistic factors behind textual production.

Partridge’s essay views the function of paratext in terms of its role as a reader guide.
Chapter headings, rubrics, incipits/explicits, litterae notabiliores and paraph marks are
considered as signposts which divide the text and facilitate the reading process. Partridge,
furthermore, describes the development of paratextual elements in relation to wider
cultural and intellectual changes which, in turn, promote ‘new ways of reading’ (Partridge
2011: 79). The fifteenth and sixteenth centuries witnessed a number of developments in
literary culture; the kinds of people reading, what they read, and how they read. Each of
these developments arise from a complex interplay of extra- and intralinguistic factors which,
in turn, shape the reading habits and practices of the population.

The mid-sixteenth century is the period of overlap in the textual transmission
history of Piers Plowman and The Fall of Princes but it also represents a watershed in terms of
the publishing industry and the development of print design. The printing press in England
was not, according to Pettegree, an immediate success. The established manuscript culture
had been negotiating the delicate balance of supply and demand for several centuries but
many early printers struggled in this unpredictable market (Pettegree 2010: 43). Printers
working during the first few decades of the press were faced with the difficult task of
matching the ‘demanding standards’ (Pettegree 2010: 4) set by manuscript culture in terms
of an efficient business model and attracting the artisans who could transfer their skills to
the new trade. By the middle of the sixteenth century, the teething troubles were over and
the print industry was flourishing. However, the handful of struggling pioneer printers had been replaced by a highly competitive and politicised industry governed by the powerful Stationers’ Company which was set up in 1403 and incorporated by Royal Charter in 1557 during the reign of Mary I. Design features begin to appear from the mid-sixteenth century which reflect the confidence and creativity of the printers, and the intellectual and cultural concerns of the Renaissance.

The shift from the oral tradition and the complex ‘literate orality’ of the late medieval period towards increasing literacy and the culture of the book is expressed through the system(s) of punctuation and the paratextual features (Sponsler 2010: 1; see also Coleman 1995). It is acknowledged, however, that this shift was not an inexorable march towards silent reading which modern opinion might hold as the fundamental objective of an educated, enlightened society. Simpson discusses the ‘state-driven’ nature of the Reformation exerting influence ‘across the discursive landscape’ (Simpson 2007a: 17). The state-sanctioned surge in literacy and the promotion of an English language Bible during the sixteenth century was bound in the politics of reform, but the implementation of the policy was rather more complex. Successive legislation issued by the Henrician court during the mid-sixteenth century encouraged, then subsequently curbed, the literary enthusiasm of certain sections of society, primarily the lower classes and women (MacCulloch 2004: 203).

The development of silent reading as the predominant practice was a gradual process, reaching the point of ‘critical mass’ at the end of the seventeenth century (Jajdelska 2007). The period spanning the fifteenth to late seventeenth centuries was a period of transition and reading practices were a complex affair, likely to involve elements of speech, performance or visuals as Lydgate’s canon demonstrates. Furthermore, the printers and editors who approached these late medieval texts were likely to have their own objectives which shaped their treatment of the textual and paratextual elements, accounting for the complex, often contradictory, presentation of printed medieval texts. Each edition analysed in the following chapters is therefore considered as a product of constantly shifting influences and interpretations from the moment of creation through multiple re-creations.

William Langland and John Lydgate exemplify the diversity and complexities of late medieval literary culture, and have experienced very different contemporary
receptions and textual histories. As Lydgate’s popularity was waning in the mid-sixteenth century, Langland was being put into print for the first time. Lydgate’s status as a Catholic monk proved to be a stumbling block in post-Reformation society, while Langland’s perceived associations with Lollardy helped to revive his popularity. Yet for both writers, the perceptions which were created and propagated during the sixteenth century were to have a lasting influence on the way scholars and readers approached and considered their work. John Lydgate has been considered very much a public poet catering to the tastes and demands of his wealthy patrons and we know a significant amount about his lifestyle and the commissions he received. In addition to the daunting list of devotional works, Lydgate applied his poetic ambition to a variety of genres to satisfy his patrons. Langland’s biographical details largely remain as speculation. It is unlikely that Langland was writing under commission due to the intensely personal nature of his poetry and the constant series of revisions which seem to represent a life’s work.

Both poets are, however, observing and responding to contemporary events and can be considered as late medieval social commentators. Lydgate’s engagement with the contemporary mood and events is clearly evidenced in his commissioned poems dealing with issues of kingship and the developing notion of national identity, and in the more conspicuous poems such as Ballade at the Departing of Thomas Chaucer (1414-17) and On Gloucester’s Approaching Marriage (1422-23) (Ebin 1985). In Langland’s case the contemporary references are to be found in the text itself, details which have also been used to date the various versions. The A-Text is thought to contain references to the Normandy Campaign of 1359-60, the B-Text mentions Richard II’s coronation in 1377 and the C-Text appears to show knowledge of the 1388 ‘Statute of Labourers’ (Baldwin 2007: 6). This internal dating has also been used to support the chronology of an ABC composition. The tale ‘Belling the Cat’ and certain allegorical characters such as Lady Meed are also thought to represent the power struggles and political dramas at court.3

Both poets engage with contemporary events, yet their motivations for doing so

3 The Good Parliament sat in the summer of 1376 during the reign of Edward III and sought to address public concern that court had become increasingly corrupt. Dodd argues that Piers Plowman ‘articulates a profound sense of disappointment in the inability of the late medieval English parliament to rectify the woes of the kingdom. This disillusionment was generated not only by the reversal of the measures taken against the court in the Good Parliament of 1376, but also by a much broader context of failure by the crown to address the petitions presented in parliament by the political community’ (Dodd 2005: 21). The theme of political community and disillusionment at the pace of reform is drawn upon by Crowley in his 1550 edition as he attempts to highlight the continuity between Langland’s politics and his own.
have been interpreted in vastly different ways. Lydgate has long been considered as a Lancastrian propagandist keen to promote stability and reassurance particularly during the minority reign. Conversely, Langland is seen as writing against the establishment, a view that has implications for the intended readership. Lydgate’s dense aureate diction and lengthy verses on the responsibilities of monarchy would be primarily aimed towards the upper classes, while Langland’s working class hero exposing hierarchical corruption would inevitably appeal to a rather different readership. Late medieval reading tastes and habits, however, were far more complex. The significant increase in literacy levels during the fifteenth century led to an increase in demand for reading materials. Primarily devotional but highly varied, the surviving texts illustrate a diversity in taste and dissemination. It can be argued that both authors have experienced a narrowing of interpretative focus which begins in the sixteenth century and overshadows the complexities of late medieval literary culture and the role of both poets therein. Analysis of various editions and editorial treatment throughout the authors’ print history will provide an insight into the ways in which editorial choices can influence the treatment and perception of a text by future generations.
1.4 The Development of Punctuation in a Silent Reading Culture

‘Punctuation was developed by stages which coincided with changing patterns of literacy, whereby new generations of readers in different historical situations imposed new demands on the written medium itself’. (Parkes 1992: 2)

If reading habits shape and are shaped by political imperatives, analysing reading practices involves charting these extra-linguistic factors down to the intra-linguistic detail. Historians can assess the impact of factors such as population distribution, economics and political upheaval on the contemporary society; literary critics chart these changes within the trends of contemporary literary culture; detailed linguistic analysis can offer insight into how people read in addition to what they read. The term ‘reading practice’ suggests both a physical and cognitive engagement with writing. The physical and external act of reading and engaging with a text through touch, sight, smell, etc. is paired with internal cognitive activity. Attempting to define and chart the cognitive processes involved in reading is, for the most part, an abstraction and beyond the scope of this current project. Recent technological and medical advances have provided insight from a neurological perspective, and identified specific areas of the brain responsible for language development and processing. However, scholars concerned with the wider social implications of literacy are still attempting to understand how the shift from orality to literacy in the first instance, and the mass spread of literacy in the second, affected human cognitive processes in the intellectual sense. In other words, has the development of literacy affected how we think andanalyse the world around us? Did Chaucer, standing on the brink of mass literacy, think differently from his literary predecessors who composed in a primarily oral culture?

As our contemporary society experiences a rapid shift into the digital age we are perhaps undergoing an alteration in our own cognitive processes. In a world of instant access and hyper-text, it is hardly much of a leap to accept that our brains are having to readjust to this new intellectual environment. When dealing with such abstract and theoretical notions a definitive answer may never be possible, at least not with current technology. However, the physical evidence for changing literary tastes and practices remains in various textual formats. This project will limit itself to the book format, which provides a vast amount of information and insight into the development of literacy and literary culture. The history of the book is now a vibrant area of research in its own right and the influence of the associated theoretical perspectives has spread through a variety of
disciplines. By embracing notions of collaboration and versions, book history has developed a model of the book as a cultural artefact. It is both a reflection of, and catalyst for, social change. It is a theoretical perspective which also requires an appreciation of the material and its role in shaping the reception and interpretation of the text, literary or otherwise. It is a perspective which subsequently invites us to consider the relationship between function and form in terms of book production and reception (Ong 2002; Clanchy 1979; Mackenzie 1999).

Traditional views of the shift from orality to literacy had conceived of a definitive march towards literacy, with scholars emphasising the superiority of private, silent reading over the oral past (Coleman 1995: 64). Silent reading was viewed as the ultimate aim of a literate, enlightened society. It was undoubtedly an important development in terms of private thought and formulation; silent reading enables heretical thinking (Saenger 1982: 399). Medievalist scholars fully embraced this theory as the march of silent reading could be traced easily through Anglo-Saxon bard culture to the sophisticated satire of Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales* (Coleman 1995: 65). Accepting that material book production is shaped by contemporary technology and driven by requirement, we can trace silent reading developments in the physical format of the book which are defined by the contemporaneous demands upon the written text. The move from scroll to codex was compounded by the rise of Christianity as a ‘religion of the book’ (Parkes 1992: 14) and the requirements of dissemination. Cursive script developed in line with increasing administrative demands and towards the end of the twelfth century, Gothic Cursive emerges from its ‘proto’ predecessor. The design and implementation of cursive script in general made the act of writing less painstaking and ‘more compatible with intellectual activity’ (Saenger 1982: 390). Increasing demand and changing functions of the written text provoked a development in the physical form.

Even taking into account the various political motivations at play during the Henrician reformation, the overview still presents silent reading as the inevitable goal of Western literary cultures. This perspective is far from redundant and provides a clear and reasonable template for the development of both literacy and silent reading. However, all clear explanations demand to be problematized. Joyce Coleman claims that scholars have ‘institutionalized the triumph of private reading’ and subsequently ignored the complexities and overlaps of a developing literary culture in which aurality played a major role.
Traditionally viewed as a transitional stage between orality and literacy and often as a sub-category of both, Coleman argues that aurality (or public reading) was, in fact, a ‘unique form of reading’ which lasted into the late fifteenth-century (Coleman 1995: 64). Her studies have applied some much-needed critical pressure to the theories of orality, literacy and the development of silent reading during the middle ages. The terms ‘oral’ and ‘literate’ are, asserts Coleman, ‘theoretical models based on outmoded evolutionary and Eurocentric principles’ (Coleman 1996: xii) and she argues for a reassessment of the role of aurality in our discussions of literacy and reading. Public reading was not a sign of illiteracy but evidence that this form of reading was popular and remained so throughout the fifteenth century. In a similar spirit of broadening perceptions of late medieval literary culture, Elizabeth Salter has argued that the descriptions of literate/illiterate are reductive and it is more accurate to consider the various ways an individual might be involved in ‘literate activities’ (Salter 2012: 67). The term encourages and permits a consideration of the various levels of literacy and the various forms of reading, public and private, which were available to readers in the late medieval and early modern periods.

Coleman and Salter’s perspectives are comparable to Sponsler’s description of a ‘literate orality’ which acknowledges the broad concept of literary culture existing in the late medieval period (Sponsler 2010: 1). The works of John Lydgate in particular demonstrate a strong link with public reading and performance, as Sponsler confirms in her edited volume of the poet’s mummings and entertainments (Sponsler 2010). Drawing critical attention to these minor works highlights several important aspects of Lydgate’s life and work, not least the sheer breadth of his canon which includes such weighty tomes as *Troy Book* and the *Fall of Princes* alongside ‘ephemeral performance pieces’ (Sponsler 2010: 5). Furthermore, it reminds us that Lydgate was composing for audiences with complex and varied reading practices and whose notion of literature could be described as rather more flexible than our own. With reference to Lydgate’s entertainment pieces, Sponsler argues that ‘it is best for us to think of Lydgate’s verses as fitting into a broad generic category that included various combinations of music, spoken word, impersonation, gesture or action, and special effects’ (Sponsler 2010: 7) suggesting that the boundaries between public reading and performance were more blurred than the modern concept of drama might acknowledge.
Within the current thesis, punctuation analysis will be used to assess the influence of orality, aurality and literacy on the composition and editing of the chosen texts. It remains a central hypothesis that the rate of appropriation of new punctuation conventions was, in actuality, a gradual process. Furthermore, early modern editors were capable of displaying a deliberate level of conservatism in their treatment of medieval texts through bibliographic and textual detail. Analysis of punctuation practices not only illustrates this editorial conservatism, it also provides an insight into the progress of silent reading from the late fifteenth century as developments are variously applied to medieval texts.

Saenger asserts that the format changes witnessed in manuscript production from the thirteenth- to the fifteenth-centuries reflect the steady growth of silent reading during this period. Word separation, textual divisions and deployment of punctuation marks all highlight the shift away from Classical rhetoric towards a silent reading culture (Saenger 1982: 392). Working with reference to a slightly later period, Jajdelska discusses the ‘critical mass’ of silent readers appearing from the end of the seventeenth century (Jajdelska 2007: 3). This new, silent-reading majority represented a new model of reader who positioned themselves differently in relation to the text. The traditional ‘reader-as-speaker’ model involved the speaker as the physical embodiment of the text, with meaning mediated through his/her tone, expression, emphasis, etc. The new model of a silent ‘reader-as-hearer’ required an internally constructed narrator. The stylistic shift witnessed in prose texts at the end of the seventeenth century was a result of this development in reading practice. Jajdelska’s research supersedes traditional views of this shift which focused on attitudinal changes and intellectual developments as an explanation for older texts and styles becoming difficult to understand (Jajdelska 2007: 13). Archaic or obsolete vocabulary can be replaced with modern equivalents or appropriately glossed. However, it is unfamiliar syntax which proves to be more of a challenge for readers engaging with an older text.

In addressing the overlapping nature of punctuation systems throughout the late medieval and early modern periods, Walter Ong’s reasoning in the 1940s encapsulates this traditional focus on attitudinal shifts. He recognised that rhetorical and grammatical punctuation co-existed in later periods but neither were ‘syntactical’ as we might define it within contemporary descriptions. Punctuation in both theory and practice was neither one approach nor the other, a situation Ong attributes to the legacy of the Classical temporal
system. The overlap is therefore a result of Elizabethan and Jacobean society being unable to disconnect itself from the view that punctuation is ‘basically a physiological rather than either an elocutionary or a syntactical (logical) device’ (Ong 1944: 359-360). The precise reason for this inability to disconnect from the physiological approach is not fully explicated but is described in terms of the enduring influence of the classical and medieval grammarians and residual orality. Ong does not discuss the complexities of early modern punctuation practices in relation to the readers who encountered these texts; rather, he attributes the conflation of punctuation systems, as demonstrated in early modern texts, to the prevailing scholarly attitudes towards punctuation and discourse.

Jajdelska acknowledges extra-linguistic circumstance in the growth of literacy and commercial book production, but her research goes further by examining how the new silent reader model had an impact on the grammar and syntax of early modern prose. From this perspective the reader takes centre stage as book production progresses from catering to an elite to courting the masses. The emergence of this ‘critical mass’ of silent readers at the end of the seventeenth-century appears to support the linear view of a shift from orality to literacy. However, although the phenomena of orality and literacy are now conceived of in terms of a more dynamic sliding scale, Jajdelska argues this is not possible for models of reader. This does not mean that the shift was any more abrupt and the transition should be considered a gradual process (Jajdelska 2007: 7).

While Jajdelska’s survey focuses on late seventeenth-century prose, this project will apply the theoretical perspectives with which she engages to the treatment of late medieval poetry in the early modern period. The punctuation practices of the printers and editors will be analysed with reference to the reader-model framework and developments in reading practices. The various approaches to punctuating older texts in accordance with a new or developing system provides an insight into the changing form and function of punctuation marks. The use and distribution of punctuation marks within individual texts also allows us to assess the approach of specific printers and editors, and analyse how these choices affect the overall interpretation of the text and the process of textual transmission. As Jajdelska notes, traditional editorial views held that punctuation ‘could be altered without threatening or diminishing the authenticity of the text’ (Jajdelska 2007: 44). Early printers were indeed concerned with maintaining the authority and authenticity of the printed text but the type and application of punctuation marks was one feature among
many which could be manipulated to suit the editorial intentions for the edition. A deliberately ‘authentic’ text is still the product of interpretation and printers/editors were liable to misinterpretation or be motivated by political agenda. Robert Crowley’s 1550 edition of *Piers Plowman* was subject to both. The intentions behind a printed medieval text may therefore appear contradictory; editors attempted to maintain the ‘authority’ of the text by reference to source manuscripts, scholarly endorsement or through the use of traditional visual cues, while simultaneously modernising aspects of spelling and orthography in order to attract a growing early modern readership.

Editors from the sixteenth century to the present day may make choices about punctuation based on a commitment to levels of conservatism or modernisation and with the expectations and interests of the prospective readership in mind. Early modern editors may retain an older mark alongside other traditional features of layout and presentation as a means of maintaining an overall sense of the authentic medieval text; contemporary editors might desire a diplomatic edition which involves minimal intervention, leaving the original system of punctuation for the most part unchanged, though the form of the mark may be altered. However, the impact of punctuation on the interpretation of a text and what it can reveal about reading practices has been generally overlooked within textual scholarship. Peter J. Lucas’ comprehensive study of the life, work and textual transmission history of late medieval chronicler John Capgrave seeks to address this oversight, devoting a significant chapter to the consideration of Capgrave’s punctuation systems contained in the authorial Cambridge University Library MS Gg.4.12 (Lucas 1997). By describing the distribution of individual marks according to their ‘structural’ or ‘interpretative’ function, and further subdividing into more nuanced categories, Lucas is attempting to understand and schematise the choices available to Capgrave within the existing systems of punctuation. In doing so, he also considers how the text was being used in both a private and public reading environment and Capgrave’s method of punctuating his text for the purposes of ‘readability’ (Lucas 1997: 166).

By describing Capgrave’s efforts to prepare the text for his readership, Lucas is implicitly acknowledging the audience as an active force in the creation and presentation of the text. However, while he notes that ‘the historical development of the use of punctuation in English seems to be a gradual process of re-drawing the boundary-line in favour of structural (and expository) at the expense of elocutionary territory’ and the fifteenth and
sixteenth centuries mark the ‘turning-point’ in this process (Lucas 1997: 171), he ventures no further in attempting to explain the mechanisms behind this shift. If the shift from orality to literacy has been simplistically described in terms of a linear progression towards silent reading as Joyce Coleman suggests (Coleman 1995), the development from rhetorical to grammatical punctuation has been unquestionably assimilated into this narrative. This reductive view of a development which was, in reality, much more complex must be contextualised. It is a central argument within this study that the shift from rhetorical to grammatical systems of punctuation should be considered with explicit reference to the readers who engaged with, and shaped, these systems. Lucas’ attempts to organise and interpret the nuances of punctuation marking in a medieval text is, nevertheless, an important study and many of his observations are pertinent to this current project. He recognises, for example, that the overlapping nature of punctuation systems is an unavoidable product of textual transmission (Lucas 1997: 194). While the current study looks forward and argues that early modern editions display lingering rhetorical practices due, in part, to editorial conservatism, Lucas looks back to the late medieval period and argues for an early adoption of grammatical marking. The arguments are not incompatible; rather, both are acknowledging the gradual nature of the shift from rhetorical to grammatical systems over an extended period of time.

Through a mixture of biographical, codicological and linguistic analysis Lucas aims to understand and frame Capgrave’s ‘scribal and linguistic’ usage in its fifteenth-century socio-historical context (Lucas 1997: 3). This thesis shares similar aims; however, while Lucas claims to have undertaken the ‘first detailed treatment’ of a writer’s own punctuation systems (Lucas 1997: 5), the present study must necessarily focus on the systems of the printers and editors who encountered the texts in the subsequent centuries of textual transmission. In reference to the punctuation practices he remains primarily concerned with the decisions and intentions of Capgrave himself. The preoccupation with authorial intent has diminished within textual scholarship and the focus has turned towards reception and interpretation. However, among Capgrave’s surviving work is an autograph manuscript of the Abbreviacion of Cronicles which allows Lucas to examine the author’s own usages, specifically his punctuation and orthography choices. This is not an option available to many medieval textual scholars and Lucas produces a detailed and qualitative analysis with which the current thesis can engage.⁴

⁴ A reproduction of his schematic is provided in the appendices (fig. V, pp. 238).
Despite the drive for transparency in contemporary editing practice with regards to choice of copy-text and spelling variants, punctuation is often a minor consideration, an ‘accidental’ feature which can be easily modified without affecting the authority of the original text. However, it is these modifications applied to editions of medieval texts which provide insight into the changing requirements of the readership. Framing a theory of punctuation which aligns with developments in literacy and ‘reader-model’ requires an acknowledgement of the history of both the form and function of marks. Discussions of punctuation development have recognised that as western culture became increasingly literate and the commercial book industry flourished, the primary role shifted from marking pauses in speech to marking syntactic relationships. Punctuation systems appearing in manuscripts and early printed editions of Lydgate and Langland deploy a minimal approach, with the virgule used commonly as a mid-line caesura. The caesura marks the metre within the verse line and is not used primarily to denote syntactic breaks or relationships. The gradual introduction of grammatical marking can be charted in the printed editions of Lydgate and Langland analysed in the current thesis. However, the development of grammatical approaches towards punctuation did not immediately displace the older systems and many texts from the sixteenth century display a combination of techniques which can provide an insight into the printer/editor’s own system and the requirements of the intended readership.

This conflation of approaches raises a number of points in relation to the development of punctuation form and function. Firstly, it demonstrates that changes in the adopted systems were gradual and that there existed a great deal of overlap between approaches and further contrasts between editors, texts and genres. A combination of approaches can also illustrate an uncertainty among editors confronted with older texts, texts which were composed in a different literary environment and with different models of reader as the intended audience. Sixteenth and seventeenth-century editions of Lydgate’s contribution to the Canterbury Tales tradition, The Siege of Thebes, illustrates the contradictions and complexities involved in producing a printed copy of a medieval text which must conform to the expectations of an early modern readership. Kyngston’s 1561 Chaucerian anthology includes Lydgate’s poem at the end of the text, modestly introduced by a simple title and decorated initial. The edition contains a combination of late medieval conventions and early modern trends in which Black Letter type and woodcut portraits of Chaucer’s pilgrims are combined with a Renaissance-style title page and several pages of biographical
material. Kyngston retains the mid-line caesura and rhetorical punctuation system in Lydgate’s poem but utilises the semi-circular comma which began to replace the older virgule from the 1520s (Parkes 1992: 51).

Perhaps most revealing is the contrast in punctuation systems between Lydgate’s poem and the rest of the Chaucerian texts. Chaucer’s works have been purged of the mid-line mark and the punctuation is lighter, distributed to mark emphasis and grammatical, rather than rhetorical, units. The habit of editing Lydgate differently from Chaucer within the same edition persists in successive Chaucerian anthologies which print The Siege of Thebes. Both Islip’s 1598 edition and the later reprint of Speght dating from 1687 display a continuing commitment to editing Chaucer while Lydgate receives less attention in the modernisation process. Lydgate’s verse is undoubtedly denser and does not display the same ironic self-awareness that modern readers admire in Chaucer. His cascading paratactic style combined with aureate diction also does not lend itself to grammatical punctuation techniques and proved a difficult editorial task. This is not to say that Lydgate’s text was entirely unaltered; the selection of editions charts a gradual move towards incorporating syntactical marking alongside the mid-line caesura.

In addition to the difficulties involved in remodelling the monk as a voice of early reform in similar fashion to Chaucer and Langland, the failure to modernise Lydgate’s poems starting from the early prints meant that they appeared increasingly archaic and eventually even his secular texts disappeared from print. As an exception to the rule and as a testament to the influence of textual transmission history and convention, The Siege of Thebes continued to be appended in early modern Chaucerian anthologies; Kyngston (1561), Islip (1598 & 1602) and the reprint of Speght’s edition (1687). What this overview demonstrates is the gradual nature of change and modernisation, and the inconsistency of editorial approaches. The conflation of punctuation approaches and features of presentation also hints at the complex reading practices of early modern audiences. As the driving force behind changes to the layout of the book and the presentation of texts, sixteenth-century readers also had a taste for medieval material and were capable of

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3 Phillipa Hardman notes that Lydgate’s first editor for the Early English Text Society, Josef Schick, described the poet’s syntax in harsh terms, complaining in the opening to the Temple of Glas that ‘His sentences run on aimlessly, without definite stop, and it is often difficult to say where a particular idea begins or ends’ (Schick 1891: cxxxiv, cited in Hardman 2006: 16). Hardman asserts that Schick’s appraisal ‘set the agenda’ for the critical view of Lydgate’s writing for the next hundred years (Hardman 2006: 16).
navigating older vocabulary and syntax.

While modern punctuation practices can be said to enable speed and proficiency, reading in the medieval period was less like a sprint and more like a marathon. This obviously raises issues when we attempt to impose punctuation systems aimed at a silent, extensive readership onto medieval texts. Early modern prints involved both conflation and complexity in their use of punctuation systems; patterns, argues Parkes, that reflect contemporary usage (Parkes 1992: 6). It would therefore be unrealistic to assume that print editions of medieval texts will display a straightforward development of their punctuation systems towards the silent reader model. In the first instance, medieval syntax did not lend itself to the punctuation systems developed for a silent reading culture, and editors could be surprisingly sensitive to their copy text and the authenticity of the medieval text. Editors may also have specific motives for retaining medieval punctuation markings alongside other traditional visual features. Robert Crowley’s mid-sixteenth century edition of Piers Plowman is a masterpiece of reform propaganda mediated through a fourteenth-century poem, and his decisions regarding the bibliographic and textual detail are shaped by his intentions for the text. Crowley accounts for one level of interpretative influence applied to the text during the process of production in addition to the author, previous scribes and the compositor(s). The responsibility of interpretation then passes to the speakers and hearers of the text. In a predominantly silent reading culture, the speaker is removed from the equation and their physical presence cannot be relied upon to interpret the meaning of the text.

Working within a culture of the ‘reader-as-speaker’, writers can depend on the physical presence of the reader as a means of mediating meaning through the use of tone, facial expression, body language, etc. If writing for a ‘reader-as-hearer’ audience, the writer must create a ‘fictive persona’ which can deliver the message to the reader in the absence of a physical narrator. This changes the structure of prose by requiring ‘textual clues’ to be embedded in the text which can locate the narrative in ‘time and space’ (Jajdelska 2007: 11). The new prose style which has been detected and discussed by such as Walter Ong, is not simply a result of the shift from orality to literacy. Rather, argues Jajdelska, the development reflects a desire to connect phrases together with more clarity (Jajdelska 2007: 13). The need for an internally constructed narrator is one of the textual constraints under which writers in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries found themselves.
working. While Jajdelska’s study focuses primarily on the syntactical developments witnessed in early modern prose as a result of a changing reader model, this thesis applies the broad theoretical framework to the transmission of late medieval poetic texts and, specifically, the punctuation and paratextual systems which reflect the changing reading practices. Punctuation is required to clarify the text for an audience which can no longer rely on the interpretation of the ‘reader-speaker’, or physical performer. If the ‘reader-speaker’ representing the mediation point between author and audience is removed, the author finds him/herself communicating directly to the silent reader. Slow and comprehensive reading of individual texts was also no longer the norm and extensive readers required ‘ready-made’ guides to help them navigate through the text quickly and efficiently.

Building upon Parkes’ observation that punctuation’s ‘primary function is to resolve structural uncertainties, and to signal nuances of semantic significance which might otherwise not be conveyed at all, or would at best be difficult for a reader to figure out’ (Parkes 1992: 1), this thesis Applying the concept of the changing reader model to Parkes’ observation, we can conclude that features previously communicated by the physical presence of the speaker are increasingly signalled by the distribution and extended repertoire of punctuation marks. A small range of marks which were used to point the text for essential clarification developed into a larger assortment of marks able to express more subtle semantic distinctions. A selection of marks and/or the interaction of punctuation and paratextual features produces a hierarchy of visual and cognitive breaks which work to resolve any structural uncertainties in the first instance. The subsequent *effect* of these marks varies according to the context. In a silent-reading context, effect is produced by a variety of interacting factors – the verse line, the page layout and the book. Chapters Three and Four examine the punctuation systems of Langland and Lydgate and seek to demonstrate how marks can interact with the textual and the paratextual to communicate semantic and interpretative nuance.

Before engaging with the primary texts through the analysis of punctuation and paratext, Chapter Two will provide a brief survey of the history of textual scholarship and editing theory. The following section examines recent developments in the interdisciplinary area of book history and discusses the chosen texts and the aims of this thesis in relation to the emerging theoretical perspectives.
CHAPTER TWO

Book History & the History of Editing

2.1 Textual Scholarship, Editing & the History of the Book

‘Editing is by nature and by definition interference; it cannot be done objectively’.
(Shillingsburg 2008: 144)

The area and concerns of textual scholarship are wide-ranging and diverse, and include the study of palaeography, codicology, textual criticism and editing, to name a few. Each of these areas of study is expansive and specialist in its own right, yet they are combined under the broad heading of textual scholarship. D.C Greetham begins his comprehensive overview of the history and trends of textual scholarship by highlighting the expansive domain and the problems occasioned by the complex inventory of terms and by the isolation of many specialist scholars within their own chosen field. Greetham does not call for a simplification of the discipline, but a clarification of the terms used to describe and identify the various specialities. Rather than drawing lines in the sand, he is advocating a sense of unity among scholars and a renewed focus on the benefits of interdisciplinarity. Acknowledging that some areas have long and specialised histories of their own, Greetham nevertheless promotes the view that similarities between specialist fields must be recognised in order to open all potential avenues of research and analysis (Greetham 1992: 4).

Interdisciplinary research can overcome the restrictions placed on scholarship with increasingly specialised subject areas and skills, and has the potential to encourage new perspectives and methodologies. Greetham notes, however, that a focus on interdisciplinarity also requires those engaging with textual study to confidently tackle a range of areas from descriptive bibliography to textual criticism and editing (Greetham 1992: 4). He may not be calling for the dissolution of specialist fields of study but he does assert that critics must be prepared to develop a sound knowledge of each step of the process of textual scholarship. The ultimate aim of this process is textual editing, making each of the preceding stages an exercise in evidence gathering for the editorial task. The theoretical basis and practical application of editing techniques has proved to be the driving force behind the many shifts and debates in textual scholarship from Antiquity to the present.
The thesis emphasises the role of the reader and developments in literacy in shaping the various levels of book production from the commercial process of supply and demand to the various editorial choices relating to the textual and paratextual systems. Specifically, it will be argued in the following chapters that the gradually changing ‘model’ of reader during the late medieval and early modern periods exerted gradual pressure on the systems of paratext and punctuation applied by editors to the chosen texts. Understanding the development of editorial methodologies and the resulting implications provides an important foundation when considering, from a diachronic perspective, the policy of early modern editors. Furthermore, reviewing the history of editing and textual scholarship grants the opportunity to reflect upon contemporary attitudes and approaches towards editing and how these may shape our evaluations of past practices. The decisions made by the editors of *Piers Plowman* and *The Fall of Princes*, and the effect of these choices, will be considered in terms of the individual edition and in relation to the wider textual transmission histories of the two poems. While we cannot credit sixteenth-century editors with exercising the same level of rigour and transparency we have come to expect in the modern scholarly edition, the reworkings of these medieval texts in the early modern period have undoubtedly shaped our own attitudes towards the medieval poets and their works.

Greetham claims that textual scholarship is the ‘most ancient of scholarly activities’ with a traceable history stretching back to the Alexandrian and Pergamonian libraries (Greetham 1992: 297). The ancient Greeks were the first to consider the process of textual transmission and corruption, acknowledging that any form of transmission, oral or scribal, naturally leads to varying levels of deviation from the original. The recognition that ‘textual dissolution’ (Greetham 1992: 297) is an inevitable process has resided at the core of textual studies since its inception. Many approaches and theories have proposed methods to overcome this obstacle and return the chosen text to its original state. By cleansing the text of scribal/print errors and inconsistencies, the work can theoretically be returned to a state closely reflecting the authorial original. The aim of much textual scholarship to date has been the identification and emendation of such errors through codicological and philological analysis. Over many centuries scholars have continuously debated, developed and critiqued different systems in an aim to confront the complex demands of textual studies and produce the best possible edition of a chosen text. From the Alexandrian analogous approach to the twentieth century’s focus on eclectic editing, the differing
methodologies and approaches have shared the same purpose: to rescue the literary work from corruption and restore it to its original glory based on the principles of authorial intention.

The librarians of Alexandria were primarily concerned with reconstructing the best possible edition of a text from among the surviving documents through a process of collation or ‘analogy’. As an approach, it was open to the same criticisms as the later ‘Lachmannian’ method of stemmatic manuscript analysis. Both methodologies could be said to demonstrate a closed argument, whereby the ‘best’ readings are chosen from the ‘best’ texts and ‘bad’ readings are disregarded. A potentially significant number of witnesses and readings are excluded on the basis of their perceived inferiority and corruption. Relying on individual critical interpretation characteristic of the Alexandrian approach, this could produce a text which was based on the whims of the critic, not the author. However, used correctly and proportionately the method allowed the critic to identify and eliminate scribal corruption through collation, producing a text which was ‘responsive’ to authorial intention (Greetham 1992: 299). The Pergamonian scholars were considered to be Alexandria’s intellectual rivals and they approached textual scholarship from a different philosophical perspective. Rather than attempting to eradicate all potential errors from the text, the scholars of Pergamon accepted as part of their philosophy the notion of textual dissolution. Corruption was inevitable; rather than attempting the reconstruction of a lost, ideal version, scholars chose the ‘best’ available text based on the evidence and principles of authorial intention. Once the text had been chosen it was followed rigorously. Despite different perspectives and practices, the outcome of both the Alexandrian and Pergamonian approach is the same: a single, authoritative text to be followed with precision. Both approaches demonstrate similar theoretical issues by disregarding alternative readings and being subject to the whims of the textual critic; both ancient approaches also find descendants in modern textual criticism. The preoccupation with identifying corruption, scribal or through print processes, and returning the text to the authorial original has formed the focus of many centuries of textual study.

However, twentieth century scholarship has challenged the very notion and status of the ‘author’ and called into question the traditional focus on authorial intention as the driving force behind textual scholarship. The author continues to inform editorial judgements concerning the choice of copy-text and issues of presentation, but critical attention has turned towards the reader and issues of reception (Holub 1984). Concurrent
with this trend is the growth of the ‘sociology of the text’ and the concept of textual *mouvance*, perspectives which acknowledge the shifting nature of textual production and the fluidity of the medieval text in particular (Zumthor 1992; McKenzie 1999). The influence of these theoretical perspectives has had a significant impact on the study of book history and the approaches to textual scholarship, particularly within the domain of medieval textual studies. Many critics now accept and prioritise the concept of fluidity rather than focusing absolutely on the reconstruction of a single, authoritative edition.

The move to a focus on ‘free-meaning’ (Greetham 1992: 341) and the promotion of socially constructed meaning over the restrictions of the author-centred approach has made an impact beyond the realm of textual scholarship, and is being tested and debated across the intellectual landscape. Historians of the early modern political sphere, for example, have begun to question the agenda of many traditional post-Reformation narratives, rejecting the triumphalist view in favour of one which acknowledges the fragmented and contradictory responses to cultural change (Duffy 2005; Simpson 2007b). Therefore, if we accept the contradictions and complexities of book production, we must also acknowledge the shifting nature of reception; the intentions of the author, and the ‘meaning’ of the text, will be continually reworked by successive cultures and readers. The ways in which society and its readers use literature as a means to express their own concerns and preoccupations is the focus for contemporary book history.

Medieval texts could prove problematic for Renaissance society as it attempted to distance itself from the Catholic past and forge a new identity founded on the principles of Protestantism. However, this triumphalist narrative has been challenged and problematized by scholars who argue that the impetus was top-down and the transition from Catholic to Protestant was far more complex, and controversial, amongst the lower classes (Duffy 2005; Simpson 2007b). Furthermore, in order to forge ahead, society had to come to terms with its past and Le Goff claims that the Renaissance was characterised by ‘constantly seeking authority in the past’ (Le Goff 1992: 19). The process of (re)reading and (re)writing is an effective way to confront, interrogate and assimilate and certain texts could be repurposed, reworked or even reassigned to a particular author. Through Crowley’s reworking of *Piers Plowman*, Langland became a voice of fourteenth-century dissent and inspired a distinct vernacular literary tradition in which the plowman became synonymous with demands for social and religious reform. The majority of Lydgate’s vast canon did not
make it into print but a small selection of poems were published during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, namely *The Siege of Thebes*, *Troy Book* and *Fall of Princes*.

In addition to modernising features such as spelling, punctuation and syntax, editors utilised paratextual devices as a means of (re)presenting the text to suit the readership and the political context. In the case of Crowley’s edition of *Piers Plowman*, problematic passages could be circumvented by paratextual material directing the reader to certain lines and thematic strands that Crowley himself wished to emphasise. Careful post-Reformation editing was also required to address Lydgate’s Catholicism and it is noticeable that biographical material in sixteenth-century prints of his work is sparse at a time when interest and demand for such material was increasing (Gillespie 2000: 69). The process of editing in the sixteenth century required editors to navigate the complex political landscape, avoiding censorship legislation and the religious zeal of the authorities. Analysis of early modern prints must therefore be mindful of the constraints and agendas which surrounded and motivated the printing industry. Ultimately, the reworking of medieval literature provided the opportunity to edit the past as well as the text. The following analysis of the two late medieval poems will discuss the editorial intentions behind the text in addition to the authorial. The analysis seeks to examine relationship between the printer/editors and the political context under which they worked and consider to what extent these affiliations shaped their treatment of the text.

Despite the acceptance of multiplicity and the shift away from authorial intention as the primary driving force behind textual scholarship, the modern scholarly edition, which aims to provide a standard text for a diverse range of readers, is still very much in demand. The system of eclectic editing for such purposes is appropriate for such endeavours and will likely continue. Contemporary practice in textual scholarship is therefore a complex mix of theories and methodologies which are influenced by wider intellectual developments, demonstrating that the area of textual studies is neither intellectually isolated nor tedious in its concerns. As the notion of authorship, book production and literary culture has developed over the centuries, the corresponding practice of textual studies has also adapted to fit with the changes in technology, literary taste and intellectual landscape. The developments can be traced from the practice of the ancient librarians through to the concerns of modern textual critics and the theoretical and methodological implications of digitisation.
While we might suppose that monastic scriptorium would foster a conservative approach to textual preservation and interpretation, responses to classical literature varied between scholars and institutions and throughout the period. From the sixth to the eighth century attitudes towards ‘pagan’ literature were more hostile and many classical works were simply erased, although remaining palimpsest evidence can provide a glimpse into a manuscript’s previous incarnation (Greetham 1992: 306). The ninth-century witnessed a revival of interest in preserving classical texts, coinciding with the rise of commercial book scribes. While engendering the spread of scribal corruption, Greetham also views this increased access to texts as an aid to the development of humanism and textual scholarship (Greetham 1992: 306-07).

The late medieval and early modern period was characterised by manuscript hunters keen to uncover and revive texts lost from the classical era. Greetham praises men like Petrarch and Boccaccio for their enthusiasm and dedication to finding and copying classical manuscripts (Greetham 1992: 307). He ultimately credits the late fifteenth-century Tuscan scholar Politian as being the first to develop a theory of genealogical relationships between manuscripts. Politian is expressing a central tenet of later textual scholarship relating to archetypal texts and textual transmission, which developed into stemmatic theory. These developments led into the Renaissance during which time biblical scholarship in particular experienced a shift in perspective. In 1516, Erasmus completed his edition of the New Testament which endorsed a rigorous and scholarly approach based on philological principles. His preface is ‘an appeal to scholarly objectivity after the whimsical or doctrinal editing of earlier centuries’ (Greetham 1992: 310). However, Greetham also judges Erasmus’ editorial work to be ‘inconsistent’ as he only utilised collation where the base exemplar demanded, rather than promote a comprehensive method of collation.

Alistair Minnis views this shift in textual studies through the lens of authorship theory. He argues that the medieval period did have a theory of authorship and it can be found in the commentaries and glosses accompanying Latin texts studied in the universities of the later middle ages (Minnis 2010: 1). He challenges the assumption that the middle ages were ruled primarily by ‘logic and dialectic’ and that the ousting of Paganism by Christianity resulted in a decline of literary study (Minnis 2010: 3). He points to the detailed literary analysis of scripture undertaken in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries
which grappled with the complex role of the human author in relation to the divine nature of the scripture itself. However, scriptural analysis before the twelfth century had been focused on allegorical interpretation; an approach, claims Minnis, which hindered the development of literary theory (Minnis 2010: 5). The fifteenth and sixteenth centuries witnessed a growing interest in the role, and credentials, of the author. The paratextual material of sixteenth century prints provide evidence of the changing perceptions and depictions of the author, with the appearance of dedicated anthologies and all manner of biographical information. The author was no longer simply a collator of material, but was credited for his artistic abilities and insight. The propensity for self-styling in the early modern period encouraged society to distance itself from the perceived dark medieval past and this was reflected in the way literature was produced, consumed and evaluated.

Laurel Amtower asserts that literacy and social advancement were closely linked in both the medieval and the early modern period, and that the act of reading was a method of self-fashioning for the growing middle classes (Amtower 2000: 43). In the early modern period reading was a directly political act in many respects; literacy was a central principle of Protestantism and commitment to the faith required personal contemplation of the gospel. Furthermore, the press became an important political tool and printing and reading the wrong kinds of books could still prove dangerous in the post-Reformation period. Despite the blossoming interest in literacy, book ownership and the principles of textual scholarship, the Renaissance did not produce a clear approach or methodology in relation to manuscripts and editing (Greetham 1992: 311). This would arrive with the further developments in philological practice from the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries. Chapter Three analyses the transmission history of *Piers Plowman* from manuscript circulation, through Antiquarian zeal and towards modern editorial rigour, and examines the ways in which the inherent *movance* of the medieval text interacted with the developments in textual scholarship. From the seventeenth century to the present textual scholarship has advanced in two seemingly divergent directions. The early modern approach which held sway until the mid-nineteenth century focused primarily on the development of philological methods. The restoration of the text and authorial intention was achieved through philological investigation and the approach considered textual criticism as the ultimate aim of philology (Greetham 1992: 314).
specialist discipline, with an increasing focus on the technical aspects of criticism. The practice of criticism came to rely increasingly on scientific principles which could be authenticated over and above subjective judgement. In the twentieth century traditional philology was heavily criticised by a variety of movements, from Chomsky’s transformational linguistics to the wave of New Criticism. Diachronic focus was challenged by the investigations of synchronic linguistics and the traditional historical stance was disputed by the anti-historical view of New Criticism which aimed to free the text from the burdens of historiography and authorial intention. The emphasis on authorial intention faced particular competition from an increasing emphasis on technology and the processes of book production. Greetham claims that subsequent ‘battle lines’ have been drawn, obscuring the road to successful interdisciplinarity (Greetham 1992: 316). This description undeniably promotes a rather simplified view of the divisions in textual scholarship and does not account for the differing opinions within a particular approach nor the similarities between them. However, the generalisations do provide an overview of the fundamental debates at the centre of the discipline which continue to shape our perceptions of the book and influence editorial judgements.

The notion of a genealogy of texts which had been tentatively formulated during the Renaissance was developed into the fully fledged theory of stemmatics by the German philologist Karl Lachmann in the first half of the nineteenth century. Lachmann’s work on the theories of textual transmission and his scientific approach to the subject represents a defining moment in the history of textual studies and his ideas continue to resonate. Criticisms of, and reactions against, the rigid stemmatic methodology naturally developed in the twentieth century. Critics were keen to point out the presumptuousness of the system and the impact on editorial choices. A.E. Housman attacked the Lachmannian approach on the basis that it encouraged an academic complacency and he regarded the attempts to reconstruct the authorial archetype as a fruitless exercise. If corruption existed at each level in any case, the desire to ‘backtrack’ was superfluous; analysis could surely begin with any other appropriate extant witness (Greetham 1992: 324). Joseph Bédier’s difficulty with the stemmatic approach was founded on his assertion that the scientific system was flawed. Many of the stemma texts created under the system still required the critic to subjectively choose between a ‘right’ and a ‘wrong’ witness, thereby undermining the approach’s claim to scientific rigour. He further criticised the methodology for being unable to deal with multiple or horizontal lines of descent and such scribal processes as conflation and contamination (Greetham 1992: 324). Bédier’s solution was to identify the ‘best’
manuscript through the application of philological and codicological evidence. Once the manuscript was chosen, it was followed with the same rigidity as the Lachmannian model (Greetham 1992: 325). Much like the competing scholarly methods of the Alexandrians and Pergamonians, the different approaches of Lachmann and Bédier produce a similar result: a single, authoritative text reconstructed on intentionalist principles.

The theory of stemmatics was remoulded and applied in different ways by later critics such as Maas, Greg and Dearing. These scholars steered stemmatics closer to a formulaic system which displays the genealogical relationships by means of mathematical expressions. While these methodologies address some of the weaknesses of traditional stemmatics, the central argument can still prove circular and undermine the value of individual critical judgement. As Greetham points out, however, the work of these critics succeeded in shifting the emphasis from the external characteristics to the internal characteristics when determining the stemmatic relationships (Greetham 1992: 329). Other contemporary critics rejected the assumptions of stemmatics by unashamedly embracing the notion of subjectivity as central to the discipline of textual scholarship and attacking the very idea of a hierarchical structure of relationships (Greetham 1992: 325). Kane and Donaldson’s edition of the Piers Plowman B-text evoked a passionate and polarised response from critics from its publication. Their style of editing treated each variant individually, attempting to distinguish the scribal from the authorial. Criticism of this approach can be fervent, including the accusation that the method promotes a ‘mistrust of texts’ which is as difficult to overcome as previous ideologies of stemmatics and the notion of the ‘best’ text (Greetham 1992: 326). Regardless, Kane and Donaldson’s determination to justify each editorial decision sets an example for the importance of critical transparency.

Textual scholarship began with classical and biblical studies and these two disciplines have defined the attitudes towards editing over the centuries. Vernacular texts have, until relatively recently, been treated separately or entirely ignored by scholars as worthy of critical attention. Anglo-American textual scholarship began to confront this issue towards the second half of the nineteenth century, beginning with medieval and renaissance studies before approaching nineteenth century American and English literature. F.J. Furnivall founded the Early English Text Society in 1864, and it became an important milestone in vernacular textual scholarship. The EEETS, like many of Furnivall’s literary societies, was a result of his work on the OED. Recognising that early vernacular
English literature was in urgent need of editorial attention, the *EETS* published approximately 250 volumes under Furnivall’s direction (Peterson 2007). Aside from the extensive publishing achievements, the society produced careful and conservative editions of medieval and renaissance texts based on the principles of philological study at a time when textual studies was still practiced with a focus on traditional stemmatics and antiquarian zeal. Textual studies rooted in the early modern period prompted developments in a descriptive bibliography able to deal with the physical aspects of book production, print technology and textual transmission. This became the area of ‘analytical bibliography’ and was the focus of critics like McKerrow, Pollard and Greg working in the first half of the twentieth century.

The analytic approach shifted the focus of textual studies and the history of the book specifically towards the history and impact of technology. However, the approach was not accepted wholesale and some scholars, including McKerrow, concluded that excessive emphasis on the technological aspect overshadowed the traditional drive of textual criticism. Greetham observes that in the mid to late-twentieth century, ‘analytical bibliography became an independent discipline with no ultimate literary responsibilities’ (Greetham 1992: 332) and, in doing so, reiterates his claim that specialist disciplines are prone to narrow-mindedness. As a reaction to the materiality of analytic bibliography, New Criticism arose with the aim to isolate the textual from the physical and historical factors, and bring criticism back to the principles of close reading.

Dominating the theoretical debate in Anglo-American textual scholarship during the latter part of the twentieth century has been the ‘Greg-Bowers’ school of thought. W.W. Greg was a prolific editor and literary critic who maintained that analytic bibliography was central to the study of textual scholarship. The material aspects of the book could yield crucial information about the circumstances of production and editorial technique regardless of the content of the text. Working primarily with medieval literature and renaissance drama, Greg was also keen to demonstrate that the processes involved in textual transmission were a topic to be studied under the heading of bibliography. It is true to say that Greg’s most lasting and influential contribution to textual scholarship was his

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*It was the *Early English Text Society* which began to steadily publish works by John Lydgate from 1891, much of them appearing in print for the first time and with the smaller texts receiving more attention (Mortimer 2005: 16). Mortimer argues that the late nineteenth century revival of interest in Boccaccio led, through the *Fall of Princes*, to a revival of interest in Lydgate (Mortimer 2005:11).*
essay entitled *The Rationale of Copy-Text* written in 1950 and later published by Bowers (Greg 1950). Intended as a guide when choosing the appropriate copy-text for sixteenth and seventeenth century printed materials, the primary aim of the essay was practical rather than theoretical. Nevertheless, Greg’s essay sparked a debate on the significance of choosing a copy-text and the subsequent impact on the editorial task, a debate which continues in contemporary textual scholarship. The essay questioned the traditional assumption that the most authoritative copy-text was the last edition printed during the author’s lifetime. It had been previously assumed that authors would oversee each edition put to press. A more realistic grasp of the circumstances of early modern book production has proved this conclusion to be untenable; it was highly unlikely that authors retained absolute editorial control over their text (Greetham 1992: 333). Greg’s copy-text theory was developed by taking into account the complex circumstances of book production and the changing role of the author in the process from composition to press (McKenzie 1999).

Greg proposed that the elements of a text be divided into two categories, *substantives* and *accidentals*. The *substantives* refer to the actual words or meaning of the text, while the *accidentals* signify the perceived superficial textual elements, such as orthography, spelling and punctuation. The division acknowledges various levels of authority associated with the single text and it is also sensitive to the complex circumstances of early modern book production. From this perspective Greg’s theory is also a recognition of editorial attitudes and how they should be represented in contemporary editions. Greg asserted that the *accidentals* be gathered from an early authorial manuscript, while the *substantive* elements should be based on later editions where it can be proved that any further changes were authorial (Greg 1950). Based on an awareness of early modern printing practice, it accepts the notion that printers, editors or other contributors besides the author felt that the *accidental* elements of the text were within their prerogative to change. The term *accidental* is perhaps misleading in the case of medieval or even older texts; modern scholarly editions in these cases pay a significant amount of attention to spelling variants.

It is argued in this thesis that systems of punctuation should be given the same level of editorial attention and acknowledged as indicators of reading practices during the various stages of textual transmission. The *substantive* elements, on the other hand, have traditionally received more conservative treatment and were less likely to be altered by later contributors. Following this, the authorial manuscript would be used as the base copy-
text, with the printed edition (preferably the first edition) used when emendation to the substantive elements was required. The outcome of this approach led to the application of ‘eclectic’ editing, where a single edition could contain readings from several witnesses. It essentially produced an ideal text constructed on the principles of authorial intention. Rejecting earlier approaches whereby the ‘best’ text was derived from stemmatic analysis, it also involved a significant theoretical shift with regards to selection and authority.

However, not all contemporary critics agreed with the methodology and challenges were raised. Some literary scholars criticised the approach for its strict adherence to an uncompromising methodology and claimed it failed to acknowledge the real circumstances of literary composition. Phillip Gaskell’s argument rests on his evaluation of renaissance printing practices; if authors accepted and expected that their manuscript would be edited, it follows that authorial manuscripts are ‘consciously unfinished’. He accepts the use of manuscripts as copy-text for materials which are not intended for publication, such as journals and letters. However, the nature of print necessitates that the author accepts and agrees to all changes during the publishing process (cited in Greetham 1992: 336). Tanselle, an advocate of Greg’s copy-text theory, approaches the issue of authority and intentionality from a different perspective and warns against assuming that the author has willingly accepted the editorial changes simply because they are published. He cites several instances of social, political or religious pressures which have been exerted upon a text during the process of publication and in these cases, the editor is justified in reverting to an earlier manuscript or edition in order to retrieve the ‘original’ intentions (Tanselle 1990).

Towards the end of the twentieth century, critics began to challenge the supremacy of this system and developed a new approach towards editing and authorial intention. A focus on the book as a cultural artefact has reinvigorated the study of book history from a social standpoint. Claiming that the eclectic approach promotes a compulsive author-centred view, Jerome McGann and other contemporary critics have re-evaluated the role of the book and the author in the process of textual production and transmission. In his 1983 publication Critique of Modern Textual Criticism McGann asserts that ‘[a] hypnotic fascination with the isolated author has served to foster an overdetermined concept of authorship but (reciprocally) an underdetermined concept of literary work’ (McGann 1983: 122). Claiming we are influenced by the Romantic notion of authorial insight, McGann proposes a rather different view of literature and the role of the book. Focusing on the
collaborative nature of textual production he aims to promote a democratic approach towards versions, acknowledging the social and collaborative aspect of book production and the multiplicity of reception. In relation to editing practice McGann’s theory rejects a complacent and uncritical focus on authorial intention as the driving force behind textual scholarship, and claims that the input of each contributor, even after the death of the author, must be considered when studying the text. This places the emphasis of textual study on the notion of a community of contributors and readers, shifting the aim of editing away from intentionalist theory towards a theory of the text as a social construct and cultural artefact.

McGann advises caution when using the terms *substantive* and *accidental* since they cannot be applied to each text in the same way. Authors differ, conventions and techniques change with time and language itself is in a constant state of evolution. Therefore, *accidentals* may prove helpful in identifying a copy-text in some cases, but prove problematic in others (McGann 1983: 122). However, McGann does not dismiss the eclectic approach entirely and concludes that copy-text theory and an awareness of authorial intention can prove to be useful ‘analytic devices’ within textual scholarship, provided that their limitations are recognised (McGann 1983: 123). The role of the reader in shaping book production is a central premise of this project; more specifically, it will be argued that the changing ‘model’ of reader and the gradual development of a predominantly silent-reading culture exerted pressures on the paratextual and punctuation systems of printed texts, often at different rates. Close-reading and a qualitative study of selected editions of Langland and Lydgate demonstrates the complexities and contradictions which arise from editing and printing a medieval text in the early modern period, and the lasting influence of these editorial decisions, *substantive* and *accidental*, on the subsequent textual transmission histories of both authors.

The decisive move towards viewing the book as a collaborative product and a multi-layered, cultural artefact has been further promoted by the work of D.F. McKenzie. McKenzie has developed his own ‘sociology of the text’ which calls for the material history of the book to be considered a central part of textual study. McKenzie’s early work in the 1960s proved that early print production was inconsistent and haphazard. This prompted him to propose the theory of textual production as a series of ‘successive interpretative acts’ in both production and consumption (Finkelstein & McCleery 2008: 9). He also asserts that
differences in the way cultures approach texts and their own specific traditions of communication must be acknowledged. McKenzie asserts that previous bibliographic theory and practice has tended towards ‘euro-centricity’ (Finkelstein & McCleery 2008: 10), resulting in a narrow view of the text and its role in society. From McKenzie’s perspective, the study of ‘the book’ widens to encompass all forms of communication. A text is not perceived as an isolated piece of literature born of the author’s artistic insight and consumed as a message directly from author to reader; it is a product of collaboration which exists within a wider structure of communication and which is shaped by the reading community. These developments in Anglo-American textual scholarship can be seen to derive from the Continental school of ‘l’histoire du livre’. This approach places the book within a full narrative of national history as a cultural artefact in its own right, and rejects the elitist notion of ‘literature’. Anglo-American scholarship has moved further from its focus on technical aspects and analytical bibliography towards the Continental approach based in social history (Greetham 1992: 339). For Greetham, this shift of focus from authorial intention to readers’ consumption is reflective of ideological shifts in the wider intellectual community. It signals a move from the constraints of the author-centred view to free meaning and interpretation associated with the post-structuralist movement (Greetham 1992: 341).

The notion of collaboration and community has been studied by Elizabeth Bryan with the focus on medieval scribal culture, specifically the production and readership of the Otho manuscript of Laʒamon. The comprehensive introduction describes the distinct textual communities which existed within scribal culture and the collaborative processes involved in the production of the text. Bryan argues that the collaborative nature of medieval textual production promoted very different perceptions of the author, the book and the act of reading. There was an inherent equality in the way medieval society viewed the process of textual composition and transmission. The concept of a hierarchy over which the author presides would be alien to medieval writers, scribes and readers. Each member of the textual community could interact with the text in various ways, from author to listener, and each had a message to glean from it (Bryan 2002: 1-2). Modern critics have failed to confront the clear differences and complexities of medieval textual production and literary culture (Bryan 2002: 4). She suggests that modern trends in scholarship have rendered us unable to fully acknowledge the circumstances of medieval book production, highlighting the fixation of the ‘standard text’ (Bryan 2002: 6) as a major obstacle. Fixation or mass reproduction only occurs in print and is irrelevant to the production and
consumption of pre-print literature. It must be acknowledged, however, that early print production was far from consistent and mass reproduction is a much more recent ‘achievement’ due to technological advances.

Modern systems of analysis also assume chronology to be a major issue in the editing process which subsequently informs, and perhaps constrains, the theory of copy-text. Bryan asserts that scribal culture was not restricted by the notion of a single version, or even a single author (Bryan 2002: 7). The application of post-print perceptions and editorial practice could therefore be considered as a textual anachronism. Medieval scribes did aim for a level of standardisation within certain institutions. However, the concern for standardisation was focused towards the idea of ‘textual authority’, an issue which Bryan claims is far more complex than the relationship between copies and exemplars. Authority was related to correctness and the desire to accurately represent the wisdom of the ancient texts, rather than producing identical copies (Bryan 2002: 13). Despite her focus on scribal culture, Bryan touches upon the advent of print and its profound impact. While the history and technological developments of print have been extensively studied and our knowledge of the practicalities of early publishing greatly enhanced by the research of analytic bibliographers, Bryan argues that little work has been done on how print has shaped our perceptions towards the author and the text (Bryan 2002: 5).

Fascinating discussions on the implications of print and the digital are emerging across the areas of literary and cultural studies. The Institute for Literature, Media & Cultural Studies at the University of Southern Denmark has recently launched a project entitled The Gutenberg Parenthesis: Print, Book and Cognition, which aims to confront the ‘growing awareness’ that the dominance of the printed book may now be waning as the possibilities of digital technology expand. Convened by Professors M. Borch and L.O. Sauerberg, the project presents a central hypothesis: the possibilities offered by digital technology and the fluidity of communication recalls the pre-print, oral culture of the past. The intervening years between the advent of print and the rise of digital technology can therefore be considered an interruption or ‘merely a historical phase, and one which is now coming to an end under the impact of digital technology and the internet’. The project,

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fuelled by an interdisciplinary forum, aims to analyse the implications of mass book production and how a shift into digital culture has, paradoxically, led to an ‘appreciation of manuscripts, variants and writing processes’ which is in opposition to the long-standing dominance of print culture. The hypothesis fielded by the *Gutenberg Parenthesis* project complements Bryan’s argument that post-print perceptions of authorship and the fixed text has restricted our understanding of pre-print, and arguably early-print, textual production. The notion that digital technology has led to an enlightened re-assessment of manuscript culture which acknowledges, even embraces, textual instability is intriguing.

Digitisation offers a range of new possibilities, primary among them the widening of access to manuscripts and rare books. Scholars like Stephen Reimer who have argued for the importance of manuscript context when editing medieval texts will surely welcome the ability to reproduce various forms of paratextual material on the screen (Reimer 2004). However, digitising without aim and presenting the text without explanatory apparatus potentially creates more problems than it solves; contextualisation offered by the digital facsimile does not replace the process of editing. The complexities remain and contemporary critics are found asking the same questions and attempting to overcome the same obstacles as their ancient counterparts. The last few decades have certainly witnessed a shift in how textual witnesses are evaluated and in the approaches towards the editing process. Online resources – corpora, catalogues and editions – allow large amounts of data to be collected, collated and displayed. The ability to search and the features which aid ‘searchability’ are now primary considerations for online administrators and editors. Databases may have the capacity to store large amounts of data, but this does not dispense with the need for an editorial strategy which governs what and how the material is presented. Maintaining these resources is also an on going process and the user interface and features must continually adapt to the changing technology and the expectations of the user. The parallels with the development of print culture are clear, and perhaps future generations of scholars will observe the overlaps between print and digital in the first few decades of the perceived transition.
2.2 Contemporary Book History & the Rise of the Reader

‘It is not always possible, despite the best efforts of book historians, to convert codicological details into a coherent, historical narrative’.

(Gillespie 2000: 51)

Within the various movements and methodologies of textual scholarship, the traditional aim has been accuracy – accuracy based on recovering the authorial intention through elimination of scribal errors, philological accuracy or systematic stemmatic and analytic investigation. The process of editing involves the study of each aspect of the chosen text from precise palaeography to literary criticism before the edited text can take final shape, and the editorial process has become increasingly rigorous. The rigour applied to the process has been matched with the drive for transparency and the expectations of transparency open up the editorial process and product to more intense scrutiny. However, it also less restrictive in many ways. Scholars such as Kane and Donaldson embrace the subjectivity of the editorial task but this is counterbalanced by the weight of evidence provided and the detailed justifications and descriptions of process. Modern editions certainly still aim for accuracy but the editorial process has been influenced by the theoretical and interdisciplinary movements which shifted critical attention from above to below, from high culture to popular culture, from the author to the reader. Furthermore, the theoretical implications of mouvance and the ‘sociology of the text’ have subverted the long-held notion of the text; scholars now increasingly conceive of themselves as engaging with a text and each version is granted the authority of its own historical moment. Modern book history, then, has barely scratched the surface of the interpretative possibilities.

Following the rejection of the ‘ideal’ text in both theory and practice, scholars were subsequently required to reject the notion of an ideal reader. The reinvigorated history of the book which democratizes the processes of production and reception has necessarily reinvigorated the study of the reader; critics from across historical and linguistic disciplines are attempting to understand what was read, how it was read and who was reading. Elizabeth Salter’s study of popular reading in England from 1400-1600 has argued that studies of the history of reading are now entering into a new phase – the ‘reconstructions of reading practice and experience for the unknown reader’ (Salter 2012: 11). The present thesis takes a similar approach and the reconstruction of reading practices is not based on a specific reader or group of readers; rather, the evidence provided by the interaction of
paratextual and textual features is used to chart the development of silent reading practices across a selection of editions of Langland and Lydgate. However, it is also argued that the editors of these poems constitute ‘known’ readers; every editor is, first and foremost, a reader. The motivations and political affiliations of each editor are evaluated and the subsequent chapters consider to what extent their interpretations shaped the reception of the text for their contemporary readers and later critics.

The process of reader reconstruction necessarily begins with the extralinguistic factors and traces them down to the intralinguistic detail. Suzanne Fleischman, in a staunch defence of the discipline of philology, asserts that the philologist must ‘recontextualise the texts as acts of communication, thereby acknowledging the extent to which linguistic structure is shaped by the pressures of discourse’ (Fleischman 1990: 37). In other words, in order to produce a comprehensive analysis of the form and function of an older text, we must consider its dynamic, ‘real-world’ origins. This, of course, is fraught with practical and theoretical complications. Elizabeth Salter’s study highlights the difficulties of reconstructing past reading habits and practices. The challenge faced is to uncover the ‘ephemeral’ reading practices from the ‘fixed’ written text (Salter 2012: 4) and it is a process which requires the consideration of the reader’s requirements and expectations alongside the evidence presented by the physical text. Fleischman’s essay discussed similar issues relating to the reconstruction of past stages of language use, asserting that ‘the texts are all we have…’ (Fleischman 1990: 29). However, the ‘texts’ can still provide a significant amount of information and their fixity is not an insurmountable barrier between the critic and the layers of dynamic meaning contained within the text.

The approach and insights of historical sociopragmatics can provide the bridge between the historical written text and the modern edition, and between the medieval/early modern reader and the contemporary critic. The systems themselves might be ‘fixed’ on the page, but the variety of and interaction between the systems of punctuation and paratext evidenced in the manuscript and early printed book demonstrates the complexity and flexibility of reading habits and practices in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. One text does not encode one reading practice and this is especially true of the printed medieval text which must reconcile the desire for authority with the need for modernisation. Analysis of the pragmatic detail of the page, considered in relation to the circumstances of production, can provide insights into the various ways a
reader in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries might engage with the text. The current thesis provides such an assessment of Langland’s *Piers Plowman* and Lydgate’s *Fall of Princes*, and demonstrates that the combined analytical and interpretative strengths of bibliography and textual criticism can build a comprehensive and dynamic picture of past reading practices and engagement.

The growing acceptance within textual scholarship of the instability of the text and the unrealistic aim of producing a single, authoritative edition based solely on authorial intention has shifted critical attention towards the fluidity of the medieval and early printed text (Zumthor 1992; McKenzie 1999; Cerquiglini 1999). However, as outlined in Chapter One, the concept of textual *mouvance* must acknowledge the concept of textual *continuity*. The links between scribal and print culture, between pre- and post-Reformation texts are not, however, limited to the processes of production. The reader and the practices they employ can also be seen as connections between texts and literary cultures; it is the readers not the texts who are the linchpin of literary culture. The ‘textual community’ involved in book production and transmission did not simply halt at the advent of the printing press and it is a main contention within the current thesis that the invention of print, while revolutionary in many respects, was also an evolution of the existing scribal culture. Andrew Pettegree’s study provides a detailed and realistic view of the early stages of the publishing industry and argues that it was not an immediate success; the new technology found itself competing against an established and commercially successful scribal culture (Pettegree 2010: 43). Scribal practices informed the tastes and trends of early printed book production and the process involved a variety of artisans and businessmen, from type-founders to booksellers.

Through the study of early printed editions of late medieval texts, it becomes apparent that printers were attempting to strike a balance between the presentation of an ‘authentic’ medieval text and an edition which reflected the tastes and expectations of the early modern readership, a process which could result in a complex mix of conservatism and modernisation within an individual text. Much like the medieval scribe, early printers were closely involved with the layout and language of the text and the editions were likely to reflect their own styles and systems of spelling and punctuation. Printers varied in their editorial approach from each other, over time and in relation to the type of text they were printing, demonstrating that the changes being adopted were gradual and subject to
various intra- and extralinguistic influences. Along with physical and editorial developments during the shift from script to print, we also witness the changing role of the author, from the often anonymous compiler of ancient wisdom to the elevated figure praised for their artistic and intellectual insight.

The changing perceptions of the medieval author and the medieval text can be charted through the paratextual material of the selected editions. However, it is argued in the present thesis that re-reading and re-working the medieval text was also a means by which early modern society could confront its past and forge its future; the Renaissance, argues Le Goff, was ‘constantly seeking authority in the past’ (Le Goff 1992: 19). The sixteenth century was a period of political transition and intersection, of religious and intellectual upheaval. James Simpson has argued that the sixteenth century engaged in a process of ‘aggressive physical and ideological demolition of the “old” order’, and the result was a narrowing of cultural output (Simpson 2007b: 2). The middle ages, by contrast, are described as a ‘reformist’ era due to its diversity of output. However, the reading habits of the sixteenth century disrupt this narrative. Editors and readers turned towards the complex medieval text and attempted to re-interpret and reshape the text to align with sixteenth-century concerns. Furthermore, the editing and reception of *Piers Plowman* and the *Fall of Princes* demonstrates that sixteenth century literary culture did not engage in a process of ‘demolition’, but a process of adaptation.

During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the layout and conventions of the modern book evolved: title-pages, contents tables, editorial notes and paratextual material relating to the author were all developed during the first decades of print and still form the basic outline for modern publishers. By studying the evidence gathered from the texts themselves, we can acknowledge the processes involved and the factors at play in the development of reading habits and practices, from both an inter- and extra-linguistic perspective. As the role of the speaker diminished and silent reading gradually became the dominant model, the range of punctuation marks increased and the range of interpretative possibilities communicated by those marks expanded. The role of paratext also develops from a primarily decorative and/or navigational function into a complex textual apparatus and a reflection of the contemporary intellectual and political landscape. Within the space of the printed book, the medieval text meets the early modern reader, the ‘reader-as-speaker’ meets the ‘reader-as-hearer’ and reading practices merge, conflict and jostle.
In order to uncover past reading practices, Salter asserts that we require ‘more empirically based work which assesses the evidence of book and manuscript in some detail’ (Salter 2012: 5) and it is to that end we now turn. The following Chapters Three and Four engage with the textual transmission histories of William Langland and John Lydgate respectively and analyse the systems of paratext and punctuation contained within the selected editions. The evidence gathered is then evaluated for what it reveals about the development of silent reading practices.
CHAPTER THREE

Reformation & Reform: Reading William Langland’s *Piers Plowman*

3.1 Overview of the Textual Transmission & Editing History of ‘Piers Plowman’

‘The cultural value and significance of a source is defined by its medium of transmission’.

(Groom 1999: 3)

William Langland’s late fourteenth-century alliterative poem *Piers Plowman* survives in over 50 manuscripts and this significant number attests to Langland’s popularity and wide dissemination during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Scholars have noted that the vast majority of surviving manuscripts are modestly produced, suggesting a dissemination which extended beyond the wealthiest of patrons. However, any manuscript remains a time-consuming and expensive production, limiting the likelihood of access to and ownership of a *Piers* manuscript considerably. The notion of the text having a particular significance and demand among the working classes has been inferred from John Ball’s evocation of the figure of Piers the Plowman during the 1381 Peasants’ Revolt. Ball’s allusions to Piers have been taken as evidence of the rebels engaging with the poem as a revolutionary text, the hero figure of the plowman becoming a symbol for social unrest and dissent. Stephen Justice provides a detailed analysis and interpretation of the rebels’ relationship with Langland’s poem. He asserts that the notion of the rebels as readers of the poem is both historically and methodologically problematic given that any copy of the poem which may have found its way into the hands of the rural workers was unlikely to survive. We are left to construct ‘a hypothetical scenario for its [the poem’s] transmission among rebel societies’ (Justice 1994: 119) and such vague hypothetical links prove to be of little use when attempting to uncover the poem’s history of transmission and readership.

However, the relatively conservative nature of the C-text and the removal of the pardon-ripping scene from Passus VII suggests an attempt, on Langland’s part, to distance the poem from these politically dangerous associations. Justice analyses the ways in which

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8 John Ball was a chaplain from Colchester and was involved in the uprising and preached to the rebels; he was hanged, drawn and quartered in July 1381 (Justice 1994: 4).
John Ball adapts the language and structure of Langland’s verse during his sermons and communications and argues that Ball’s interpretation aligns the poem with a dispute which did not align with Langland’s intentions (Justice 1994: 106). Justice’s close reading of rebel communications alongside the poem leads him to conclude that Ball’s appropriations are ‘wilful’ and ‘at odds with Langland’s purposes…’ (Justice 1994: 111). Robert Crowley has been similarly charged with ignoring or manipulating Langland’s intentions to further his own political agenda, an endeavour made possible by the ambiguity and complexity of the verse. In other words, Langland’s ‘diffidence’ about reform and the course it might take becomes ‘an invitation to those who would use Piers to underwrite their own particular courses of reformist action’ (Justice 1994: 106). Crowley might be responding to this unintended invitation contained within the poem, but he was also be responding to these previous associations and his 1550 editions extended the reformist interpretation of the text. His editions have been regarded as a ‘Protestant misreading of an essentially medieval text’, a misreading which exerted considerable influence on subsequent editors and scholars (Scanlon 2007: 54). However, this interpretation simplifies both the original poem and Crowley’s sixteenth-century response to it. Drawing upon recent re-evaluations of the edition by Scanlon and Hailey, the following discussion holds that Crowley’s motivations behind the edition are complex and his treatment of problematic Catholic doctrine nuanced.

Nevertheless, the link between the plowman figure and popular protest did exist, and any assessment of the poem’s transmission and reception history must acknowledge this. These cultural associations are undoubtedly reinforced and manipulated by Robert Crowley’s 1550 prints which are discussed in more detail in the following section. These three impressions are the focus for a number of reasons: firstly, Crowley was the first to put the poem to press and, besides the almost wholesale reprint published by Owen Rogers in 1561, he remained the only editor to print the poem in its entirety for over 250 years. While Crowley’s own manuscript copy-texts are now considered lost, his print(s) became a reference text for scholars and a copy-text for future editors. Scanlon suggests that past critical responses to Crowley’s edition have been ‘sporadic’ and ‘subordinated to its

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9 Justice is referring specifically to Ball’s interpretation of Wit’s speech from Passus IX which describes society’s duty of care towards the poor and argues that Ball relates this passage to the contemporary politics of disendowment (Justice 1994: 106).

10 Larry Scanlon’s 2007 discussion is contained within the volume Reading the Medieval in Early Modern England. It draws upon Robert Carter Hailey’s 2001 doctoral thesis titled, ‘Giving Light to the Reader: Robert Crowley’s Editions of Piers Plowman (1550)’ (Ph.D. University of Virginia). Hailey’s later article in the 2007 volume of the Yearbook of Langland Studies furthers the argument that Crowley’s treatment of the poem is less manipulative and polemical than has been previously accepted.
[criticism’s] larger response to Langland’ (Scanlon 2007:54), an oversight that the recent studies of Crowley seek to address.

Crowley’s prints are important, even unique, in the poem’s textual transmission history; his edition links directly back to the preceding manuscript tradition and forwards to the editions which used his print as a reference and/or copy-text. Furthermore, the boldness of his paratextual framing and his complex, even contradictory editorial approach also merits detailed discussion. In addition to providing a comprehensive study of the socio-political dimensions of the print, the chapter will analyse the concessions Crowley makes to the early modern silent reader in relation to the systems of paratext and punctuation, and what his choices can tell us about his own intentions for the text and the expectations of his readers. The lack of print editions of *Piers Plowman* prior to 1550 necessitates the comparison with an earlier manuscript copy and Trinity College, Cambridge MS B.15.17 (c.1400) has been selected. This manuscript became a primary copy-text for later editions of the poem, including Thomas Wright’s edition from 1842 (2nd edition 1856) and Kane and Donaldson’s edition (Kane & Donaldson 1975); both the Wright and the Kane & Donaldson editions also use Crowley’s impressions as reference texts.

The current thesis considers Crowley’s prints as a centre point in the textual transmission history of *Piers Plowman*, absorbing the cultural associations from several centuries of manuscript circulation and reworking it to reflect the preoccupations and political context of the mid-sixteenth century. The sixteenth century is itself considered to be a political and intellectual turning point in several respects, not least because the Reformation altered what were considered necessary and acceptable forms of cultural expression (Simpson 2007b). The continued growth of silent readers, promoted by the principles of Protestant reform, exerted further pressure on the treatment of medieval texts. However, associating the sixteenth century with the emergence of a recognisably ‘early modern’ society does not equate to a simplified, triumphalist narrative. Neither does the present thesis aim to mount a reactionary defence of the medieval and its literary output. Rather, the analysis of Langland and Lydgate aims to demonstrate that medieval texts printed during this period of transition are resistant to generalisations and subvert our expectations in terms of a straightforward development of silent reading practices and political homogeneity.
In terms of charting these developments in reading practices within the textual transmission history of *Piers Plowman*, the paucity of printed editions does present some difficulties. The analysis provides a comprehensive comparison between the paratextual and punctuation practices evident in MS B.15.17 and Crowley’s impressions from 1550, assessing the impact of print technology and the development of reading practices during the shift from script to print. The next 250 years can be described as the ‘extract years’ during which the poem only appears in excerpt, brief quotations, or passing reference from Antiquarian scholars such as Thomas Percy, Thomas Warton and Joseph Ritson in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. These references, however brief, constitute a significant part of the poem’s transmission history and merit discussion. Crowley’s editions and Owens’ reprint are therefore the only examples of early modern punctuation systems being deployed (or not) within the poem. However, Crowley’s editorial approach towards punctuation and paratext is also compared in Chapter Three to two contemporary printers, Richard Tottell and John Wayland, who both published an edition of Lydgate’s *Fall of Princes* in 1554.

The political conditions of the mid-sixteenth century promoted the blossoming of an independent literary tradition centred on the figure of the plowman and the motif of common complaint. The *Plowman’s Tale* and *Jack Upland* found their way into the Chaucerian Anthologies and the scathing anti-monastic satire *The Crede of Piers Plowman* is appended to Owen Rogers’ 1561 print of Langland’s poem. The paratextual material suggests that Rogers considered the poems to be at least complimentary, if not by the same author. It is not the purpose of this chapter to highlight the differences in style, theme and intent between Langland’s original poem and the works it inspired; rather, these details are a reminder of the political dimension of a poem which emerged in the late fourteenth century and which was adapted and reworked during the sixteenth century. Robert Crowley’s framing of the poem as a work of early reform undoubtedly reinforced these links; however, this chapter will argue that his choice and treatment of *Piers Plowman* is an innovative response to the political situation. Crowley was one of a number of ‘commonwealth men’ who used their writing as a form of political activism (Wood 2009: 33) and the choice of *Piers* as a poem to exemplify Protestant ideals implies the complexity of sixteenth-century politics.
The choice of a medieval dream vision as a means to understand and exemplify the power of popular protest in the Reformation period brought particular editorial challenges, as the following analysis of Crowley's three impressions will show. Each edition displays a tension between the desire to emphasise the medieval origins of the poem and the desire to reflect the needs of the sixteenth century reader. The paratextual material attempts a biography of Langland, based on the scanty details available, locating the author geographically and historically. The presentation of the book is text-focused and the single-column black letter type employed throughout creates a stark edition. Black Letter was a conventional choice for representing the vernacular in print and Sharpe notes that England was ‘relatively late in converting to Roman type’ (Sharpe 2000:51). The densely packed text and lack of decoration in Crowley’s edition is certainly a concession to the economics of printing and his other prints are similarly austere. Nevertheless, Crowley chooses to print Piers in Quarto format while the majority of his other publications survive in Octavo – perhaps Crowley decided that the risk of producing a more expensive volume was worthwhile.

The sixteenth century considered the text and the figure of the plowman as reformist in nature and Langland was inextricably linked to Lollardy; analysis of the poem continued in this vein until the end of the nineteenth century. Late nineteenth and early twentieth century criticism re-evaluated the poem primarily as an individual journey and search for spiritual truth and the conservative aspects of Langland’s poem were re-examined as evidence of his social and religious conservatism. The existing social hierarchy and Church doctrine of the late fourteenth century is challenged by Langland who warns against the evils of corruption, but the institutions themselves remain intact (Simpson 2007c:1). Simpson himself views the poem as distinctly ‘person-shaped’ and, fundamentally, an individual spiritual journey. However, he states that the person, indeed Langland, cannot be understood without reference to the institutions being critiqued. Identifying Langland’s political and religious affiliations through formal choices made in the text is central to understanding the purpose of the text and its place in contemporary society (Simpson 2007c: 2). This is also true of Crowley’s print.

After a short hiatus during the reign of Mary I, Piers is reprinted by Owen Rogers in

11 It is interesting to note that Whitaker’s decision to utilise Black Letter in his 1813 edition, an overt visual reminder of the medieval origins of the text, was met with irritation by his Antiquarian contemporaries.
1561. This edition is plagiarised almost wholesale from Crowley’s earlier print, with Rogers simply cutting and rearranging the original paratextual material; he also decides to omit Crowley’s marginal annotations. Given that Piers Plowman was not reprinted until over 250 years later by the Reverend Thomas Whitaker in 1813, Crowley’s edition becomes a pivotal point in Langland’s textual history, exercising a lasting influence over perceptions and criticism. Crowley’s personal enthusiasm for the text and the eagerness of the readership is evidenced in the three consecutive impressions issued in 1550. Crowley’s edition is based on versions of the B-Text, though all of his exemplar manuscripts are now thought to be lost (Brewer 1996: 13). Keen to enhance and exploit anti-papal sentiment and institutional criticism, Crowley chooses the revision most directly critical of Church and state. It is possible that this is simply representative of the texts to which Crowley had access. However, given that he appears to reference a selection of B-manuscripts specifically it seems likely this was a deliberate editorial choice. This choice was significant: combined with the prefatory material and annotations which aim to highlight the apparent reformist views contained in the text, Crowley’s edition further consolidated the idea of Langland as an early reformer.

It is necessary to consider the role of editors during this period in comparison to our modern appreciation of the role. Charlotte Brewer immediately confronts the editorial dilemma in the opening of her comprehensive study of the history of Piers Plowman editing — what should be considered revision and what constitutes scribal corruption? (Brewer 1996:1). Due to the uniqueness of Langland’s process of composition and production, the issue of scribal corruption and editorial involvement is particularly pertinent in the study of Piers Plowman. Modern scholarly editing is undoubtedly a much more comprehensive and transparent exercise and editors are expected to fully explain and justify their decisions and approach. Despite an undeniable bias, Crowley is still engaging with the process of editing and, through his prefatory material and annotations, a level of textual criticism. Brewer points out that the exercise of criticism demands the primacy of ‘human judgement’ at every stage (Brewer 1996: 3) and Crowley certainly imposes his stance and political affiliations throughout the text. Brewer considers Crowley to be unique among Piers editors; for him, the text had a real contemporary significance. Crowley was at the forefront of reform activism during Edward VI and Elizabeth I’s reign and was a Marian exile during the late 1550’s. He was often frustrated in later years by what he saw as a derailing of the reform progress made in the early years of Edward’s reign. Crowley bears a genuine enthusiasm for the poem and in his view Langland was a true herald of early reformist
theory. Printing the text was a matter of conviction. There is a suggestion that Crowley may have deliberately enhanced certain anti-clerical sentiments within the poem to suit his own political ends, but the loss of his exemplar manuscripts means this will remain speculation. Crowley’s primary motivation in the edition was to highlight the contemporary political and religious significance within the poem and bring it to a new generation of readers. *Piers Plowman* was not an obscure and awkward medieval text, it was a poem with unmistakable relevance for the post-Reformation readership.

A revival of interest in medieval literature began during the late eighteenth century, giving rise to a swathe of private book societies and learned antiquarians. These upper class gentleman approached the discovery and publishing of medieval works with great conviction, but they were only accessible to a small number. This period in the history of *Piers Plowman*’s textual transmission is somewhat unique, with the poem continuously mentioned, referenced and quoted in a selection of antiquarian anthologies. It may seem odd to discuss the lack of editions in the transmission history of a text, but omissions are themselves revealing and these ‘non-editions’ engage in scholarly conversation and debate concerning the origins of *Piers Plowman* and its place within the canon of English literature. Thomas Percy’s *The Reliques of English Poetry* (1765), a work which epitomises the eighteenth century antiquarian zeal, was lauded and criticised in equal measure but was nevertheless a commercially successful volume of collected vernacular literature which required several print runs. The title page advertises:

Old Heroic BALLADS, SONGS, and other
PIECES of our earlier POETS,
(chiefly of the LYRIC kind.)
Together with some few of later Date.

(From the facsimile of the Second Edition, published 1767)

Percy digresses from his discussion of the *Complaint of Conscience* in the second volume of the anthology to discuss the metre of *Piers Plowman* and provide a succinct account of the history of the alliterative tradition (Percy 1767: 268). Percy consulted ‘four different editions in black letter quarto’, Crowley’s three 1550 impressions and Rogers’s reprint from 1561. Percy praises the poem, asserting that Langland ‘excells in strong allegoric painting, and has with great humour, spirit and fancy, censured most of the vices incident to the
several professions of life; but he particularly inveighs against the corruptions of the clergy, and the absurdities of superstition’ (Percy 1767: 270). Considering Percy’s reference texts were limited to Crowley’s polemical impressions and Rogers’ edition (with the addition of the anti-monastic Crede), it is hardly surprising that he was drawn towards the perceived anti-clericalism.

Nick Groom has written in detail about the role of Reliques in eighteenth-century literary culture and discusses the reaction to Percy’s editorial rationale from the perspective of his contemporaries and later scholars. Groom argues that, despite Percy’s idiosyncrasy when dealing with his source material, he was one of a ‘handful’ of eighteenth-century antiquarians who shaped the English literary canon, evaluating ‘the literary status of manuscript sources in a mass-print culture’ (Groom 1999: 5). Percy’s focus on lyrical texts is an attempt to codify the ephemeral and his edition negotiates the relationship between oral, manuscript and print sources (Groom 1999: 7). The mention of Piers Plowman in a collection of texts derived principally from the oral tradition distinguishes the poem from canonical writers like Chaucer and Shakespeare whose works were consistently and comprehensively edited and presented in anthologies. Furthermore, Percy’s interest in the poem derives from the peculiarity of the alliterative verse form and the relation of Langland’s metre to ‘the old Saxon and Gothic poets’ (Percy 1767: 267). The poem is framed as an antiquarian curiosity and, if the ‘cultural value and significance of a source is defined by its medium of transmission’ as Groom asserts, the omission of a full edition of Piers Plowman between the mid-sixteenth and the start of the nineteenth century demonstrates a canonical hierarchy.

Nevertheless, Percy’s edition granted his chosen texts a level of authority and respect among the literary establishment and it is considered an important foundation work in the history of English Romanticism; William Wordsworth praised Percy’s contribution to English literature in his Lyrical Ballads of 1815 (Palmer 2006). The desire to elevate the native and earthly modes of literature in contrast to the established canon would certainly appeal to the Romantically inclined. However, not every contemporary critic was impressed by Percy’s efforts and the notoriously acerbic Joseph Ritson was a relentless
critic of the edition and of Percy’s unsystematic editorial approach. Ritson even disputed the very existence of the manuscript Percy used as his base-text for the *Reliques* — the manuscript Percy famously claimed to have rescued from the ignorant clutches of Humphrey Pitt’s housemaids (Palmer 2006). Percy edited extensively and creatively, erasing lines and adding many of his own. It is perhaps no surprise Joseph Ritson, the rigorous and pedantic philologist, found that the approach offended his sensibilities.

Nick Groom jumps to the antiquarian’s defence with regards to these editorial indiscretions. He points out that Percy was faced with the task of organising and editing a large and diverse array of texts gleaned from a variety of sources. These sources were themselves products of a disjointed history of transmission and had been retold and revised for generations before Percy waded into the textual fray (Groom 1999: 9). Groom furthers this argument by claiming that issues of editorial license and textual authority were, in fact, ‘intractable’ in the case of the *Reliques* (Groom 1999: 9). Indeed, this edition does raise some very interesting questions about the notions of authorship, attribution and editorial prerogative. Who can be considered as the primary author of these texts — Percy and his extensive alterations, or the original, anonymous balladeer? There is also an untold number of contributors who shaped the text during its oral and written history. The very nature of the haphazard base manuscript and the status of the minor, anonymous texts it contained would have justified, in Percy’s mind, the high level of editorial intervention. With no author or place in the existing canon of English literature, these texts were able to be fully refreshed for contemporary audiences. The near-reverential attitude towards Shakespearian and Chaucerian editing was simply not applicable to the poems and songs of the *Reliques*.

As a result we see a rather different editorial policy in action; a policy which was hailed as creative and bold by its supporters, and simultaneously lambasted by critics who

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12 Ritson’s *Bibliographica Poetica: A Catalogue of English Poets* (1802) discusses both Warton and Percy’s editorial mistakes regarding *Piers Plowman*. In reference to the first line of the poem, Ritson meticulously refutes both Warton and Percy’s readings and argues for the following:

In a somer-season when softe was the sunne

Ritson notes that ‘softe’ is the variant found in most manuscript versions of the text but that ‘sette’ appears in the printed versions of the poem. Ritson blames Crowley for this error claiming that he ‘did not understand’ the meaning of ‘softe’ in the context and ‘injudiciously’ substituted it with ‘sette’. Warton and Percy chose the altogether different ‘hot’ in the place of ‘softe’, a choice Ritson criticises for its ignorance of manuscript sources and the fact that it disrupts the alliteration (Ritson 1802: 404).
believed Percy had betrayed his scholarly responsibilities. The accusation of unlicensed subjectivity has also been levied upon the Athlone edition of *Piers Plowman* by George Kane and Talbot Donaldson, first published in 1975. The edition of Langland’s B-Text is undoubtedly a seminal work with regards to both *Piers Plowman* scholarship and the development of editing theory. The editors aim for absolute transparency and describe each editorial decision in detail in a comprehensive introduction to the text. Kane and Donaldson staunchly defend the role and judgement of the critic in the editorial process and claim that subjectivity is ‘not merely an inevitable factor but actually a valuable instrument’ in the production of the *Piers Plowman* edition (Kane and Donaldson 1988: 213). Kane and Donaldson argue that close analysis of variant readings according to their own dogmatic policy is the only way to successfully edit when the ‘manuscript authority at all stages is manifestly dubious’ (Kane and Donaldson 1988: 140). This statement encapsulates a major criticism of the edition; the inherent and unrelenting ‘mistrust’ of texts which becomes a theoretical boundary in itself (Greetham 1992: 326). Groom argues that the disparate source material and lack of authority in the texts compiled for the *Reliques* requires and justifies the level of intervention and subjectivity displayed by Percy. Indeed, had Percy not rescued the main source manuscript and crafted his edition for eighteenth century audiences, many, if not all, of these poems and songs would have been lost. Certainly, Percy’s edition granted these texts a level of authority they would likely otherwise not have achieved. The complex textual transmission history of Langland’s poem prompts similar justifications from Kane and Donaldson for the high level of emendation as in the *Reliques*. The unique predicament faced by *Piers* editors and scholars with regards to the manuscript tradition demands such a mixture of pragmatism and bold subjectivity.

Clearly, however, this is as far as the comparison can go between Percy and the Athlone edition in terms of editorial standards. Percy may have displayed a flair and enthusiasm for his edition which was central to its popularity, but the criticisms levied at his editorial policy by the likes of Ritson have been accepted by modern critics. Percy’s editorial approach and methodology would fall far short of the standards and the level of transparency expected by modern textual criticism. While scholars may also disagree with the extent of Kane and Donaldson’s emendations and their theoretical stance, their confidence and dogmatism combined with the sustained detail and transparency of their editorial endeavour makes the Athlone edition as much an exercise in textual theory as in the practical act of editing. This is a view already noted by scholars working separately with the *Reliques* and the Athlone edition. For Patterson, Kane and Donaldson’s B-text becomes
a study of what constitutes textual evidence in the first place (Patterson 1987: 78). The edition transcends the evaluation of its success as an edited work of literature and presents textual critics with a comprehensive theoretical framework for editing *Piers Plowman*. The Athlone edition has become a benchmark for late twentieth-century editing theory and practice, and continues to influence and encourage debate. Groom views the *Reliques* as having a similar, extrinsic value in the history of textual scholarship. Percy’s antiquarian tour de force epitomises the attitudes of the day and has much to reveal about the practice of eighteenth-century scholarly editing and the contemporary anxieties of such practice (Groom 1999: 2). From this perspective, Percy’s failings as an editor highlight the central concerns of critics like Joseph Ritson, and prompted a reactionary move towards detailed philological enquiry and methodological reliability.

While we may be justified in our criticisms of Percy’s cavalier attitude and apparent disregard for the integrity of his medieval sources, his success must also be recognised. The *Reliques* ran through several editions in Percy’s own lifetime and became a source of inspiration for the English Romanticism movement. His edition of traditional English songs and poems captured the contemporary public mood, or perhaps filled an existing gap in demand. It is a reminder that editorial approaches can be tailored to different audiences; those editors and printers who could recognise and exploit public taste and demand could achieve commercial success. Like Crowley, Percy prioritised his own personal enjoyment and that of his audience over editorial consistency and transparency. Both of these editions were, however, compiled before strict standards and rules governing the treatment of manuscript sources were crucial to the editorial task. From a commercial perspective, both editions were extremely successful and captured the contemporary public taste and imagination. Crowley’s edition of *Piers Plowman* was a product of the political context. It was a project fuelled by personal conviction and political activism. Percy, on the other hand, was a gentleman antiquarian with a passionate interest in English cultural and literary history. His edition is a celebration of that interest and enthusiasm.

Within a decade, while *Reliques* was still being reprinted, Percy had dismissed his own work and labelled it as ‘trash’ (Groom 1999: 8). Perhaps he felt that a book of earthy, secular songs and poems was unsuitable material for a man of the cloth climbing the career ladder. Despite Percy’s rejection of his own work, the *Reliques* remained an influential text and contemporary responses to the edition provides an insight into the attitudes of
eighteenth-century critics and the tastes of the readership. In Ritson’s heated response to Percy’s treatment of his source material lies the demand for an editorial rationale which is governed by procedure, not impulse. However, the emergence of comprehensive Piers editing in the nineteenth century did not necessarily widen access to Langland’s poem beyond readers of the scholarly edition. The success of Crowley and Percy’s editions rested on the ability to court the interests of a diverse readership.

Thomas Warton’s *History of English Poetry* (1775) provided a more substantial textual analysis of the poem which bridged the gap between extract and edition during the eighteenth century. Warton supplies historical context and interprets Langland’s satire on the behaviour of monks in Passus III (B-text) as inspiration for Chaucer’s Summoner (Warton 1775: 278) and, in doing so, situates *Piers Plowman* within a wider chronology of canonical medieval literature (Brewer 1996: 31). Warton quotes approximately 500 lines of verse which focuses on the allegorical figures and the Deadly Sins; Charlotte Brewer considers the edition as the first to supply the poem with a textual apparatus (Brewer 1996: 31). Warton provides the reader with an introduction, annotations on the main text, and a basic glossary. He also presents the poem in single-column Roman type indistinguishable from the descriptive prose intersecting the verse. Warton’s choice of some of the most lively sections of the poem combined with the textual apparatus is a benefit to accessibility. Unlike Percy’s relatively brief excerpt, readers of Warton’s anthology are able to engage with a significant section of the text. The transcript itself is lightly edited in terms of the punctuation, retaining the mid-line caesura marked by a comma. Warton provides occasional end-line punctuation, namely the comma and punctus but the majority of verse lines are left free and relies on the mid-line break and Langland’s frequent use of discourse markers to punctuate the text. These markers are connectives such as ‘and’, ‘thanne’, ‘for’, ‘ac’ and ‘so’ which appear regularly at the beginning of the verse lines, simultaneously linking back to the previous line and propelling the reader forward to the next idea or action. Warton also deploys the colon, semi-colon and punctus interrogativus intermittently and introduces parentheses marked by commas. A comparison with Crowley’s impressions demonstrate that Warton used the 1550 impression(s) as a reference and the overall level and distribution of punctuation is similar. Over a 40 line section taken from the beginning of Passus VIII, both Crowley and Warton retain the majority of mid-line caesura, in 39 and 35 instances respectively. End-line punctuation is more variable in this section and in general, with Warton employing end-line markings in approximately half of the verse lines while Crowley’s usage is more restrained.
A more detailed analysis and discussion of Crowley’s punctuation choices and the implications for reading practices is given in the following section. Warton’s own choices regarding the presentation and punctuation of the extract can be usefully compared to his near-contemporary Percy, his source text from Crowley and future editors, namely Whitaker (1813) and Wright (1842). Warton is noticeably conservative in his approach to the punctuation and his contextualisation of the poem does not break new interpretative ground, presenting the poem as a straightforward critique of the Catholic Church and the ‘absurdities of superstition’ (Warton 1775: 266). His textual apparatus, however, is a move towards the conventions of the scholarly edition and a more comprehensive treatment of *Piers Plowman*. The running glossary and editorial annotations form a guide, demonstrating that reader requirements have developed beyond textual division and features of organisation offered by manuscript and early print.

The following section argues that the paratext of MS B.15.17 functions as punctuation, dividing the text and alerting the reader to major thematic or structural breaks within the poem. The Passus summaries in Crowley’s edition condense the main themes and scenes of a complex text, but the feature can also be viewed as a concession to the silent reader. It suggests a less intensive model of reading which involves perusal and efficient navigation to the desired passage. His paratextual framing of the medieval poem is also an exercise in Protestant polemics and a distinctive example of sixteenth-century reform writing, as the following section will argue. Within Warton’s edition the paratext becomes apparatus, an aid to guide the reader both contextually and linguistically. From this point onwards, it is unthinkable that *Piers Plowman* could appear in mass print form without the apparatus required to negotiate the thematic and linguistic complexity of the late fourteenth-century poem.

The Reverend Thomas Whitaker produced the next full edition of *Piers Plowman* published in 1813. Using the C-Text as a base, the edition contains a comprehensive and lengthy ‘Introductory Discourse’ in which Whitaker discusses the literary functions of satire and allegory within the poem, while simultaneously criticising Langland’s use of alliterative verse (Brewer 1996: 38). He disregards the notion of Langland as an obvious proto-Protestant, demonstrating a more balanced evaluation of the poet’s motivation in the text
than had been previously proposed. Whitaker supplies a glossary, Passus summaries and a running commentary for his readers. Despite these additions, Whitaker’s edition was not particularly well received by his contemporaries. Isaac d’Israeli wryly commented that the book was ‘the most magnificent and frightful volume that was ever beheld in the black letter[...] edited by one whose delicacy of taste unfitted him for this homely task...’ (d’Israeli 1841, *Amenities of Literature*; cited in Brewer 1996: 45). It is an expensive edition with impressive decorative features, including enlarged initials at the start of each Passus, intricate floral borders and striking red rubrication which highlights the Latin text and names of the allegorical figures. The book displays an impressive mix of visual and textual features which evoke the poem’s medieval origins, yet Whitaker’s decision to retain the striking Black Letter typeface for the main body of text alongside the thorn and yogh alienated some readers (Brewer 1996:45). In terms of punctuation choices Whitaker similarly rejects a system of modernisation his readers might have expected, retaining the mid-line caesura in each verse line and eschewing the addition of end-line punctuation. On the other hand, the generous spacing afforded by the large volume accommodates Langland’s long alliterative lines and the consistent use of red-ink rubrication punctuates the text with colour. The visual features of manuscript culture are clearly part of the editorial rationale, but a footer running discretely along the bottom of each page which paraphrases the verse and provides a basic glossary is a reminder of the requirements of the readership.

Despite the gross textual inaccuracies of which the edition has been accused (Brewer 1996: 43), Whitaker clearly had very strong ideas regarding the presentation of the poem. We are once again confronted with the complexities and contradictions involved with reproducing an ‘authentic’ medieval text and the role of visuality in this endeavour (Echard 2008: vii). The edition demonstrates the ever-present tension between authenticity and modernisation which is necessarily influenced by the requirements and demands of the intended readership. Whitaker’s editorial choices relating to orthography, typeface and punctuation suggests he was not overly concerned with accessibility. Despite proving a level of personal enthusiasm for Langland’s poem, the lack of a comprehensive system of modernisation combined with the sheer size and cost of the volume left Whitaker’s edition unable to popularise the poem beyond the Antiquarian reader.

Whitaker’s lavish edition is in contrast to the next full edition of *Piers Plowman* edited...
by prolific antiquarian Thomas Wright, published in 1842 with a second edition appearing in 1856. Wright’s consultation of a small selection of manuscripts prompts Brewer to consider this as the first ‘critical text’ of *Piers Plowman* to be produced (Brewer 1996: 53). However, Wright’s approach rejected conflation as an editorial approach and he focused on choosing what he considered to be the highest quality example for his base text and editing where it was required. Wright chose the B-text Trinity College, Cambridge MS B.15.17 as the ‘best and oldest manuscript now in existence’ with a ‘few readings’ added from MS R.3.14, also housed at Trinity College (Wright 1856: xxxix). The selection of B.15.17 was based primarily on the aesthetics of the manuscript, expressing the judgement that quality of craftsmanship and textual authority went hand-in-hand. Printed in two volumes, the edition is modest in size and presents both the paratextual material and poem in Roman type. With no black letter in sight, Wright’s only concession to decoration is a pull-out image facing the title-page. The image showing two medieval figures guiding an ox-driven plough is reproduced from an illustration originating in MS R.3.14. The inclusion of the manuscript illustration is arguably more in keeping with the creative conception of Whitaker’s edition and might initially appear at odds with Wright’s more serious, scholarly attempt.

Wright makes significant changes to the layout of the poem and imposes modern punctuation conventions in an effort to modernise, but the illustration is an overt reminder of *Piers Plowman*’s medieval origins. Langland’s poem is fully divorced from its manuscript context and previous efforts by Thomas Whitaker to emulate the features of manuscript and early print were met with contempt. However, the illustration in Wright’s edition demonstrates the same impulse to contextualise medieval texts through the deployment of visual features. Advocates of the digital edition praise technology’s potential for re-contextualising. The practicalities and theoretical implications of the digital edition promotes an awareness of the physical object and the relationship between medium and message; perhaps digital technology will confront, and finally resolve, the conflict between modernisation and contextualisation.

Brewer acknowledges Wright’s treatment of source manuscripts as a mark of the critical text, but his treatment of the punctuation and layout of the poem is perhaps the most distinguishing aspect of the edition. Wright discards the rhetorical caesura and imposes a comprehensive system of grammatical punctuation, utilising a full repertoire of
marks. Furthermore, he splits each line, claiming, ‘the alliterative verse reads much more harmoniously in the short couplets, than in the long lines’ (Wright 1856: xxxii). Wright claimed that the conventional practice of presenting the poem in long alliterative lines punctuated by a mid-line caesura was a space saving device employed by scribes. In Wright’s opinion, the only justification for modern editors retaining this layout was a similar concern with space or the presentation of the poem in facsimile. He claims ‘in either case, he [the editor] must carefully preserve the dots of separation in the middle of the lines, which are more inconvenient than the lengths of the lines, because they interfere with the punctuation of the modern editor’ (Wright 1856: xxxii). Wright’s assertion that the caesura should be entirely discarded to allow for the application of modern punctuation indicates a lack of sensitivity to its structural and interpretative function within the poem.

The imposition of modern punctuation, in both form and distribution, forces the alliterative lines into a structure intended for a poem which deploys rhyme as its primary metrical feature. The overall effect of Wright's approach is to conceal the alliteration; if read aloud while observing Wright's punctuation, the regular beat is disrupted and the stressed syllables are dispersed. Direct speech, in addition to being enclosed by double quotation marks, is indented and dialogue-focused sections are strewn with punctuation as the following transcript illustrates:

“What!” quod the preest to Perkyn
“Peter! as me thynketh, Thou art letted a litel:-
Who lerned thee on boke?”

“Abstinence the abbesse,” quod Piers
“Myn a.b.c. me taughte;
And Conscience cam afterward,
And kenned me muche moore.”

“Were thow a preest,” quod he
“Thou myghtest preche where thou sholdest,
As divinour in divinité,
With Dixit incipiens to thi teme.”

(Wright 1856, second edition: Passus VII, lines 4753-64)

While it could be argued that Wright’s approach highlights the dialogic element of the
poem to his contemporary readers through the application of conventional punctuation, Wright does not express this as an aim of his edition and his rationale with regards to the punctuation is focused on his role as corrector. Robert Crowley displays a similar uncertainty with regards to the alliterative metre, but his response is restraint. Wright is attempting to meet the requirements of his eighteenth-century readership and their reliance on punctuation as an interpretative guide. However, his approach to the punctuation proves insensitive to the orality of Langland’s verse and the reading practices of the late fourteenth century, resulting in the text appearing over-punctuated.

The various editors involved in the history of *Piers Plowman*’s textual transmission from Crowley onwards display their own unique approaches to the presentation and treatment of the poem. However, the editions include a similar interpretative strand which underpins their editorial rationale; each editor frames and discusses the poem in terms of what it can demonstrate and prove to their intended readership. Robert Crowley was determined to uncover a history of reform and protest and used Langland’s poem to document a tradition of working class discontent with the ruling establishment across Church and state. Percy and Warton are both concerned with recording a chronology and canon of English literature dating back to the Anglo-Saxon period. The impulse to establish a literary canon can be read in terms of national identity formation and the attempt to validate the Anglican Church in the aftermath of the first Act of Supremacy (1534). Colin Kidd argues that the early modern period had embarked upon a quest for religious legitimacy and was played out, in part, through the production and dissemination of reform writing such as John Foxe’s *Book of Martyrs* (Kidd 1999: 99). Robert Crowley’s choice of an established work of medieval literature as a vehicle for the message of legitimisation was unique but the underlying objectives were shared. The urgency demonstrated by the sixteenth-century reform writers to validate the Anglican Church and the tradition of popular protest is not evident in the eighteenth-century editions of Percy and Warton. However, both interpret Langland’s poem as a protest against the ‘absurdities of superstition’ and discuss the Anglo-Saxon roots of alliterative poetry, simultaneously historicising the poem and endorsing its Protestant credentials. Percy and Warton skim the interpretative surface of *Piers Plowman* and overlook the satirical nuances but their references and extracts from the poem served its intended function: demonstrating the development of a distinctly English literary culture.
Thomas Wright’s preface to his second edition acknowledges the poem’s link to ‘political history’ and confidently claims that the reader will be rewarded for labouring through the ‘partially obsolete language’ with ‘one of the purest works in the English tongue’. These nationalistic overtones return in the introduction section in which he describes *Piers Plowman* as ‘peculiarly a national work’ due to its uncontaminated language, Anglo-Saxon verse form and, rather sentimentally, for displaying the ‘spirit of the forefathers’ (Wright 1856: xxvii). Chaucer could be praised for elevating the status of English and furnishing the language with sophisticated French and Latinate terms; Langland’s poem is being commended by Wright, perhaps somewhat patronisingly, for the rustic nature of its language and verse form. Whitaker and Wright were both keen to display their editorial prowess and William Langland’s *Piers Plowman* was the ultimate editorial challenge. Their stand-alone editions of the poem provided more detailed contextualisation and heralded a move towards the comprehensive critical text.

The following section of the chapter now turns to undertake a detailed analysis of Crowley’s 1550 impressions of the poem in relation to the socio-historical circumstances of its production and reception. The next section will discuss the tactics used by Crowley to rework *Piers Plowman* for the mid-sixteenth century readership and considers how his interpretative framing of the poem had a lasting impact on subsequent editorial treatment. Addressing the research questions set out in the first chapter, this section will examine Crowley’s attempts to negotiate the conflict between the medieval origins of the poem and the developments in sixteenth century reading practices. Comparisons are provided with TCC MS B.15.17 in an effort to understand how systems of punctuation and paratextual layout applied to Langland’s poem were affected by the shift from script to print. The concluding chapter will summarise the findings and argue that the treatment of medieval texts in the early modern period demonstrates a reading community in flux, moving gradually towards predominantly silent reading practices. The medieval text is evidence of past reading practices; the reworking of those texts is evidence of the changing functions of literacy and literary culture.
3.2 Textual Production & the Political Context of Crowley’s Edition

In 1550 Robert Crowley, a zealous Protestant polemicist in only his second year as a printer and bookseller, made the bold and financially risky decision to publish an edition of “The Vision of Pierce Plowman”.

(Hailey 2008: 143)

Robert Crowley was a man of many talents: poet, publisher, cleric, and polemicist. He was involved with many of the leading Protestant reformers of the sixteenth century in both a professional and personal capacity. A close friend of John Foxe and the King’s Printer, Richard Grafton, Robert Crowley made his name as a prolific Protestant publisher under the relaxed censorship laws of Edward VI’s reign. He reappears, after a brief stint as a Marian exile in Frankfurt, as a prominent clerical figure during the early years of Elizabeth’s reign, becoming embroiled in the Vestments Controversy of 1566 as a vocal opponent of Archbishop Parker. Thomas Cranmer’s 1552 Book of Common Prayer, published during the reign of Edward VI, had abolished the wearing of clerical vestments. When Protestant Elizabeth ascended to the throne, the legislation relating to doctrinal matters was reissued in 1559 as the thirty-nine Articles, with minor adjustments made to Cranmer’s original. The adjustments included certain concessions which included vestments, and the priest was subsequently allowed to wear the cope during holy communion. MacCulloch notes, however, that vestments associated with the Eucharist remained outlawed (MacCulloch 2003: 289). Eamon Duffy describes the concession as a ‘gesture towards traditional ritual’ (Duffy 2005: 567) but MacCulloch rejects the notion that the modifications were intended to ‘mollify Catholic-minded clergy and laity’. He points out that this is unlikely given that most of the traditional forms and expressions of Catholic worship had been abolished. Rather, he suggests that the thirty-nine Articles were ‘probably aimed at conciliating Lutheran Protestants’ and were intended to probe Protestant attitudes both at home and abroad (MacCulloch 2003: 289). Crowley’s revolt against the alterations to the vestment laws suggests he considered it, and perhaps the thirty-nine Articles more broadly, a backwards step in the on-going process of reform.13

Before his ordination as deacon in 1551 Crowley had embarked upon a successful printing career, publishing over 20 books between the years 1549-51 (Scanlon 2007: 56).

13 He later compromised on his staunch anti-Vestments views, a decision which no doubt attracted scorn from members of the growing puritan movement. He also appears to have relaxed his early opposition to pluralism, holding several clerical offices during the 1560s (Morgan 2008).
Crowley was a man who recognised the potential of the press for propaganda purposes and his success proves he was able to combine his reformist ambitions with commercial profit (Martin 1983: 90). King notes that the term ‘printer’ was used loosely during this period and could describe anyone involved with the publishing process. There is no evidence that Crowley was physically involved with the technicalities of printing, and he can be considered primarily as a publisher and bookseller (King 1978: 222). Significantly, however, Crowley was also the author of the majority of the works he printed, including ‘five moderately lengthy poems’ and five polemical pamphlets (Scanlon 2007: 56). Crowley maintained his links to the publishing industry throughout his varied career, continuing to appear in prefaces of Protestant works and being made an honorary freeman of the Stationers’ Company in 1578 (King 1978: 236). However, Scanlon asserts that, despite the three consecutive prints of Piers Plowman proving to be commercially successful, financial gain was not his primary motivation. Crowley’s prolificacy was short-lived and he left the publishing industry immediately following his ordination in 1551 (Scanlon 2007: 56).

The practicalities of the publishing process fell to like-minded reformist Richard Grafton, who printed the majority of Crowley’s poems and tracts, including all three editions of Piers Plowman (1550). 14 The edition was printed during the peak of press freedom in the sixteenth century. Edward VI’s reign witnessed a doubling of print output on the previous decade and such numbers would not be reached again until the 1570s (Hailey 2007: 140). Holding office as the official King’s Printer, Richard Grafton enjoyed patronage from Edward Seymour, Lord Protector during Edward VI’s minority reign (Beer 2009). King suggests that Grafton’s involvement with Crowley’s Protestant propaganda campaign was deliberately suppressed due to political sensitivities (King 1978: 222). However, neither Grafton’s Protestant sympathies nor Seymour’s relaxation of the press censorship laws could be considered a secret. In addition, government involvement with the press was nothing new; Henry VIII was continually drafting legislation aimed at curbing the unruly press during his reign.

During his brief but prolific printing career, Crowley also published a number of works which powerfully express his own personal beliefs and concerns. Both his own poems and the editorial work in the prints of Piers Plowman clearly set forth his religious and

14 Crowley also collaborated with the Protestant printer John Day, who went on to achieve success publishing John Foxe’s Actes and Monuments.
political agenda. We can observe two major themes in Crowley’s texts: the religious and
the social. He engages with theological debate in which he is keen to attack Roman
Catholic doctrine such as transubstantiation. In the latter part of his career he writes a
scathing attack on the vestments policy of Archbishop Parker entitled *A breife discourse against
the outwarde apparell and Ministring garments of the popishe Church* (1566). Crowley’s other major
career is the welfare of the commons and the treatment of the poor at the hands of the
wealthy. One of his earliest texts, *An Informacion and Peticion Agaynst the Oppressours of the Poore
Commons* (1548), can be read as an outline for social reform. He was also critical of the
exploitative behaviour of the upper classes and often voiced the opinion that the new
Protestant elite had simply taken the place of the old Catholic clergy in their greed and
disregard for the commons.

It was perhaps, then, key to Crowley’s success as a printer to maintain his position
as an independent and righteous religious reformer, unfettered by political affiliations with
the ruling classes. Martin points out that Crowley was a citizen and did not have large
amounts of money or political power at his disposal (Martin 1983: 93) and his published
material demonstrates his dissatisfaction with the ruling elite and their treatment of the
poor commons. Indeed, poverty and the perceived failure of the ruling classes to address
the problem is an issue which unites Langland and Crowley in their writing. Given
Crowley’s tendency to revolt against the establishment in both writing and practice
(notedly, the Vestments Controversy), it is perhaps unsurprising that Crowley received no
direct patronage. He remained an important reformist figure with strong links to the
publishing industry during the mid-sixteenth century and he came to exert further
influence as a puritanical cleric and popular preacher during the reign of Elizabeth until
his death in 1588.

As modern critics, we may consider these themes of religious reform and social
advancement as two separate ideals. However, Crowley’s texts suggest he believed that
religious and social reform went hand in hand. This may further explain his interest in the
fourteenth century alliterative allegory *Piers Plowman* as a piece of reformist propaganda,
rather than any number of contemporary texts he could have produced. Langland’s text
promotes a policy for religious and social reform which links these ideals in a complex
poetic narrative. Corruption in the Church and the ruling classes are responsible for social
inequalities and a decline in morality and godliness; only through reforming these
corruptive influences can social order be properly restored. Crowley also found Langland’s
defence of the social hierarchy appealing. Ultimately, both were monarchists who believed
every man had a duty to fulfil the responsibilities of his own social estate, from plowman to
king. Langland and Crowley considered themselves to be advocates of comprehensive
reform, not chaotic revolution. The Tudor historian Andy Wood describes Robert
Crowley as one of a group of ‘commonwealth men’ whose political activism in the mid-
sixteenth century was centred around concern for the poor and expressed through a series
of writings and teachings. In Wood’s view, the perceived streak of ‘conservatism’ which has
been detected in the works of Crowley and other commonwealth reformers such as Hugh
Latimer is not as simplistic as the term suggests. While they advocated stability in the social
hierarchy, they were also passionate and vocal critics of the oppressive gentry and believed
a more equal distribution of wealth was key to achieving this stability (Wood 2009: 33).
Both Langland and Crowley, then, are resistant to simple categorisation.

Crowley published three impressions of *Piers Plowman* in quarto format during 1550
and was the first to put the poem to print. *The Psalter of David*, Crowley’s first published
work, was the only other text printed in quarto; his other surviving poems and tracts were
printed in the cheaper octavo format (King 1978: 226). Despite the larger book size, the
*Piers Plowman* edition cannot be described as luxurious; it is a decidedly austere and text-
focused edition. Crowley undoubtedly wanted the print to achieve maximum dissemination
—he was a Protestant pamphleteer and similar principles are applied to his editions of
Langland’s poem. The Passus summary and the marginal annotations are the main
paratextual additions to Crowley’s second and third impressions, a feature which made the
uncovered a fascinating bibliographic detail relating to the prints; namely, the existence of
several copies on vellum. Printing texts on vellum was a rarity in England and Hailey notes
that the *Piers* editions are one of only five vellum prints produced between 1544 and the
end of the century (Hailey 2001: 243).

This detail arguably sheds new light on Crowley’s motivations and the interests of a
small number of his readers and indicates, as Scanlon argues, ‘a select market’ with a focus
on ‘durability’ (Scanlon 2007: 57). Scanlon further suggests that Crowley was interested in
‘canon formation’ and the vellum prints are indicative of his attempt to ‘secure for
Langland the authoritative status Caxton secured for Chaucer nearly seventy-five years
earlier’ (Scanlon 2007: 57). This attempt to recover the poem and insert Langland into a growing early modern literary canon was not ‘ideologically innocent’, however; Crowley was advocating a medieval author who was palatable to his sixteenth-century readers (Scanlon 2007: 57). Nevertheless, a fourteenth-century alliterative poem was neither an obvious nor an easy choice for promoting the reformist cause and, considering Crowley’s short-lived publishing career, it further supports the conclusion that his involvement in the printing trade was not primarily motivated by financial concerns. Furthermore, Crowley’s appreciation of the literary text shaped his editorial treatment and we must acknowledge his role as reader alongside his reputation as reformer.

Although three distinct impressions of the poem have been identified by modern critics, Crowley himself appears to have recognised only two separate editions (King 1976: 346). The second and third impressions are both introduced as being the ‘seconde time/tyme imprinted’; the time/tyme example is one of a number of variations in spelling and punctuation distinguishing the two impressions which otherwise appear very similar on first inspection. The second and third impressions are often classified as variants of the second edition, a stance which is supported by Crowley himself in his descriptions of the prints.15 Although differences in spelling and punctuation exist between the second and third impressions, the prints display the same editorial policy and political intentions. However, for ease of reference each of the three impressions will be discussed in the chronological order set out in the English Short Title Catalogue. Closer inspection does reveal that Crowley reset the type between the second and third impressions; the variations are consistent throughout the main body of the text and a few minor differences in the marginal annotations are noted. Overall, however, the second and third impressions have undergone the same revisions and additions which distinguish them from the first impression. Crowley retains the Black Letter typeface throughout each of the three impressions and the single-column layout is almost identical, displaying only a simple decorated initial to mark each new Passus. He also resists any temptation to add illustrations or produce a more expensive edition, preferring, through choice or economic necessity, to reproduce the unadorned and text-focused edition.

Assured of commercial success following the first print run, Crowley confidently

15 The English Short Title Catalogue categorizes the three impressions as follows: First Impression STC 19906; Second Impression STC 19907a; Third Impression 19907. The chronology of the prints are discussed in the Transcriptions section of the Appendices.
expands his prefatory material and marginal annotations. The introductory address from the printer to the reader and the editorial prologue is reproduced exactly from the first impression, but a brief Passus-by-Passus summary is added to the subsequent impressions. He refrains from including any polemical material in the summary and simply presents a general overview of the poem’s main characters and events. The second and third impressions are more assertive in editorial technique and Protestant framing of the poem, achieved primarily through the use of marginal annotations. However, the following extract appears in Crowley’s address to the reader, a section placed in prime paratextual position in each of the three impressions. Crowley wastes no time in positioning the poem within a history of religious dissent by explicitly linking Langland to the Lollard reformer, John Wycliffe:

In whose tyme it pleased God to open the eyes of many to se hys truth, giuing them boldenes of herte, to open their mouthes and crye oute agaynste the workes of darckenes, as dyd John Wicklyfe... ('From the Printer to the Reader')

Scanlon claims there can be ‘no doubt’ that Crowley is taking the opportunity to assert the superiority of his Protestant present over the Catholic past (Scanlon 2007: 59). Furthermore, he concedes to John King’s earlier assertion that Crowley may be responding to John Bale’s mistaken identification of Wycliffe as the poem’s author dating from 1548 (Scanlon 2007: 59; King 1982).16

However, by engaging in a close reading of the full section Scanlon claims that the extract, often quoted out of context, has been subject to a fundamental misreading. The relative pronoun at the beginning of the sentence subordinates it to the previous sentences in an overall ‘Latinate’ structure; thus, the description of an intellectual and spiritual enlightenment relates back to Langland’s own time period (Scanlon 2007: 59). It is a subtle but significant point to acknowledge and suggests Crowley’s desire to connect with his author and the authorial intentions behind the text. While the section does indeed situate the poem within a narrative of reform, fulfilling the requirements of a Protestant readership, Crowley also presents what he considers to be the similarities between the enlightened moment of original composition and his progressive moment of print publication. While Crowley undoubtedly used the paratextual frame to support and

16 Bale’s 1548 edition of Illustrium maioris Britanniae scriptorium summarium identifies Wycliffe as the author of Petrus Plowman, or Petrum Agricolam as it appears in the text (STC 1295, 2nd edition; fol. 157).
propagate his ideology, it must also be acknowledged that he sought to connect with the poem’s author and its origins. By presenting the details of authorship and historical context, Crowley is consciously highlighting the ‘medieval’. However, rather than focus on the perceived historical and cultural chasm between the poem and his own present, Crowley reconfigures this space to include the potential for continuity.

Scanlon asserts that Crowley sought this ‘continuity’ with Langland in various ways: as an editor seeking historical links and as an activist pursuing political and philosophical sympathies (Scanlon 2007: 54). Analysis of the paratext supports Scanlon’s claims. Through the initial prefatory material, Crowley seeks to contextualise the poem and present it as evidence that the path to progress was forged by previous generations of dissenting writers and thinkers. Secondly, through his deployment of marginal annotations Crowley attempts to highlight the links between the poem’s message and his own, an endeavour which requires him to carefully negotiate Langland’s Catholicism. Though keen to portray Langland as an early reformer, rooted in the medieval past but with an inspired eye on the bright Protestant future, he is also clear in establishing *Piers Plowman* as a literary text. Langland may have been visionary in his calls for institutional rehabilitation, but his ‘visions’ were not prophetic; they were a fiction ‘that he fayned hym selfe to have dreamed’ (‘From the Printer to the Reader’). Scanlon also highlights Crowley’s final advice to his readers at the end of the same section, which warns them to ‘Loke not upon this boke therefore to talke of wonders past or to com but to emend thyne owne misse, whych thou shalt fynd here most charitably rebuked’. This warning directly follows mention of the lines in Passus X which foretell the suppression of the abbeys by a righteous king in response to monastic corruption. Crowley’s discussion of the passage within the prefatory material makes it clear that it should not be interpreted as divine prophecy or mystical insight; rather, these are the observations of a man familiar with scripture and sensitive to institutional abuses of power (Scanlon 2007: 59). He predicts the interest from his readers but tempers it from the outset, instructing them to both acknowledge the fiction and absorb the moral teachings therein.

J. N. King considers Crowley’s edition of *Piers Plowman* to be the ‘culmination’ of two centuries of the *Piers* tradition but claims that Crowley ‘kidnapped’ the text for his own political ends and edited the text to support his reformist agenda (King 1976: 342). It is certainly true that aspects of the poem suited Crowley’s own vision of social and religious
reform and he presented the text accordingly. However, the term ‘kidnapped’ suggests a certain recklessness with regards to the treatment of the text which is simply not supported by either the paratextual material or the editorial decisions. The term also implies that *Piers Plowman* was little more than a vehicle for Crowley’s polemics, but close attention to the nature of his emendations and additions to the text presents a different, more complex view of his intentions.

Crowley allegedly omits a 13-line section from Passus X which praises the rule of Pope Gregory and discusses the benefits of monasticism. King argues there is a specific reason for Crowley’s departure from his editorial policy of minimal intervention at this point in the text. The omitted passage appears directly before the important description of the arrival of a righteous king who punishes the corrupt monasteries.

\[
\text{Ac ther shal come a kyng and confesse yow religouses,} \\
\text{And bete yow, as the Bible telleth, for brekyng of youre rule,} \\
\text{And amende monyals, monkes and chanons,} \\
\text{And puten hem to hir penaunce...} \quad (\text{Passus X: 291-302})
\]

(Everyman Edition edited by A.V.C Schmidt 1995: B-Text)

Had Crowley retained the previous passage praising the monastic ideal, the force of the central prophecy would have been undermined (King 1976: 348). However, Hailey has recently taken issue with this assertion in an article appearing in the *Yearbook of Langland Studies*, noting that this passage is ‘lacking’ in all B-text manuscripts from the beta group from which Crowley’s editions are derived. There is also no compelling textual evidence to suggest that Crowley had access to the two B-manuscripts which contain this passage (Hailey 2007: 148). In light of this evidence, the ‘omission’ is not a deliberate anti-Catholic intervention, but a consequence of copy-texts.

Crowley takes the opportunity in the prefatory material to reveal that he consulted several manuscript copies and ‘such men as I knew to be more exercised in the studie of antiquities, then I my selfe have ben’ (From the Printer to the Reader). Providing the details of composition and authorship distinguishes the text from the anonymous medieval
manuscript tradition and gives the poem a level of authority. By claiming that he consulted a selection of available manuscripts, Crowley is also demonstrating his own authority as editor. The first impression is based on a B-text version now thought to be lost, while the second impression uses another lost B-text manuscript and conlates the two (Brewer 1996: 13). Skeat claims that Crowley consulted at least four manuscripts during the editing process. A two-line variant quoted by Crowley in his preface suggests that he had access to a C-text, and a 6-line passage appearing in the later impressions is taken from an A-text version (cited in King 1976: 346). Hailey’s reasoning holds that overall Crowley retained more problematic material than he altered and/or omitted. There are several examples of ‘explicit’ references to purgatory distributed throughout the text which Crowley has retained despite the doctrinal conflicts. Hailey concedes an instance in Passus VII may represent a unique intervention on the part of Crowley to erase a reference to Mary. However, at least three other references to Saint Mary are retained, demonstrating a less intractable attitude than has been traditionally acknowledged (Hailey 2007: 149).

The annotations do, however, interject with the occasional Protestant criticism and pull the reader into the margins. In Passus VII (fol. xxxix) the annotation reads ‘Note howe he scorneth the authority of Popes’; most critics would now agree that Langland is in fact scorning the potential abuse of papal power, not the papacy itself. It is a subtle distinction which Crowley either fails to notice or tactfully overlooks. Yet Scanlon argues that, of 495 marginal annotations in the third impression, only 15 can be considered ‘explicitly anti-Catholic’. The remainder of the annotations can be classified into three groups: a category of interpretative glosses which typically describe a feature of Langlandian verse totalling 93; 165 narrative summaries; and 237 notes on sources and references (Scanlon 2007: 66). The primary function of these annotations is not intended to be polemical wrangling, but can be described as reading aids and signposts in a thematically complex and narratively knotty poem. The annotations containing references to source material, predominantly biblical, account for the largest category and Crowley must have expected his readers to engage with these references on some level. A central tenet of the Protestant faith was the reading of scripture and Crowley’s focus on this aspect of the poem can be interpreted as a call to action for his readers, encouraging them to engage with, or at least remember, the Bible as they read Langland’s poem. These annotations may also have been intended to have a legitimising effect on the poem and its Catholic author, achieved once again by seeking

17 Hailey notes three particularly explicit references to purgatory in Crowley’s first impression at Passus 6.41-44, Passus 7.9-12 and Passus 18.391-93.
continuity and cohesion between Crowley’s ideology and Langland’s calls for institutional reform. The purifying, or purging, effect of scripture on the corrupt offices of the Church was certainly fundamental to radical reformers like Crowley, but the impetus could be traced back to at least the fourteenth century, if required.

As an editor, Crowley also demonstrates a concern for the authenticity of Langland’s poem which transcends his political agenda. Hailey notes that his second and third impressions add a Marian reference from Passus 5.71-72 back into the text, describing this as ‘a remarkable instance of the triumph of text over ideology’ (Hailey 2007: 150). Crowley’s editions certainly exemplify a staunch Protestant ideology, but this ideology is pitted against his editorial principles; the result is a text of contradiction and complexity.

The 1550 impressions of Piers Plowman are a compelling example of the legacy of editorial decisions and the role that early modern editors played in shaping the attitudes of subsequent generations of critics. The poem also demonstrates the need to re-evaluate those decisions in light of our own critical trends and biases. Crowley’s edition was criticised for its perceived misreading and manipulation of Langland’s complex poem while scholars ironically overlooked the subtlety of his editorial treatment and the politics which informed it.

Scanlon interprets the primary function of the annotations as an attempt by Crowley to provide his readers with all the necessary information in order that they might ‘engage intelligently with Langland’s text on their own’ (Scanlon 2007: 66). The paratextual material as a whole certainly provides comprehensive guidance on various levels, from historical contextualisation and scriptural citations to Passus summaries. Shifting focus from Crowley’s editorial approach to the reception of the edition, the paratext reveals the interests and requirements of the readership, including the appeal of bibliographic detail. The inclusion of the Passus summaries in the second and third impressions helps the reader to manage the thematic and narrative complexity of the poem, and provides a means of physically navigating through the text which is distinct from previous manuscript copies. The annotations encouraging engagement with scripture can be seen in relation to the wider ‘programme of evangelical publications’ supported by Edward VI, a programme which also ‘transformed’ and consolidated the London book trade (Pettegree 2010: 127). Reading and interpreting Langland’s poem was perhaps almost as challenging in the mid-sixteenth century as it is today, and Crowley is sensitive to
the needs of his readers. However, as discussed in the following sections, Crowley’s system of paratextual framing means that his readers are never truly left alone; the editorial hand, while responsive, is ever present.
3.2.1 Other Printers & Other Texts: Owen Rogers & the Piers Plowman Tradition

‘The vision of Pierce Plowman, newlye imprynted after the authours olde copy…’.

(Owen Rogers, 1561)

Owen Rogers published an edition of *Piers Plowman* in 1561 after a brief hiatus in Protestant publishing activity during Mary I’s reign. Rogers’ edition has tended to be side-lined by *Piers* critics and literary historians, described primarily as an inaccurate reprint of Crowley’s third impression. Scanlon does not name Rogers in his comprehensive chapter *Langland, Apocalypse & the Early Modern Editor*, describing only ‘another printer’ who reissues Crowley’s text in 1561 (Scanlon 2007: 53). Certainly, Rogers’ ‘editorial’ approach is thinly-veiled plagiarism: he simply rearranges the summaries composed by Crowley over a decade before. He cuts Crowley’s notes and observations from the prefatory material, leaving only the general summary of the poem. Crowley’s marginal annotations are edited down but Rogers does add a small glossary list at the end of the text to aid with the ‘interpretation of certayn hard woordes’. Along with his decision to place the summaries before each relevant Passus, the addition of the glossary suggests that Rogers was concerned with accessibility for his readers and displays a modest attempt at modernisation. The title-page is similar in layout to Crowley’s second and third impressions; Black Letter type-face and no illustration beyond a small border running along the bottom of the page. The modest decorated initials used to introduce each new Passus are different in style but Rogers has otherwise replicated the layout and spacing of Crowley’s impressions.

*The Vision of / Pierce Plowman, newlye imprynted af / ter the authours olde copy, with a brefe summary / of the principall matters set before euery part called / Passus. Whereunto is also annexed the Crede / of Pierce Plowman, neuer imprinted with / the booke before.*

The description of the book on the title page highlights a number of interesting aspects of Rogers’ edition and the incentive for producing his own print of the poem. The ‘brefe summary of the principall matters’ is taken directly from Crowley’s edition, in both content and description. The near-wholesale replication of the third impression from 1550 precludes the notion of Rogers having directly consulted any manuscript sources himself. Indeed, he makes no mention of this in the print. This is in direct contrast to Crowley, who is keen to describe his scholarly enterprise and assure his readers of the authenticity of his...
text by providing bibliographical detail and historical references. Rogers does claim that the poem is ‘newlye imprynted after the authours olde copy’, suggesting that he consulted a manuscript copy-text directly related to Langland. This is certainly a bold claim, and one which is unsupported by the evidence contained in the edition. It may be that Rogers is simply making reference to Crowley’s previous research without crediting the source; he makes no mention of his debt to Crowley anywhere in the edition. This has no doubt further cemented the perception of Rogers as a careless copy-cat and of his edition having little editorial worth. However, his decision to append the Crede should not be overlooked in terms of its effect on the later treatment and reception of Piers Plowman.

In terms of the punctuation system applied to the poem, Rogers does not deviate significantly from Crowley’s edition. He retains the mid-line caesura which is signified by the comma. However, the virgule is used interchangeably as the mid-line rhetorical mark, merging the new and the traditional form of the medial punctuation mark. As use of the virgule is not consistent nor deployed in any specific environment, it is reasonable to assume that Rogers was running short of semi-circular commas while compositing the type and utilised the virgule as an alternative. The comma did not begin to consistently replace the virgule as a mid-line mark until the 1520s but was still considered to be functionally interchangeable with the virgule and punctus during the rest of the sixteenth century (Parkes 1992: 51).

However, a comparison of the punctuation system Rogers applies to the Crede demonstrates a different approach. The caesura is retained and marked by the comma in the majority of cases. The colon and punctus are also occasionally used to denote the mid-line pause and the virgule is absent in the repertoire of marks applied to the Crede. Rogers is also far more consistent in his application of end-line punctuation in the Crede, with almost every line ending with a comma, punctus or colon. In Charlotte Brewer’s view, Rogers considered Piers Plowman and the Crede to be the products of the same author (Brewer 1996: 20); there is indeed no evidence in the paratextual material to suggest otherwise. However, the decision to apply a different punctuation system to the Crede immediately distinguishes the two poems by treatment. The Crede had been printed as a single text by Reynold Wolfe in 1553, probably one of the last Protestant texts produced before the accession of Mary. It is a small and attractive volume containing an illustrated title-page and single-column Black Letter. The brief printing details appear at the end of the volume after a small
glossary, but the poet remains anonymous. A comparison confirms that Rogers simply replicated this glossary to the letter in his own edition, including Wolfe’s description. Even a cursory inspection of the poem confirms this was also the case for the distribution of punctuation which is replicated almost wholesale from Wolfe’s print. The varying punctuation systems can therefore be attributed to Rogers’ copy-texts, rather than his conscious editorial decisions.

From the physical and textual evidence gathered from Rogers’ edition, it is possible to formulate an account of his motivations for printing Langland’s medieval poem. Unlike Crowley, who was driven by reformist zeal and viewed the poem as an important text in the history of popular unrest and reform, Rogers does not appear so determined to emphasise this aspect of the poem. He retains Crowley’s annotations which highlight the relevant biblical passages, but he cuts out the narrative commentary, the Latin annotations, and some of the more polemical notes. The poem does not hold the same emotive power and religious resonance for Rogers; he does not personally engage with the poem through the marginalia or attempt to interpret the poem on his own terms. Recognising a renewed appetite for the poem in the wake of five years of Protestant persecution, Rogers’ primary motivation was probably financial. By the mid-sixteenth century, the printers and publishers were predominantly shrewd businessmen, able to both cater to and shape popular taste.

However, it is worth pausing to consider the last claim of Rogers’ title-page and its implications for the transmission history of *Piers Plowman*. Rogers adds *The Crede of Pierce Plowman* and enthusiastically asserts that it was ‘neuer imprinted with the booke before’. The *Crede* had indeed never been printed alongside the poem which inspired it, though the association was already established in the title. The addition of this popular and scathing attack on Catholic monasticism was clearly a selling point for Rogers and differentiated his edition from Crowley’s. Rogers’ publishing portfolio includes *The seditious and blasphemous oration of Cardinal Pole* printed in 1560 and, taken together with the print of *Piers Plowman*

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18 *Pierce the ploughmans crede*, printed by Reynold Wolfe in 1553; STC (2nd edition) 19904.  
19 The Early English Books Online database catalogues the text under the full title *The seditious and blasphemous oration of Cardinal Pole both against god [and] his coun/tray which he directid to theempour in his booke intytuled the defe[n]ce of the eclesiastical vnitye, mouing the emperour therin to seke the destruction of England and all those whiche had professid the gospele translated into englysh by Fabyane Wythers*. Reginald Pole was a cousin of Henry VIII but sided with Catherine of Aragon on the matter of divorce, leading to his exile in Italy during the 1530s (MacCulloch 2003: 214). Pole later returned to England during the reign of Mary I and became an important figure in Church and government. He died on the same day as Mary in November 1558 (MacCulloch 2013: 286).
and the *Crede*, we can infer his reformist stance.

There is no evidence to be gathered from the paratextual material which indicates that Rogers was aware of the *Crede*’s later composition and authorship. However, Rogers fails to refer to Langland at any point in the edition, having removed Crowley’s introductory notes. The issue of authorship and placing the poem within its historical context was not Rogers’ principal concern. The lack of authorial references is at odds with developments in the publishing industry and the changing attitudes towards authorship during the early modern period. Rogers’ edition thus displays the juxtaposition of old and new that appears in many early modern prints of medieval texts. While Rogers may not have contributed a great deal in terms of textual scholarship and criticism, his decision to place the *Crede* alongside *Piers Plowman* has had a lasting influence on the treatment of the poem in print. In his *History of English Poetry* (1775) editor Thomas Warton discusses the *Crede* as a distinct text, but in relation to the extended *Piers* tradition which merges the poems instinctively.

The next full edition published at the start of the nineteenth century by Thomas Whitaker (1813) follows the precedent set by Rogers and appends the *Crede* at the end of the volume, despite acknowledging that Langland was definitely not a Wycliffite. Thirty years later Thomas Wright (1842) continued to discuss the *Crede* as though the two poems were inextricably linked by theme, but we see a recognition of the distinction between the levels of ecclesiastical criticism contained within the two poems. As *Piers Plowman* was not republished as a full edition until Whitaker’s in 1813, both Crowley’s and Roger’s editions represented the most comprehensive versions in print for over 250 years. Later editors and critics, including Joseph Ritson, relied on both printed versions alongside manuscript sources, consolidating their influence. Whitaker’s outright rejection of Langland as a proto-Protestant is significant in terms of *Piers* criticism, yet he chooses to print alongside this complex and nuanced poem an unmistakably anti-monastic polemic.

The Protestant interpretation of *Piers Plowman* did not remain unchallenged during the early modern period. At the start of the seventeenth century a Catholic gentleman by the name of Andrew Bostock owned a copy of Crowley’s second impression (Oxford, Bodleian Library Douce L 205). He felt compelled to comment on Crowley’s annotations,
pointing out what he considered misreadings of the poem and misrepresentations of the practices of the Catholic Church. His observations are shrewd, noting that Langland is criticising monastic abuses, not monasticism itself in the ‘prophesying’ passage that Crowley highlights in his prefatory material and annotations. Bostock is also sensitive to the subtleties of Langland’s arguments regarding pardons and indulgences, where yet again it is the abuses which are being criticised, not the practices themselves. Scanlon includes himself amongst scholars who have argued that Protestantism was so rapacious in its criticisms of doctrines of works because the concept of penance was so integral to their reform ideology (Scanlon 2007: 61). The aim of the reformers was not the eradication of penance, but the replacement of a corrupt doctrine with one ‘more thoroughgoing and rigorous’ (Scanlon 2007: 61).

Bostock highlights what he considers to be Crowley’s ignorance of Catholic doctrine: ‘No Catholick Doctor can be shewd to have writ or ever taught that the Pope hath potest to pardon without any penanc or obligation to live well’ (Douce L 205, fol. xxxixr, quoted in Brewer 1996:18). Clearly not every reader was convinced by Crowley’s Protestant polemics, which subsequently raises the issue of Langland’s non-Protestant readership. The poem was in circulation long before the rumblings of the Henrician reformation and several of the extant manuscripts belonged to religious orders. Anne Middleton notes that the poem is mentioned in three surviving wills, two of which refer to Catholic clerics. Copies of the A-text have also been frequently found with annotations on the subjects of religious instruction and historical narration, suggesting that these manuscripts found an audience among clerics and religious orders (Middleton 1982: 104).

While Crowley’s interpretation was being challenged in the early modern period by his readers, Langlandian scholarship has more recently begun to scrutinize the evidence for reformist associations generated by the poem up to and around the time of Crowley’s edition. Analysing the appearance of extracts of Piers found in manuscript circulation during the sixteenth century, Lawrence Warner takes issue with the notion of a literary tradition which was ‘inherently Protestant’ (Warner 2014: 73). BL Additional MS 60577, 20

20 A surviving will also bequeaths a copy of Piers Plowman to a woman in the late fourteenth century (Simpson 2007: 345). The diverse pre-Reformation readership of the poem takes on additional significance after Henry VIII passes the Act for the Advancement of True Religion in 1543 which forbade women below the level of gentry from reading the Bible. Furthermore, the Act also attempted to purge certain books, songs and ballads dating from before 1540 and Langland’s Piers Plowman was not specifically exempt, unlike the works of Chaucer and Gower.
also known as the Winchester Anthology, contains an excerpt of the poem ending with
‘Quod piers plowman’. The passage is often referred to as the ‘monks’ heads’ or ‘hunger’
passage\textsuperscript{21} and is highlighted by Crowley in his prefatory material due to the high level of
variation of this section across his copy-texts: ‘for diuere copies haue it diuerselye’ (From
the Printer to the Reader). Warner asserts that the Winchester Anthology is Catholic in
provenance and in focus, particularly with regards to the additions made by later readers in
the sixteenth century (Warner 2014: 73). The appearance of this section of poem as a ‘free-
floating text’ and the attribution of the lines by the copyist to Piers, when the lines in fact
belong to the narrator, leads Warner to consider this an example of oral transmission and
record by memory (Warner 2014: 74). Oral transmission and the evocation of the figure of
Piers was not solely reserved for reformers such as John Ball.

The Sloan Collection (BL MS Sloane 2578) has been described by Sharon Jansen
as a ‘wild assortment of political prophecies’ dating from the sixteenth century which
denounce Mary I’s Spanish match and express faith that Edward VI will rise up and
restore England to the Protestant faith (Jansen 1989: 93). Jansen was the first to note a
passage in the compilation which merges two sections of Piers—the ‘monks’ heads’ lines (B
6.321-331) and the ‘there shall come a king’ lines (B 10. 322-325).\textsuperscript{22} Given the general anti-
Marian sentiment of the compilation and the focus on prophecy, Jansen interprets the
utilisation of older ‘prophecies’, in this case an excerpt from Piers Plowman, as being
‘familiar and reliable in a time of doubt and conflict’ and argues that they also served as
‘evidence’ that reformist thought could be traced back to the late medieval period (Jansen
1989: 99). Indeed, it is argued here that Crowley himself sought to demonstrate continuity
between past moments of protest and his own period by engaging with a fourteenth
century poem. However, Lawrence Warner has more recently argued that the
Protestantism of the Sloane compilation has been ‘exaggerated’ (Warner 2014: 79).
Furthermore, it is unclear whether the copyist was aware of the origins of the passages he
was quoting; Warner suggests a ‘longstanding tradition’ which merged these lines had
become conventionalised and, presumably, dissociated from the original poem. The
appearance of the merged passages as prose with unique variants leads Warner to conclude

\textsuperscript{21} Whan ye [merke] the sonne amys and two monkes heddles,
And a mayde have the maistrie, and multiplied by eights,
Thanne shal deeth withdrawe and derthe be justice,
And Dawe the Dykere deye for hunger –
But if God of his goodnesse graunte us a trewe.

\textsuperscript{22} The small extract is reworked in prose and appears on folios 107v – 108r (Jansen 1989: 94).
that this was, like the excerpt in the Winchester Anthology, an example of ‘memorial reconstruction’ (Warner 2014: 80).

Warner argues that Crowley was therefore attempting to wrest *Piers Plowman* from this ‘non-reformist and oral’ tradition which promoted the poem as a vehicle of prophesy (Warner 2014: 83). This was achieved through the ‘bookish paraphernalia’ deployed in his edition which aimed to ‘re-textualise’ the poem (Warner 2014: 83). Thus, Crowley’s edition should be regarded as a rejection of the mainstream, oral transmission of *Piers Plowman*, rather than an interpretation emerging directly from the previous two centuries of reformist ‘cultural associations’ (Middleton 1982: 107). Indeed, Crowley was explicit in warning his readers not to consider Langland a prophet, nor the poem as an example of ‘wonders past’. In reference to the ‘monks’ head’ lines, Crowley directs the reader to the folio containing the problematic passage and asserts that their appearance is ‘lyke to be a thinge added by some other man than the fyrst autour’ (From the Printer to the Reader). To further reinforce his point, Crowley adds a stern marginal annotation next to the passage which reads ‘This is not a prophecy but a pronostication’ (fol. xxxvi). Crowley is both rejecting the notion of the poem as fanciful prophecy and expressing confidence in the intellectual integrity of his author. He is also acknowledging the variability of manuscript witnesses and the challenges to the integrity of the authorial original as a result of textual transmission.

Crowley’s paratextual framing of the poem certainly demonstrates his Protestantism, but his editorial decisions also demonstrate his respect for his medieval author and the power of the literary work. Somewhat ironically, subsequent generations of critics overlooked the complexities of Crowley’s edition and identified the work as a straightforward example of sixteenth-century reform propaganda. Larry Scanlon provides an astute observation on the complex politics which inform Crowley’s editions, noting ‘his [Crowley’s] polemics, though always articulating a fairly radical Protestantism, tended to focus more on politics than on the doctrinal or liturgical’ (Scanlon 2007: 55). This interpretation resonates with Andy Wood’s description of Crowley as one of the sixteenth-century ‘Commonwealth’ men for whom religion and politics were inextricably bound (Wood 2009: 33) and further supports the argument that Crowley, as an activist, was interested in the poem’s broader debates on social justice.
Early print culture was certainly not mass production in the modern sense but it did produce a more stable and widely available version of the text. James Simpson’s assertion that print fractured the ‘discursive constellation’ of *Piers Plowman* by disseminating a single, restrictive interpretation suggests a contrast to the potential flexibility of interpretation offered by manuscript versions (Simpson 2007b: 369). As previously noted, a small but significant number of A-texts were circulated among the clergy, suggesting the breadth of interpretation during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries (Middleton 1982: 104). Excerpts, whether consciously linking to the poem or appearing as conventionalised phrases, continued to circulate in manuscript form around the time of Crowley’s print and challenge the perception of the ‘Piers tradition’ as primarily reformist. It is important to recognise that Simpson is not discussing the disruption of authorial intention; rather, he is claiming that the diversity of interpretation and reception of Langland’s poem was curtailed by the political circumstances of the sixteenth century. While these circumstances – primarily the relaxation of censorship legislation under Edward VI – encouraged a ‘revival of sorts’ of *Piers Plowman* and assorted Lollard texts, both genuine and spurious, the revival was unable or unwilling to engage with the ‘full force’ of the poem (Simpson 2007b: 330).

Simpson views this revival not as a spontaneous response to the liberating environment of the Reformation, but as a means of legitimising Henrician and evangelical interests (Simpson 2007b: 331). Perhaps this explains the failure of early modern society to understand and replicate the complexity of the original poem; if the central force of *Piers Plowman* is contained in the call for protest against institutional power abuses as Simpson himself suggests, the message is somewhat undermined when deployed in support of the prevailing institution. However, Crowley is critical of the prevailing institution and, as Scanlon argues, his pamphleteering activities suggest he was more interested in criticising less radical Protestants and the self-serving elite than the Catholic opposition (Scanlon 2007: 57). Furthermore, Crowley was a man frustrated by the pace of reform and his edition of *Piers Plowman* is a critique of contemporary sixteenth-century politics and of a Reformation stalled. Crowley may be using Langland’s poem to legitimise the reform agenda, but he is also using it to criticise. While Simpson may be right that sixteenth-century writers and reformers sought cohesion, his assessment of the period overlooks the complexity of their responses.
Interpreting the *Piers Plowman*/Lollard literary revival as a political strategy to reinforce obedience to the king once again highlights the mistrust of the early modern period which pervades Simpson’s study (Simpson 2007b: 366). The various ways in which literature could be deployed (or not) in the early modern political sphere is certainly an important consideration in the present thesis which accepts that certain forms of cultural expression were curtailed in response to the need for political and cultural cohesion in the wake of the Henrician Reformation. Simpson’s claims that texts of the *Piers Plowman* tradition simplified the message of Langland’s poem are persuasive and support his wider view of the sixteenth century as a period of restricted cultural output, in contrast to the perceived heterogeneity of the middle ages. However, *Piers Plowman* and *The Fall of Princes* were medieval texts with an established textual transmission history and existing cultural associations and this must surely complicate the ‘strategy’, regardless of the motivations of the later printer/editors. This again raises the central question: why tackle such problematic texts at all if simplification and political cohesion was the primary aim? The answer surely lies in considering what can be gained from reworking existing texts and it is this issue to which we will now turn.
3.3 Robert Crowley, the Plowman & the Commonwealth

‘The bloude of...the plovenen that laboured sore...’.

Robert Crowley, *The Way to Wealth* (1550)

It is possible to reject the notion of an inherently Protestant *Piers Plowman* tradition and the interpretative limitations that imposes, while also acknowledging the wave of literary responses to the poem which linked the figure of the plowman to dissent and complaint. Texts such as *The Praier and the Complaynte of the Plowman unto Chryste* and *The Plowman’s Tale* emerge in the late fourteenth century and discuss social inequality and the perceived hypocrisy of the friars. A selection of texts similarly evoking the figure of Piers appear later during the 1530s, a particularly difficult period of Henry’s reign. Wrongly attributed to Chaucer, *The Plowman’s Tale* and *Jack Upland* first appeared in print around 1536; *The Plowman’s Tale* later reappeared in the 1542 reprint of Thynne’s Chaucerian anthology (Jansen 1989: 97). Sharon Jansen reiterates John King’s assertion that Crowley ‘kidnapped’ the poem for his own political ends and mentions the tract *Pyers plowmans exhortation unto the lords knightes and burgoysses of the Parlyamenthous* (1550) as another example of contemporary anti-Catholic writing. However, Jansen fails to note that the *exhortation* is thought to have been composed by Robert Crowley himself (Scanlon 2007: 64). The tract is described by Scanlon as Crowley’s ‘most polemical and emphatic’ discussion of the issues of social injustice and sedition. Crowley demonstrates further commitment to the figure of Piers by adopting the persona of the ploughman while arguing that the acts of enclosure had thwarted the progress of the Reformation.

Crowley’s *The Way to Wealth* was printed in the same year as the *exhortation* and his editions of *Piers Plowman*. Like his prints of *Piers*, the tract also uses marginal annotations to provide biblical chapter and verse references. The text is intended as a lesson ‘wherein is plainly taught a most present remedy for sedicion’ and Crowley invokes the plowman figure (thought not persona) as a rhetorical device. Evidenced in his treatment of *Piers*

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23 A Godly Dyalogue and Dysputacyon between Pyers Plowman, and a Popysh Preest Concernyng the Supper of the Lorde and I Playne Piers Which Can Not Flatter both appear around 1532 (Jansen 1989: 97).
24 The poem remains part of *The Canterbury Tales* through two centuries and several editions before being acknowledged as a Chaucerian counterfeit. James Simpson regards this work as an example of an ‘official propaganda campaign’ during the sixteenth century (Simpson 2007: 330).
25 Tate defines the act of enclosure (or inclosure) as ‘the conversion of any means, legal, extra-legal or illegal of open (common) lands, arable, meadow pasture or waste into individual ownership, tenancy and use’ (Tate 1967: 187). Tate asserts that enclosure represents ‘the great historical change’ from the shift from open, ‘semi-communal organization’ of medieval agriculture to the modern system of land ownership (Tate 1967: 21).
**Plowman**, Crowley is sensitive to the power of words and imagery. This is also true in his own writings and he passionately evokes ‘the bloude of...the plowemen that laboured sore’ as a call for the elite to act responsibly and show compassion for the commons. The tract was published in the year following the rebellions of 1549 and highlights both the strong link between the plowman figure and social unrest, and Crowley’s own close involvement with contemporary politics. The summer of 1549 was one of simmering unrest, with the south-east of England boiling over into a series of independent uprisings. Andy Wood considers the events of 1549 as the ‘last medieval popular revolt’ with a tradition stretching back to the Peasant’s Revolt in 1381 (Wood 2009: 1).

Despite differences in focus, the popular rebellions of 1549 shared common aims and forms of organisation. Andy Wood also describes the ‘remarkable consistency in popular political language’ used by the rebels and further suggests that the rebels themselves were aware of the continuity to be found across the uprisings. This awareness of unity cultivated ‘an ideology of popular protest’ (Wood 2009: 1) which railed against the self-serving and profligate ruling classes. The continuity of popular protest stretching back to the late medieval period is clearly a concept Crowley wished to highlight through his treatment of *Piers Plowman*. However, Wood is keen to stress that the ‘social conflicts’ of the 1381 Rebellion and those of the 1549 risings were different. The rebels of 1381 had risen up to protest against the feudal hierarchy, but the socio-economic conditions of the sixteenth century were being shaped by the ‘uneven emergence of early agrarian capitalism’ (Wood 2009: 1). The 1549 rebellions can therefore be viewed as spanning the juncture between the medieval and the early modern, and symptomatic of the social, economic and political transformations taking place in the sixteenth century (Wood 2009: 2).

Wood considers the writings of Robert Crowley to demonstrate a certain sympathy for the rebels and their cause against the ruling elite, using ‘common phrases which are more typically found in accusations of seditious speech’ (Wood 2009: 101). The structure of his polemical writing is also, argues Wood, ‘both dialogic...and multivocal’ (Wood 2009: 103) – a description which also captures the essence of Langland’s poem. The uprisings to which Crowley was responding and sympathising were varied in their origins and focus. Kett’s Rebellion began in Norfolk and was primarily an expression of anger at the acts of enclosure which followed the dissolution of the monasteries. Enclosure effectively removed
portions of land from the commons which had been previously held for grazing and common use. Tate agrees that the acts of enclosure were a central grievance held by the rebels during the 1549 revolts. He notes that complaints about the process and repercussions of enclosure appears in contemporary sermons by reformist preachers William Tyndale and Hugh Latimer, various ‘pamphleteers’, and ‘versifiers’ such as Robert Crowley (Tate 1967: 69). The resulting popular anger and the failures of the ruling class are addressed directly by Crowley in the exhortation and certain details of the rebellion demonstrate the inextricable links between politics and religion during this period. Wood locates the initial rumblings of the rising to a gathering on the feast day of the Wymondham Game, a play which traditionally celebrated the life of St Thomas Becket. Such celebrations had been outlawed under Henry VIII and so the gathering itself was ‘tinged with sedition’ (Wood 2009: 60). Furthermore, the man who would go on to lead the rebellion, Robert Kett, had previously led local opposition to the stripping of Wymondham Abbey’s assets in the wake of its dissolution (Wood 2009: 61).

The Prayer Book Rebellion, which originated in Devon and Cornwall that same summer, was a revolt against the imposition of the Book of Common Prayer. Described by Eamon Duffy as a spectacular rejection of the ‘ritual impoverishment’ enforced by the Reformation more generally, he claims that the ‘essentially religious character of the revolts cannot seriously be questioned’ (Duffy 2005: 466). Wood similarly argues that the Reformation was considered by ‘many common people’ as a series of aggressive manoeuvres by the upper classes, part of a wider attack on the established social order (Wood 2009: 24). However, Wood also insists that the labouring classes understood and responded to the Reformation on more than just doctrinal terms – they were aware of the social and economic dynamic, and the ruling elite was forced to acknowledge that the Reformation had failed to take root in many sections of popular society (Wood 2009: 24). Duffy may be right in his observations regarding the primary religious motives behind the Prayer Book Rebellion; however, this was one uprising among a series. A broader view of these protests highlights similarities of language and organisation, and the undercurrent of popular anger at a ruling class who were neglecting their moral and social responsibilities. Furthermore, as the imposition of The Book of Common Prayer was part of a drive for religious cohesion, endorsed from the top down, the responses were necessarily political.

If Crowley was sympathetic to the grievances and demands of the peasant rebels,
his endorsement of their cause would have surely stopped short in certain theological matters. After all, the enforcement of Protestant reforms and the aggressive suppression of traditional forms of worship were factors which stoked the flames of popular dissent. Crowley again demonstrates his ability to overlook problematic clashes in theological conviction for the sake of wider demands for social justice and stability. While it could be argued that Crowley was insensitive to the complexities of the medieval poem and presented a gross simplification of Langland’s rather knotty relationship with Catholic doctrine, it is more difficult to claim that he was ignorant of the liturgical disputes involved in the contemporary 1549 Rebellions. Crowley’s own politics were clearly more complex than his reputation as a strident reformer suggests.

The end of The Way to Wealth offers stern advice to both the oppressed and the oppressors:

…so loke upon these causes of Sedicion, and do your best endevoor to put them auaie. You that be oppressed, I say, refer youre cause to God. And you (tha)t have oppressed, lame(n)t your so doinge and do the office of your calling, in defending the innocente and fedinge the nedye. Let not couetyse constraine you to robbe the people of that porcion which they paie to have godly ministers to enstruct the(m) in their dutie, and to releue the uneweldy that be not able to labour for their fode.26

Crowley here acts as a mediator between the commons and the gentry. He speaks for the commons, adopting the language of popular protest to urge responsible governance, but he also speaks to the commons, counselling patience and a respect for the social hierarchy. This extract also urges the gentry to ensure provisions are made for the religious instruction of the poor. The ‘godly ministers’ would presumably be those who toed the Reformist party line, but Crowley clearly considers religious instruction a fundamental remit of the ruling classes and second only to the supply of food in the amelioration of the poor. The extract also exemplifies the streak of conservatism that has been detected in the writings of sixteenth century reform literature. Wood identifies the two modes through which this conservatism found expression: the conception of society as ‘mutually supportive social blocs’ with the commons in subordination; and a rejection of the political voice of those commons (Wood 2009: 33). Both Wood and Scanlon refer to Crowley’s work The voyce of the

26 The text contains no original pagination and the EEBO images include a doubling of one folio. If the duplicate page is removed and the count begins on the first page of text (rather than the title page) this section would appear on page 29.
laste trumpet (1549)\(^{27}\) as an example of his desire to maintain rather than undermine the traditional social hierarchy. The text sets out to instruct each estate in their responsibilities and standing and advises the poor to reject rebellion, accept their position and the governance of their social superiors (Wood 2009: 33; Scanlon 2009: 62). Crowley’s support for the commons and their grievances is staunch, but his support for rebellion is conditional and tempered by his belief in the sovereignty of the king and the rightful subordination of the working classes.

Identifying Langland’s influence in The voyage of the laste trumpet, Scanlon notes that Crowley similarly explores sin in terms of its social causes and effects and the work sees ‘Christian virtue articulated in part around social position’ (Scanlon 2007: 62). Neither Langland nor Crowley sought revolution or the overthrow of social order, but a reaffirmation of existing responsibilities. However, while Langland writes in relation to his long-established Catholic Church, Crowley’s messages strike a more urgent note, speaking for and to an institution still in formation. His writings suggest an attempt to maintain the momentum of the reform process, of which Langland was an early voice. The desire for continuity represented more than a connection to the past and a means of legitimizing the present; it offered the promise of continued progress and of a future society shaped by the principles of the Reformation.

Crowley’s publishing record reveals his disappointment at a Reformation which had not reached its full potential. He attacks the contemporary ruling elite with almost as much fervour and righteous indignation as he directs toward the old Catholic clergy, believing that the elite had simply inserted themselves in the positions of corrupt power left vacant by the bishops (King 1978: 223). In Crowley’s view, enclosure had reduced the land available to till and rendered the dissolution of the monasteries and seizure of lands pointless. His exhortation is a highly charged piece of political writing which expresses his anger at a self-serving elite unwilling to reform for the good of the poor commons:

Nevertheless even as in the time of oure greatest errour & ignoraunce, the fatte prestes wol[...] neuer confesse that any thing concerni[...] oure religion was amis,

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\(^{27}\) The various estates addressed by Crowley in the poem are a Beggar, a Servant, a Yeoman, a Lewd Priest, a Scholar, a Learned Man, a Physician, a Lawyer, a Merchant, a Gentleman, a Magistrate and a Woman. The EEBO catalogue contains two editions of the text, both printed by Richard Grafton on Crowley’s behalf - a 1549 edition (STC 2\(^{nd}\) edition 6094) and a 1550 edition (STC 2\(^{nd}\) edition 6095).
worthy to be reformed/ euen so now at this daye there be many fatte marchau(n)tes which wold haue no reformation in the comon wealth affirming that therein al things be wel but he that wyll be conuersaunt with the comeforte of the poore comens, shal (if he stop not his cares, not hyde his eyes) both shal heare se & p(er)ceyue the case to be farre otherwise. He shal heare tel that afewe riche me(n) haue ingrossed up so many fermes & shepe pastures/ & haue decayed so many whole townes/ that thousands of the poore comens can not get so muche as one ferme/ nor scant any litell house to put their head in. It is not agreeable with the gospel that a fewe parsons shall lyue in so great abou(n)daunce of wealth/ a(n)d suffer so many their christe(s) brothers to lyue in extreme pouertie.28

The excerpt claims that the ‘fatte prestes’ have been replaced by the ‘fatte marchau(n)tes’ who have benefitted from enclosure, leaving the working poor in even more unfortunate circumstances. Crowley’s hopes for comprehensive reform had rested on Edward VI, a passionate Protestant who grew up under the tutelage of Thomas Cranmer. The hopes for further reform were dashed when Edward died in 1553, aged only 15. The crisis of succession which followed the Protestant king’s premature death led to his staunchly Catholic sister Mary seizing the throne and the English Reformation being violently curtailed. Crowley returned from religious exile shortly after Elizabeth’s accession, no doubt reinvigorated by the hope that Protestant reforms would be back on track. It is clear that Crowley was yet again disappointed by the speed and rigour of reform under Elizabeth, his disillusionment prompting him to rebel during the Vestments Controversy of 1566. The controversy also reigneded Crowley’s polemical spirit and he involved himself in another flurry of print activity.

In his comprehensive study of the complex textual transmission of Foxe’s Book of Martyrs, John N. King charts the history of what he describes as ‘...a book that epitomizes the history of the book in early modern England’ (King 2006: 1). Foxe’s book was remarkable for a number of reasons, not least of all for the complexity of its paratextual material. Paratextual innovation was not the only similarity between Foxe and Crowley; both men abandoned university careers as a result of religious conviction and, sympathetic to the early puritan movement, both protested in the Vestments Controversy (King 2006: 72). Furthermore, King notes that Foxe and Crowley believed ‘social and religious ills were interconnected... ’ (King 2006: 132); politics and religion were inextricable concepts in the

28 Pyers plowmans exhortation unto the lords knightes and burgoysses of the Parlyamenthouse (1550), fol. i-ii. (STC 2nd ed. 19905).
minds of these reformers, evident in their own writings and the ways in which they treat their source material. Active members of the reform movement who recognised the propagandistic potential of print, they utilised paratext as a means of framing the text in support of their aims. They were not driven by the profits of the trade, but rather by the commitment to preaching and persuading. However, if this mission was to prove at all successful, the books would have to appeal to a wide readership. The system of paratext was central to the aim of social inclusion, and bibliographic analysis provides insight into how Foxe and Day expected their readers to respond to the interplay of words and images, layout and type.

Foxe’s *Book of Martyrs* was both a fierce attack and a staunch defence: an attack against the history of persecution, and a defence of Protestantism’s history in the face of accusations of illegitimacy. Foxe’s bold claim that the Church of the early Britons was descended from the Greek, not the Roman, was part of a wider attempt to ‘rehabilitate’ Saxon history in the sixteenth century and deploy it as a legitimising force (Kidd 1999: 99). Foxe collated impressive amounts of historical documentation, witness reports and various forms of anecdotal evidence in order to build a robust and unassailable case for Protestantism’s righteousness, and he was careful to ensure the book’s presentation attracted the largest possible readership. Robert Crowley was similarly concerned with reinforcing the historical legitimacy of the reform movement, choosing an established work of English literature as evidence of the perceived subculture of reform prevailing in the middle ages. Crowley, along with Foxe and other sixteenth-century commentators, demonstrate a desire to rewrite the past and create a history of differentiation from the Roman Church stretching back to the Anglo-Saxon period. As McKenzie notes, ‘Every society rewrites its past, every reader rewrites its texts and, if they have any continuing life at all, at some point every printer redesigns them’ (McKenzie 1999: 25). Crowley redesigns the physical presentation of *Piers Plowman* for his sixteenth-century readership, and comparisons with MS B.15.17 demonstrate the vastly different pressures and expectations placed on the poem.29 However, Crowley is also a reader and, through his paratextual framing, he engages in a process of rewriting Langland's poem.

Crowley deliberately chooses a difficult medieval poem with a knotty transmission history and his treatment of it is a mixture of the brazen and the subtle. The Protestant

29 Analysis of MS B.15.17 and a detailed comparison with Crowley’s editions is found in Section 3.4.
interpretation is unavoidable, unflinching, and designed to manipulate the reader from the outset; the annotations physically enclose the poem. However, he chooses the striking Black Letter type, a visual mark of the poem’s medieval origins as well as a mark of its authenticity. He displays a relatively conservative approach towards the text itself in relation to the punctuation, spelling and vocabulary. The prefatory material makes it clear that Langland is not a prophet but a man whose knowledge of scripture and discussions of social responsibility merits serious contemplation. Furthermore, close reading of the annotations and their function in the text reveals Crowley’s focus to be on cohesion, not division, its sectarianism ‘occasional and secondary’ (Scanlon 2007: 58). Crowley wishes to demonstrate and emphasise a long-standing history of reform and the paratextual features are deployed for this purpose, combining contemporary conventions of layout which acknowledge the growing extensive, silent readership with features marking the medieval origins of the poem. Like Foxe in his Book of Martyrs, Crowley is using Langland’s poem as a means of uncovering a history of reform. Simpson regards Foxe’s book as one of the first in a line of ‘powerful defences’ promoting a triumphantist view of the Reformation which continued into the twentieth century (Simpson 2007b: 327). These ‘defences’ are mounted from a number of different perspectives and, while both Foxe and Crowley engage in a process of writing and rewriting as a means of legitimating the Protestant cause, approach is where the reformers diverge.

Foxe’s Book of Martyrs is underpinned by a concern for the reputation and justification of the Anglican Church and, for him, the purity of the Church is linked to the purity of the Nation. The Book of Martyrs is not simply a collection of sources documenting the history of persecution faced by reformers through the centuries; it is a work which attempts to define English identity in the aftermath of the split from Rome and centuries of Catholic tradition (Kidd 1999). Linking the piety of the Church with the integrity of the Anglo-Saxon people as Foxe does is a masterstroke of Protestant propaganda, allowing the past to be rewritten and the present to be reshaped. Modern propaganda is often an exercise in simplification, presenting a biased and unrealistically positive view of a political act or opinion. It is a reductive process in which a range of factors are narrowed to a single, unifying ideology. But if our modern concepts of ‘nationalism’ and ‘propaganda’ are anachronistic when applied to the sixteenth century, it is primarily because these familiar terms fail to acknowledge the novelty and complexity of Foxe and Crowley’s endeavours. While Foxe’s book allowed him to collate, edit and present his own ‘ideological construction’ of the Anglican Church born of the sixteenth century (King 2006: 1),
Crowley chooses an existing medieval poem to highlight the historical precedent for reform.

This choice limits Crowley in certain ways; from a layout and presentation perspective, his editions of *Piers Plowman* do not achieve the levels of typographical innovation with which King credits Foxe and his printer John Day (King 2006: 85). However, these limitations are to an extent self-imposed – the editorial intervention is relatively minimal with regards to the textual elements, both substantive and accidental. Crowley’s originality lies in his the ability to capture a mid-sixteenth century Protestant readership with a fourteenth century Catholic poem and linking two distinct periods of history. He successfully highlights the common thread of protest which underpins both Langland’s poem and his own political agenda. Scanlon argues that it is ultimately the figure of Piers who unites Langland and Crowley by negotiating ‘the great diachronic span between a radical Catholic writer and a radical Protestant reader’ and, crucially, by ‘bringing the example of God to bear on the social privileges of property and political power’ (Scanlon 2007: 70). Crowley’s focus was protest and reform; this was in contrast to John Foxe and other sixteenth-century Protestant writers who were concerned with proclaiming the doctrinal purity of the Anglican Church. In the case of Foxe, these attempts to highlight the integrity of Christian faith in England before the corruptive influence of the Norman invaders begins to tentatively connect Protestant reform to the concept of national identity: an identity which could be properly restored after the split from Rome.

Taking account of Crowley’s sympathy for the predominantly Catholic rebels provides an additional level of insight into his choice to print *Piers Plowman* and his interpretation of it. James Simpson asserts that evangelical theology ‘played directly into royal interests’ (Simpson 2007b: 328), but Crowley simultaneously displays a commitment to Protestant reform and an impulse for protest against the ruling establishment. This impulse found an outpouring in his own writings, his political activism and his engagement with Langland’s poem. His prints of *Piers Plowman* reflect this complexity and contradiction, demonstrating a fascination with the medieval origins of the poem and an editorial sensitivity to notions of textual authenticity which appear alongside the Protestant paratext. The socio-political circumstances which arose during the poem’s original manuscript circulation and those surrounding Crowley’s print have unmistakable parallels. The
grievances of the rebels who invoked the name of ‘Piers the Plowman’ during the Peasant’s Revolt of 1381 are mirrored in the demands of the rebels who rose up in the summer of 1549, protesting oppressive conditions and unfair taxes levied by a self-serving gentry. While the associations may have been unintentional on the part of Langland and forced him to temper the more controversial scenes in his C-text revision, Crowley is fully aware of the political nuances and exploits them to full effect. Ultimately, Crowley’s 1550 prints are a complex response to a complex poem.

Chapter Two discussed some of the recent criticisms of post-Reformation narratives which have traditionally presented the movement as one of liberation inspired by popular protest against the abuses of the Church (Duffy 2005; Walker 1996; Simpson 2007b). This straightforward and triumphalist view no longer carries weight, due in part to developments in the study of early modern politics which has turned historians towards the concerns and agency of the working classes. This approach which unites political and social history has allowed new, more complex readings of the Reformation and the Tudor political sphere more generally (Wood 2009). In a similar spirit of interdisciplinarity and of opening new avenues for research, medieval and early modern scholars are increasingly aware of the restrictions imposed by strict periodization. Breaking down the barriers between the medieval and the early modern requires and allows a reconsideration of the relationship between these ‘periods’, with a focus on continuity rather than disjunction. Furthermore, there is acknowledgement of the interdependency of these periods to each other and to our conception of them – each is ‘the product of the other’ (McMullan & Matthews 2007: 3). Attempts to read the medieval often involves reading it through the early modern and, as McMullan and Matthews note, medievalists ‘now range far into the sixteenth century as a matter of course’ (McMullan & Matthews 2007: 4). Our understanding of both the medieval and the early modern is enhanced by examining the connections and continuities, and through recognising the various ways history and identity could be reshaped and rewritten.

The notion of connection and continuity should not only be applied to the reading habits and the political backdrop, but should inform our analysis of reading practices. The development of silent reading was a gradual process subject to various technological, social and ideological pressures. The punctuation and paratext systems of early print demonstrates the evolution of features from the manuscript tradition as they come into
contact with the technological and economic constraints imposed by the press and the growing and evolving readership. Early printer/editors were confronted with questions of textual consistency, authority and accessibility which continue to challenge modern critics. Furthermore, changing reader requirements posed a particularly complex problem for editors of medieval texts who balanced the need for modernisation with the desire for authenticity. These factors are themselves shaped and underpinned by socio-economic developments which encouraged rising literacy levels and increased demand for the printed book. None of these factors stand in isolation and it is through the interplay and connectivity, both within the pages of the book and in the wider literary culture of the early modern period, that we gain an insight into how texts were perceived and read.

Robert Crowley’s edition of *Piers Plowman* attempts to focus the readers’ attention on these perceived continuities and he presents the late medieval period as heralding an era of reform. However, Crowley is careful not to frame the text or his author Langland as examples of ‘wonders past’, and the continuities are resolutely grounded in observance of scripture, the responsibilities of good governance and the struggle against social inequality. The paratextual framing of Crowley’s editions, analysed on its own, provides a fascinating insight into the political affiliations of the editor and the wider socio-political context of its production. It also demonstrates the emerging propagandistic potential of print and the various ways the Reformation was shaping literary culture. Considering the paratextual features alongside the punctuation practices re-focuses attention on intra-linguistic detail and the reception of the text, and it is to this analysis we now turn. Comparing the paratextual and punctuation practices between MS B.15.17 and Crowley’s edition seeks to examine how the text and the associated reading practices developed over time and the boundaries it crossed while moving from the late medieval to the emergence of the early modern, and from a culture of ‘literate orality’ (Sponsler 2010: 1) towards silent-reading.
3.4 Punctuation and Paratext: The Development from Manuscript to Print

‘Changes in the signs are signs of changes’.
(Parkes 1992: 40)

Trinity College, Cambridge MS B.15.17 is one of the 18 surviving manuscripts of the B-text version of *Piers Plowman* and has provided the base text for Thomas Wright’s edition of 1842 and the Kane and Donaldson *Athlone* edition. The binding is early seventeenth-century and displays the arms of owner and subsequent donor, George Willmer. Written on parchment by one scribe throughout, the manuscript survives in excellent condition. A 2006 article by Linne Mooney represented the culmination of painstaking research to uncover the identity of Chaucer’s scribe and piece together a portfolio of his work. MS B.15.17 has been included in the corpus of one Adam Pinkhurst, a professional scribe who produced various Middle English texts including the Ellesmere and Hengwrt manuscripts (Mooney 2006: 98). Pinkhurst joined the Scrivener’s Company of London in about 1392 and is discussed by Mooney as a definitively London scribe in terms of locale and network. The original owner of the manuscript is unknown but the employment of a single professional scribe to copy the monumental work and the level of consistency found therein suggests an expensive commission.

The first folio has suffered staining transferred from the leather paste-downs on the front board prior to the addition of the fly-leaves (Benson 1997: 57). This brown stain obscures the intricate border decoration featuring a 10-letter high initial and ornate flourishes in red and blue, with evidence of small amounts of gold leaf having been used. Decoration throughout the manuscript is modest by comparison and focused on the initials and rubrication. The striking feature of the decoration and rubrication in B.15.17 is the consistency, both in standard and style. The scribe included a hierarchy of initials and flourishes which are marked by size, colour and design, which provides a clear system for organising and subdividing the complex poem. Each Passus is introduced by a heading in red ink and a decorated initial of approximately 4-5 lines high. Each new paragraph begins with a capital letter inked in alternating red and blue, and nine ‘secondary’ decorated initials mark points of narrative importance within Passus. The main body of text is written in a clear Anglicana Formata with rubrication and Latin text appearing in a Bastard Anglicana script, both boxed in red ink.
Spacing is also a consistent feature of the manuscript, suggesting both an expensive production and a well planned and executed project on the part of the scribe. The scribe utilises the width of the page in order to accommodate Langland’s long alliterative lines, but the verse is frequently broken up by spacing which signals dialogue or a change of speaker, topic or overall narrative direction. In contrast to the dense column of text which appears in the first printed edition by Robert Crowley (1550), this manuscript copy appears spacious and measured. With no significant ornamentation in B.15.17 besides the elaborate first folio page, the text itself becomes the decoration through the use of coloured ink, initials and flourishes. The indulgent use of spacing further enhances the sense of an unhurried progression through the poem, with display central to the manuscript production values. The use of coloured ink, although limited to blue and red, performs an important function by providing consistent signposts through the complex dreamscape.

Opening Passus initials appear in blue ink, approximately 4-5 lines high, and are encased with delicate red-inked pen-work which drapes down the left-hand margin. Blue ink is otherwise limited to the alternating paragraph initials, perhaps due to the relative cost of blue pigment, while red ink is used more extensively, providing emphasis and various textual divisions and distinctions. Red ink is used to demarcate the catchwords at the end of each quire and Passus titles appear in red Bastard Anglicana display script with a decorative red rectangular border. Langland’s shorter Latin interpolations are retained within the verse lines but most are given a new line and clearly separated from the English verse. In both instances the Latin is written in black Bastard Anglicana and surrounded by a plain red-inked rectangle. The Latin text is consistently distinguished by script and rubrica tion, and often through the use of spacing.

Assigning such marked and consistent prominence to the Latin interpolations serves as a reading aid by clearly distinguishing the Latin quotations. On one hand, the weaving of Latin text into the poem suggests a highly literate readership and a more private, contemplative engagement with the poem. However, it may have been intended to act as a guide for different levels of literacy, allowing those not literate in Latin to easily circumvent the sections. The potential of typography and layout to engage varied reading practices was further developed with the printing press and is noted by John King in relation to Foxe’s
Book Of Martyrs (1563). King asserts that Foxe and his printer John Day marketed the book for ‘a socially and intellectually stratified readership’ and were clearly aware of the importance of paratext and layout when catering for different levels of literacy (King 2006: 16). The distinction is made clear through the use of typography: the vernacular is printed in two-column black letter while the Latin text appears in single-column Roman type. King suggests that the two-column vernacular represents a concession to less literate readers by presenting shorter lines of text (King 2006: 101).

Lawrence Warner notes the Piers Plowman is not unique in its prominent display of Latin among Middle English texts; the Clerk’s Tale and the Wife of Bath’s Prologue are both surrounded by Latin marginal annotations in several manuscripts, including the Ellesmere and Hengwrt manuscripts (Warner 2014: 53). What is unique, however, is the integration of the Latin interpolations into the main body of the poem across much of the manuscript tradition. Marginal Latin glosses can be ignored by casual readers but the layout of Piers, argues Warner, ‘forces its Latin in the reader’s consciousness’ (Warner 2014: 53). The prominence of the Latin has encouraged critics to interpret Langland’s intentions as radical, using the language of learning to reveal the secrets of the Church to the masses. However, this overlooks the conventionality of the Latin, primarily biblical extracts and phrases from Cato, a feature which also makes the phrases and aphorisms potentially ‘detachable’ from the main text (Warner 2014: 53). Furthermore, observing that a significant number of manuscripts display the Latin interpolations in the margins, Warner suggests that the Latin originated as marginal notes added by successive readers and was subsequently incorporated into the main text during the process of textual transmission (Warner 2014: 53). The Latin interpolations are afforded such prominence in MS B.15.17 through consistent decoration and are so carefully replicated in modern editions but may not be authorial; rather, suggests Warner, they may be remnants of early reader engagement with the poem (Warner 2014: 54).

However, while many of the Latin interpolations might indeed be considered conventional, their aphoristic status alone does not support the conclusion that they were ‘detachable’ from the main text. Firstly, the Latin interpolations are frequently intralinear, immediately preceding, following or wedged between the vernacular within the verse line.

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30 Warner compares the appearance of Latin in the Ellesmere and Hengwrt manuscripts with that in the Piers archive in general, but does not mention that Adam Pinkhurst has been posited as the scribe of Ellesmere, Hengwrt and MS B.15.17 (see Mooney 2006).
Latin is integrated into Piers’ own speech in Passus VII (B.115-138) following the frustrated pardon-ripping. The Latin is Biblical text from the gospels of Matthew and Luke, and from book of Psalms and thus might be described as conventional, or at least familiar. However, it is structurally and thematically integrated into Piers’ speech and detaching the Latin would fragment the verse. Furthermore, the drama of this scene is focused around the written word and the concept of translating word into action for the purposes of salvation. The priest’s response to Piers’ display of Latinity also raises the issue of who has access to vernacular and Latin literacy. Anima’s lengthy speech in Passus XV reconnects with the concept of lay literacy and Latinity, suggesting that if laymen had access to Latin they might prove to be more observant and critical of the clergy.

If lewed men knewe this Latyn, their wolde loke whom thei yeve

(B. XV. 318)

Langland is clearly interested in the issue of lay Latinity and these lines might be interpreted as a call for Latin learning to be democratized or reformed. Taken with the complex arrangement of inter- and intralinear Latin, this evidence points to the interpolations being authorial rather than reader-generated; at the very least, it must be a combination.

Nevertheless, the notion that early reader annotations proved so integral to the interpretation of the poem that they were incorporated into Langland’s verse is compelling, particularly in light of Robert Crowley’s treatment of the poem over 150 years later. Crowley’s own marginal annotations are a central feature of his edition and demonstrate both his own engagement with the messages of the poem and his desire to guide his reader through those messages. It is also interesting to note that the majority of Crowley’s annotations might also be described as ‘conventional’, with 237 out of 495 in the third impression noting sources and references, primarily biblical (Scanlon 2007: 66). We are again encouraged to see Crowley in the guise of reader and might consider whether Langland’s first print editor felt compelled, as had previous generations of readers, to actively engage with the poem in the margins.

Through the deployment of paratextual features MS B.15.17 potentially catered to a range of literacy levels. The inclusion of significant amounts of Latin material in the poem and the hierarchical treatment of it by the scribe suggests a highly literate readership.
possessing knowledge of the liturgy and Classical learning. The careful separation between the main text and the Latin verse lines might also allow readers to easily navigate around the Latin without disrupting the flow of vernacular verse, another potential function of the interpolations’ ‘detachability’. However, Warner’s analysis of the Latin lines challenges traditionally held views of the linguistic relationship in the poem. While he rejects the notion that the inclusion of Latin was radical in either deployment or sentiment, he does argue that it was Latin’s status as the ‘lingua franca of the literate’ which allowed the poem’s readers to come to terms with its messages (Warner 2014: 54). It is the Latin, not the vernacular, which is significant when considering accessibility and reading practices. Furthermore, there is a need to acknowledge ‘the reality that the poem was for much of its audience primarily a repository of Latinate learning, whether scholastic and learned or aphoristic and populist…’ (Warner 2014: 71). The perceived conventionality of the Latin interpolations and their potential origins as reader annotations serves as the basis for Warner’s assertion that the early transmission of Piers was predominantly ‘non-reformist and oral’ (Warner 2014: 72).

Indeed, the layout of the poem and the attention paid to the interchange of speech and speakers emphasises the integral orality of the poem itself and suggests how readers may have principally engaged with the poem as a dialogue. The unusual systems of rubrication in the B-text tradition is a compelling insight into the process of textual transmission and the level of scribal engagement. Benson notes that Corpus Christi College MS 201 contains ‘constant marking’ of ‘quod’, with many of the examples being themselves scribal. In addition to demonstrating a clear level of scribal creativity, it is also a reminder that speakers and speeches are central to the poem. Indeed, it is frequently described as a ‘dialogue’ in the clutch of extant B-texts, including TCC MS B.15.17, a further testament to the importance of direct speech and the interweaving of allegorical speakers in Piers Plowman (Benson 1997: 20). Phillips develops the analysis further and considers this feature of MS 201 in terms of what it reveals about the intentions of the scribe and the potential reading experience offered. She argues that the manuscript’s ‘emphasis on speech encourages the reader’s active participation in the reading experience’ and blurs the lines between the written and the spoken, the literate and the oral (Phillips 2013: 440). The scribe of MS B.15.17 uses spacing, rather than rubrication, as a means of signalling the appearance of direct speech and change of speaker, but the dialogic aspect of the poem takes centre stage in both. Despite Crowley’s deployment of the ‘dialogic…and multivocal’ as a device in his own polemical writings (Wood 2009: 103), the constraints of
the printing press do not allow for the luxury of rubrication and generous spacing.

Displaying a similar interest as the scribe of MS 201 in demarcating speech, the spacious layout of MS B.15.17 resembles the printed format of modern drama, albeit without the stage directions. Spacing functions on several levels within the manuscript; firstly, it is a central feature in the system of presentation, demonstrating high production values and an awareness of the importance of visuality and aesthetics on the reading experience (Parkes 1986; Phillips 2013). The use of spacing to mark speech and narrative shifts has the additional effect of slowing the reading process and breaking up the text into more manageable sections. Bonnie Mak argues that space functions by ‘moderating the pace of engagement with the page’ and allows a visual and cognitive break for the reader (Mak 2011: 17). MS B.15.17 also demonstrates how space can be interpreted on a more conceptual level by providing space for the fictional speaker in the text and space for the physical speaker of the text. During the reading process, line-break spacing functions as a pause, guiding the reader and providing a level of interpretation by emphasising certain lines or speakers. The equiparative distribution of the caesura within each verse line is primarily a structural mark, supporting the alliterative metre and suggesting consistent, rhythmical points of pause for the ‘reader-as-speaker’. Spacing denotes a more substantial pause for the reader but it is also interpretative, displaying the scribe’s attitude towards the poem and its message.

Turning to examine the role of paratextual features as evidence of more specific engagement with the themes and narrative structure of the poem, we encounter rubrication and decorated initials with an interpretative purpose. Rubrication in the form of red-inked rectangles used to highlight certain allegorical characters illustrates not only scribal engagement, but the history of textual transmission of the B-text manuscript. Fol. 27r illustrates the practice with particular focus given to the figure of ‘Repentaunce’. Benson notes that the practice of rubricating words is ‘unusual’ within Middle English poetic texts. Although found in some Canterbury Tales and a few Lydgate manuscripts, historical prose was much more likely to contain this type of rubrication. He goes on to suggest that this feature, which occurs to a greater or lesser extent in 12 out of the 17 B-text manuscripts, indicates that scribes were perhaps uncertain about the ‘status’ of Langland’s alliterative verse (Benson 1997: 17-18). Benson does concede that scribes regularly mark the caesura in the alliterative line. This surely displays, if not confidence, then at least a
familiarity with the rhythm and metre of alliterative verse; the layout of B.15.17 is certainly sensitive to the poetic structure. It also seems unlikely that scribes paying any attention to the poem’s content would misinterpret Langland’s roving allegorical dream-vision for a prose history. However, the structural and thematic complexities of *Piers Plowman* do transcend any traditional genre label we might apply. Although discussing genre in relation to a fourteenth text is anachronistic to say the least, *Piers Plowman* would have still proved an organisational challenge for contemporary scribes, with layout and textual divisions proving key to understanding and navigating the poem.

Twenty Passus initials accompany the Passus title in rubricated red, dividing the poem into the conventional sections. Nine secondary initials provide further subdivision, requiring a more comprehensive knowledge of the poem’s themes and content, and illustrating a ‘special interest’ in the subject of dreams (Benson 1997: 14). The secondary initials are spread throughout the poem (see fig. II, pp. 235) and chart Will’s journey in his various dream-states. Initials also mark Theology’s entrance in Passus II, Will’s complaint in Passus X that the long lesson from Dame Studie has not proved enlightening, and the beginning of Faith’s speech in Passus XVI. Manuscript B.15.17 is one of three B-text manuscripts which further subdivide the poem within the conventional Passus chapters. Oxford, Corpus Christi College MS 201 contains seven additional initials within the Passus, highlighting speeches and the introduction of individual sins. Cambridge, University Library MS Gg. iv. 31 is a slightly later manuscript written on paper and includes 14 additional initials all in the first half of the poem. They are deployed at what Benson describes as ‘dramatic moments’ in the narrative, such as the entrance of the king in the prologue (Benson 1997: 14). Subdividing initials allow scribes to manage and organise Langland’s complex and digressive poem in varying ways, each scribe reacting to his exemplars and perhaps devising his own system of textual organisation.

In folios 47v and 86v the scribe of B.15.17 breaks with his strict hierarchical regime of Passus and secondary initials, deploying two paraph initials with hatching detail. The initials are no larger than the consistent red/blue alternating secondary initials but both verse lines stand alone and employ the additional modest pen-work. In folio 86v the line comes near the start of Passus XV and marks a section of direct speech between Will the dreamer and Anima. Will questions Anima directly and initiates a lengthy episode dealing with criticisms of the clergy and the decline of learning.
What are ye called quod I in þat court. among cristes peple  

The other hatched detail paraph is similarly utilised to mark a line of Will’s direct speech beginning a dialogue with Kynde. The hatching deployed on the two paraph initials is distinctive and a deviation from the functioning hierarchy of decoration. The technique is also applied to the extended ascenders on the first line of each folio; these flourishes display a more freestyle approach and perhaps an opportunity for personalised pen-work. However, the appearance of the hatched parapraphs at similar points in the narrative suggest a specific signposting function linking the sections and demonstrating the scribe’s thematic concerns. It is notable that these secondary initials appear before sections of direct speech between Will the dreamer and a central allegorical figure, and serve to further emphasise the dialogic character of the poem.

Eight of the nine secondary subdividing initials are styled identically to the primary Passus initials, though slightly smaller. The ninth initial (fol. 81r) is unique and more modest, stylistically similar to the top-line flourishes. The alignment of the surrounding verse lines demonstrates that the initial was pre-planned, either added along with the main text or with space left for it. Benson makes no distinction between this and the other eight subdividing initials (Benson 1997: 14) yet both its form and placement within the poem suggest a different function. It neither marks a reference to dreams, nor does it introduce a new section of direct speech; rather, it appears amidst Haukyn’s exchange with Patience. However, the section of poem immediately following the unique subdividing initial contains several biblical references relating to drought and the wider themes of Passus XIV are concerned with the sins of gluttony and the virtue of poverty. The poor’s advantage over the rich in the journey towards heavenly salvation is a central concern in the poem and, from what we know about contemporary reactions, a central concern of the readership.

Dating from c.1400, the manuscript can be placed within a period of increasing literacy, residual orality and the distinct practice of public reading (or aurality), but at least 250 years before Jajdelska’s ‘critical mass’ emerges. The textual and paratextual features present in B.15.17 point compellingly towards a primarily intensive reading practice. The punctus, which hovers just above the base line, is the only punctuation mark employed and
is placed consistently as a mid-line caesura; ample space on either side of the punctus suggests that the marks were inserted by the original scribe alongside the verse. The punctuation system in B.15.17 is unambiguously rhetorical. The caesura is neutral in the interpretative sense but functions as a structural marker and represents a physical pause for the reader. Langland’s poem is peppered with discourse markers which typically appear at the beginning of verse lines and propel the reader through the text. For a reader familiar with paratactic verse style and discourse markers, the addition of end-line punctuation may be considered superfluous. Aside from the singular mark placed within the verse line, the signposting is of a paratextual nature, complementing the rhetorical punctuation system. Spacing, colour, hierarchy of initials and rubrication provide the reader with sufficient guidance through the text. The neutrality of the punctuation system was not a drawback; the responsibility of providing tone, emphasis and nuance was placed on the ‘reader-as-speaker’. The rhetorical system of punctuation utilised in the manuscript reflects the reading practices of the intended audience. However, no reading community is homogenous and we must assume that a variety of readers engaged with the text, bringing with them different reading practices and perceptions of the poem.
3.5 Robert Crowley’s System of Punctuation

‘The most basic and consistent ideological motive his edition and apparatus expresses is the expansion of vernacular literacy’.

(Scanlon 2007: 58)

Robert Crowley was concerned with providing an edition which was accessible to his sixteenth-century readership. This was achieved through the process of modernising certain linguistic features and careful framing of the poem which emphasised the political continuity between late medieval dissent and the mid-sixteenth century reform agenda.

The political conservatism of Crowley’s editions has been discussed in detail above, but we can now turn our attention towards the level of linguistic revisions made and his relationship with potential copy-texts. In his article entitled Robert Crowley’s ‘Piers Plowman’ (1986), J.R. Thorne discusses the relationship between CUL MS LL.iv.14 and Crowley’s editions. Skeat was the first to propose a link between Crowley and the anonymous sixteenth century glossarist who appears in the manuscript providing a list of approximately 95 words and 70 corresponding definitions. In a brief discussion appearing at the back of his EETS edition of Piers Plowman, Skeat asserts that the glossarist may in fact be Robert Crowley himself. Thorne notes that a comparison between the manuscript glossary and Crowley’s edition does reveal that the selected words appear in the same format in the printed text (Thorne 1986: 248). Similarities in the distribution of sub-headings across the text also lends support to the hypothesis that Crowley at least had access to this manuscript or a closely related copy as a reference text (Thorne 1986: 249).

While Thorne agrees that there are ‘sufficient grounds to establish that the glossarist/annotator was of the same frame of mind as Crowley’, there is not enough corresponding evidence to prove conclusively that he was the glossarist (Thorne 1986: 251). The analysis highlights Crowley’s negotiation between his copy text(s) and the requirements of his sixteenth century readership. Had Crowley wanted to radically modernise the poem’s vocabulary he would have found ‘ample precedent’ in the manuscript tradition (Thorne 1986: 248). Instead, he chooses to retain most of the original forms and is much less cavalier in response to problematic passages, linguistically and doctrinally, than one might expect from a zealous Protestant pamphleteer.
Closer analysis of the punctuation and layout reveals further complexities with regards to the modernisation process. Crowley purges the text of thorns and yoghs, but consistently uses abbreviations throughout the poem. A macron is used to signal an omitted ‘n’ or ‘r’ and the conventional y and y appears regularly for ‘that’ and ‘the’. The superscript abbreviations do not appear in the prefatory material but are used consistently in the main body of poem. These abbreviations are convenient when dealing with Langland's long alliterative lines and their use is primarily functional. Crowley does not comprehensively revise the punctuation in his prefatory material and a comparison between the first impression and the two later impressions reveal only a few alterations. These alterations apply to the form of the marks, substituting a comma for a colon in a few instances. The distribution of marks remains the same with the liberal use of colons and commas to signal the hypotactic structure of Crowley’s prose.

The punctuation of the poem itself presents a more complex picture and calls attention to the divergence between the paratextual elements and the system of punctuation. The layout of the text is replicated in each of the three impressions, presenting the text in single-column Black Letter with no subdivisions within Passus. A new Passus is signalled by a small decorated initial and each verse line begins with a capital letter. The Latin interpolations are retained in Crowley’s edition despite their potential to prove problematic for a Protestant reformer dedicated to vernacular literacy. However, in contrast to MS B.15.17, the lines appear in smaller font and are absorbed into the main verse. These Latin proverbs and biblical quotations are consistently ended with a punctus. The overall system applied to the poem utilises both the mid-line caesura and end-line punctuation, but neither are consistent in their deployment and vary between and within impressions. The second and third prints are more extensively and decisively punctuated throughout the main body of the text than the first. Significantly, however, the later impressions increase the deployment of mid-line punctuation and either maintain or decrease their level of end-line marking (see fig. III, pp. 236). The revised increase in punctuation in the second and third impressions do not follow the pattern we might expect – eradicating the mid-line pause in favour of grammatical and end-line marking; instead, Crowley appears to embrace the role played by the caesura in supporting the alliterative lines.

Focusing on the opening lines of Passus II highlights the variations between the first
and second impressions. In the first impression the use of the mid-line comma is infrequent: 8 commas are dispersed over 53 lines. Where the comma does appear, Crowley has attempted to place it after the second alliterative stave in the conventional manner he would have noted from his manuscript sources. Langland’s flowing and flexible alliteration, however, proves a challenge in many instances, as exemplified by the following lines:

I had wonder what she was, & whose wyfe she were (line 18)
But Sothenes wolde not so, for she is a bastarde (line 24)

James Simpson asserts that Langland ‘detaches’ himself from the conventions found in contemporary alliterative texts and his verse expands the possibilities of the medium (Simpson 2007c: 9). It results in a versatile and less restrictive verse structure which frequently places alliteration on both stressed and unstressed syllables. A comparison with MS B.15.17 reveals that in the vast majority of cases, Crowley’s placement of the mid-line comma matches the distribution of the mid-line punctus in the manuscript. It does deviate at certain points, typically in verse lines which present a more complex alliterative pattern or grammatical structure.

The subtler alliteration of this line rests on the ‘l’ but Crowley does not follow the conventional marking found in the manuscript, instead placing the comma before the conjunction in the first half of the line. The revised line from the second edition uses an additional comma to mark parenthesis, imposing a grammatical interpretation on the line. The line also illustrates a misreading contained in Crowley’s text. Crowley presents ‘worke/worch’ where the manuscript presents ‘worpe’. The Everyman Edition of the poem agrees with the manuscript, offering ‘worthe’ (Schmidt 1995).

31 Textual analysis has concluded that the lost B-text manuscript Crowley used as the primary copy-text for his first edition was closely related to three extant B manuscripts, including MS B.15.17 (Brewer 1996: 13).
Passus II from the second edition is more extensively and consistently punctuated than either the first or third edition. Crowley places a mid-line caesura in each verse line, marked primarily by the comma, which can be compared to the use of 8 mid-line commas throughout the 53 transcribed lines in the first and third impression. The comma is occasionally substituted for the colon which represents a more substantial pause within the hierarchy. The following extracts display the development of punctuation across the three impressions, including the introduction of the colon as a medial pause.

I ought be hier than she I cam of a better
My father the gret God is, and ground of al graces
One God w(ith)oute biginninge, & I hys good daughter
And hath gyuen me mercie to marrie wyth my selfe
And what man be mercifull and lelly me loueth
Shalbe my lorde and I his life in the heigh heuen (First Edition, lines 29-34)

I ought be hier then she : I cam of a better
My father the great God is : and ground of al grace
One God w(ith)oute beginning : & I his good daughter
And hath geuen me mercy, to marry with my selfe
And what man be mercifull, and lelly me loueth
Shalbe my lorde and I his lyfe, in the hygh heauen (Second Edition, lines 29-34)

I ought be hier then she : I came of a better
My father the great God is : and ground of all grace
One God w(ith)out beginning, & I his good daughter
And hath geuen me mercy, to marry with my selfe
And waht man be mercifull, and lelly me loueth
Shalbe my lorde and I his lyfe, in the hygh heauen (Third Edition, lines 29-34)

Passus Secondus begins with Will the dreamer seeing Mede for the first time and he expresses his marvel at a ‘womman wonderliche yclothed’ (Schmidt 1995: line 8), adorned in the finest furs and glittering rubies and sapphires. The passage above is taken from Holy Church’s subsequent description and appraisal of Mede which reveals a strong sense of indignation at her presence and role within the Church. The daughter of the fickle-tongued Fals, Mede is associated with covetousness while Holy Church follows the path of grace.
The colon signifies a longer medial pause than the comma within the hierarchy. The passage is a section of direct speech in which Holy Church expresses her own superiority of pedigree and character in comparison to Mede. Crowley does not highlight direct speech either through punctuation markings or the use of spacing, as deployed in MS B.15.17, requiring readers to closely follow the interweave of discourse markers. In his analysis of John Capgrave’s punctuation usage and the readability of the text, Lucas concludes that it is ‘essential to distinguish between purpose, which can usually only be deduced, and effect, which can be observed and described’ (Lucas 1997: 201). Applying this approach to the extracts, we can deduce that the mid-line marks are intended to maintain the caesura and, additionally, the appearance of the colon in the second and third impressions is a deliberate attempt to introduce a longer pause. The effect of the punctuation can be observed by comparing the first impression with the revisions in the latter two.

The lines communicate a sermon-like quality through the choice of vocabulary evoking the grace and mercy of God. The overall effect of the colons in the second and third impressions is a more forceful, purposeful tone, with the longer pause slowing the verse down to a more measured pace. If the purpose of space, as evidenced in MS B.15.17, is to moderate the ‘pace of engagement with the page’ (Mak 2011: 17), Crowley is not afforded that luxury. The punctuation, then, assumes this function, forcing a more substantial pause and allowing the reader space to contemplate and process the sense and substance of the lines. For a ‘reader-as-speaker’ this space is also physically embodied by a breath and a pause. For the silent reader the pause is no less significant in terms of processing and in both cases the pause effectively modulates the speed of progression. On an interpretative level, the longer pauses combine with the vocabulary and imagery of Langland’s verse to produce lines which resonate and invite contemplation on the principles of grace and mercy. These extracts demonstrate Crowley’s attempts to maintain the structural effect of the caesura while working within the constraints of the printed book and adapting the system to meet the expectations of the readership. The technical and commercial constraints necessitate less space; the visual and cognitive breaks required by both ‘readers-as-speakers’ and ‘readers-as-hearers’ are substituted with punctuation. In addition, an increase in the forms and distribution of punctuation reflects the increased level of guidance required by early modern silent readers who could no longer rely on the presence of a physical speaker to mediate the meaning of the text.
The introduction of the colon as an alternative mid-line mark also alters the equiparative system. Under Parkes’ classification, the equiparative approach utilises extensive punctuation to produce a neutral interpretation, where no clause is given prominence over the other (Parkes 1992). The consistent mid-line punctus in MS B.15.17 is an example of equiparative pointing; the structure of the verse line is marked but each clause has equal weight under the system. Introducing a hierarchy of medial marks does allow prominence to be given to certain verse lines, as shown by the extract above in which the placing, or purpose, of the mark is the same but the effect is altered. The caesura retains the rhetorical structure of the alliterative verse but the introduction of the colon is a concession to silent-reading practices, providing the reader with a level of interpretative guidance not offered by the indiscriminate punctus.

In addition to the modifications across the three impressions, the punctuation within Crowley’s first print varies throughout the text. Analysing Passus XX reveals a sudden proliferation of end-line punctuation, including the comma, punctus and punctus interrogativus. The change in punctuation practice is as brief as it is sudden and returns to the minimalist approach in the last folio of the Passus. The distribution of end-line punctuation is inconsistent throughout the text and the occasional folio will appear with a significantly higher number of marks; this also becomes a more frequent feature towards the end of the text. The sudden flurries of end-line punctuation appear by folio but can also vary within a Passus. The increase in end-line punctuation is not extended to the mid-line comma. The inconsistency of punctuation systems raises the question of compositorial input and manuscript sources. It is unlikely that Crowley supervised each stage of the composition and type-setting himself, which may explain the sudden change in punctuation technique on a folio-by-folio basis. The personal nature of Crowley’s relationship with the poem and his experience in publishing his own texts, however, suggests he would have supervised each stage of the book making process. The disparity may also be a result of the differences in his manuscript sources; he claims to have consulted ‘such aunciente copies as I could come by’ (from The Printer to the Reader). Nevertheless, he appears hesitant in his approach to punctuation in the first impression, perhaps due to the complexity of the poem and an uncertainty with regards to the public reception of the text. His second and third impressions display a more decisive editorial policy in terms of the paratextual material and the system of punctuation applied.
The sudden flurries of end-line punctuation which appear sporadically in the first edition are removed in the second and third and replaced by a more consistent policy. The table (see fig. III, pp. 236) displays percentages representing the occurrence rate of mid- and end-line punctuation marks from selected passages across each of the three editions. The results demonstrate a significant increase in the use of mid-line punctuation in the second and third impressions, and this simple overview can be extrapolated across each of the editions. The use of end-line punctuation is much lower in each of the three editions and is generally consistent. However, as discussed above, the distribution of end-line punctuation is more likely to vary within the first edition. The first edition displays the unusually high percentage of end-line punctuation which appears in Passus XX. By contrast, the occurrence rate of end-line marks used in Passus XX in the second and third editions drops significantly below the average rate. Conversely, the occurrence rate of mid-line punctuation in the second and third edition increases slightly above the average.

The sporadic use of end-line punctuation in sections of text also prompts us to consider the collaborative nature of textual production and serves as a reminder that Crowley’s editorial ‘system’ was neither inviolate nor a product of his input alone. It is therefore important not to place too much emphasis on the position of an individual mark or discuss systems of punctuation in absolute terms. As Parkes notes, it may not be possible to completely ‘disentangle’ the punctuation of the author from any other contributor, but the combination must reflect actual usage patterns (Parkes 1992: 6). It is the actual usage patterns, however complex and contradictory, which can provide insights into the reading practices of the editor and the intended audience.

While significant levels of variation appear between and within the three editions, the second and third impressions are closely related and share an approach towards the paratext and punctuation which has been developed from the first edition. They are more consistent in their distribution of marks throughout the text and also display a more decisive use of the medial pause. As demonstrated by the extract from Passus II above, the form of the mark and the subsequent length of pause signified is more flexible. Such

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32 Roughly 200 lines have been extracted from each of the four sections of the poem and the occurrence rate of punctuation marks has been counted. In cases where the facsimile is corrupted, the lines have been selected from the closest folio and cover the same number of lines. For example, the available facsimile of the second edition has one leaf missing at the start of Passus XX; the lines have been taken from the subsequent folio.
instances of flexibility can be taken as evidence of Crowley’s increased confidence in handling the complex medieval poem, having been assured of the commercial success of the first edition. The explanatory notes and marginal annotations which are expanded in the second and third impressions similarly suggest an editorial assertiveness in catering to the demands of the readership. However, the system of punctuation in the second and third impressions does not develop in line with the paratextual elements. Crowley’s paratextual material in *Piers Plowman* must be considered alongside his own polemical tracts and in relation to the energetic flurry of ‘evangelical publications’ which defined the London book trade during Edward VI’s reign (Pettegree 2010: 127). The intentions and applications of the paratextual material can also be analysed in terms of the innovations of sixteenth-century printers such as John Foxe and his *Book of Martyrs* which explored the technical possibilities and political potential of print.

The punctuation, by comparison, demonstrates a more conservative approach. While concessions are made to the silent reader and grammatical marking, the second and third impressions retain the mid-line mark in almost every verse line and do not increase the use of end-line punctuation. Perhaps this should be interpreted as another example of ‘the triumph of text over ideology’ (Hailey 2007: 150), this time in relation to Crowley’s treatment of the ‘accidental’ textual elements (Greg 1950). The accidental features of spelling and punctuation undergo minimal revision while Crowley chooses to retain problematic doctrinal material (the substantive) rather than excise it from the edition. Combined with the assertion that only around 3% of Crowley’s marginal annotations can be considered ‘explicitly anti-Catholic’ (Scanlon 2007: 66), the analysis supports a re-evaluation of Crowley as radical in his editorial approach. Crowley is omnipresent in his editions, eagerly and skillfully guiding his readers through the poem and highlighting moments of continuity between his reformist present and the medieval past. The ‘medieval’ is central to Crowley’s agenda and is mediated through a concern for authenticity and authority which, in turn, moderates and restrains the editorial decisions. A significant amount of attention has been paid to the transmission history of *Piers Plowman* and the political, social and editorial concerns which shaped the process of textual production. While the figure of the reader has been central to the preceding discussions, we now turn to consider, more specifically, the evidence for reception and engagement.
3.6 The Evidence for Reading Practices

‘...theories of reading, like theories of authorship and of textual development, must derive from bibliographical analysis, even if they can never be wholly dependent on such analysis’.

(McKitterick 2006: 223)

Crucial to the engagement of Crowley’s readers was the paratextual material which successfully re-textualised and re-contextualised the poem for sixteenth-century readers. The process of re-contextualising involved a focus on the political, social and intellectual continuity between the circumstances of the poem’s production and the events of the mid-sixteenth century. Ultimately, however, to re-contextualise was also to repurpose, and Crowley utilises the poem to highlight the concerns of the sixteenth century reformers to whom he was aligned. The process of re-textualising was also political and the edition is described by Warner as ‘a response to, rather than exemplification of, an oral tradition…’ (Warner 2014: 83). Sixteenth-century principles of literacy and the changing requirements of the readership were brought to bear on a fourteenth century alliterative poem, and governed the formal and textual choices of Crowley’s edition. Scanlon concludes that ‘[t]he most basic and consistent ideological motive for his [Crowley’s] edition and apparatus is the expansion of vernacular literacy’ (Scanlon 2007: 58). The ‘ideology’ of his edition is not focused primarily on Protestant politics, but on the politics of accessibility. Given the focus on continuity within Crowley’s editions, it is perhaps more accurate to describe him as celebrating the history of vernacular literacy and its role in the dissemination of reformist ideas. The role of vernacular literacy has always been discussed in relation to the poem and Langland’s own motivations but assumptions have been very recently challenged by Lawrence Warner, who argues that it was the poem’s Latinity which proved central to reader engagement (Warner 2014: 54).

Paratextual elements certainly became more complex and comprehensive in print, indulging the demand for biographical and bibliographical material. The repertoire of available punctuation marks also expanded, allowing writers to signal subtle semantic relationships. The diminishing role of the reader-as-speaker eliminated a level of mediation between author/text and reader, and was replaced by a complex system of punctuation in which features such as tone and emphasis could be expressed. In terms of design and layout MS B.15.17 is far removed from the dense, text-heavy edition by Robert Crowley published 150 years later. However, Crowley’s paratextual additions are of a very different...
nature, shaped by his own reform agenda. More importantly, the readership in the mid sixteenth-century was moving towards a predominantly extensive reading culture which exerted new and distinct pressures on the physical production and layout of the book. The systems of punctuation and paratext were designed to provide the reader with clear and swift signposting through the text; immediacy was key. On a paratextual level the ability to navigate to the desired section of text with ease was facilitated by detailed contents pages and more explicit chapter divisions and headings. On a textual level, the increasingly sophisticated punctuation allowed readers to negotiate syntax quickly and efficiently. The shift in reader model is reflected in both the textual and paratextual domains; domains which necessarily interact and, when analysed, display the multiple layers of meaning and intention involved in the production of a single edition.

However, it would be mistaken to describe the paratext and punctuation practices of manuscript culture as lacking in comparison to sixteenth-century prints. MS B.15.17 was clearly an expensive production, written on vellum throughout by one scribe with a well-planned use of coloured ink and modest, but accomplished, flourishes. The aesthetics were important and we can presume a level of display was intended; manuscript books were, after all, considered a ‘collectible commodity’ (Finkelstein & McCleery 2008: 5). The scribe’s consistency of layout and decoration demonstrates a high level of engagement and technical skill and he deals confidently with the structural complexities of the poem through the use of spacing and a hierarchy of initials. These features combine to position the poem centre stage; the paratext supports, but does not overpower, the text. Crowley’s edition eschews the use of ornamentation and the practicalities of sixteenth-century printing required an economical use of space; it is resolutely ‘text-focused’. However, Crowley’s political agenda is a prominent feature of the edition, with the number of marginal annotations increasing significantly in the second and third impressions. As a result, the ‘text’ which readers focus on is not always Langland’s. The poem finds itself physically confined and enclosed by the paratextual material through which Crowley attempts to shape the reader’s response. His attempts are direct, addressing the reader openly in his note From the Printer To the Reader and the Prologue, in addition to his marginal annotations. A direct approach does not preclude the potential for subtlety, however. Hailey notes the scene from Passus 4.188 in which the King agrees to be ruled by Reason and subsequently swears by Mary. It is interesting that this overt example of Catholicism is retained at all, but Crowley’s response to these lines once again demonstrates his conservative editorial approach to the text and the range of tactics for dealing with
potentially problematic material. In his second and third impressions he adds a marginal
annotation which ‘strategically deflects attention from the swearing by Saint Mary,
focusing the reader’s attention instead on the figure of Reason’ (Hailey 2007: 149). The
reader’s attention is pulled *from* the text *into* the margins and is waylaid by Crowley’s
deliberate framing.

Lawrence Warner has postulated that the history of the poem’s Latinity is also a
‘record’ of reader engagement which played out in the margins of the earliest manuscripts
(Warner 2014: 54). The conventional Latin aphorisms were central to early readers’
understanding of the poem’s message and were subsequently absorbed from the margins
into the main text during the process of textual transmission. Whether this was a conscious
decision or not, Warner argues that the level of engagement offered by the poem was one
of Langland’s ‘most original conceptions’ and an opportunity early readers ‘accepted with
relish’ (Warner 2014: 55). The significance of annotations in the history of *Piers Plowman*
may have begun with contemporary readers, but it did not end with Crowley’s paratextual
framing; subsequent early modern readers like Andrew Bostock annotated, and scrutinised,
Crowley’s annotations, the margins of the print themselves becoming a dialogue. The
‘invitation to contribute’ (Warner 2014: 55) to the poem’s production encouraged a
particularly active form of reading; the structure of Langland’s poem is dialogic and so too
is the reader response. The discussion surrounding *Piers Plowman* constitutes the poem’s
epitext, the external history of the book according to Genette’s categorisation. A distinctive
feature of the poem’s transmission history has been the ability of this epitext to merge with
the peritext, the devices and conventions deployed within the book, a process encouraged by
the dialogic and discursive essence of Langland’s poem (Genette 1997).

Crucially, Crowley’s paratext acknowledges silent readers: editorial notes, marginal
annotation and Passus summaries are intended to be perused, considered and revisited. A
significant portion of the book’s audience were ‘readers-as-hearers’ at least in part, but this
raises the question – whose voice was the reader hearing? So comprehensive is Crowley’s
framing that his voice often competes with Langland’s own. Not only are the sixteenth
century readers dealing with the syntactic complexities of fourteenth century alliterative
verse, they are encountering two very different voices within the text. The punctuation

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33 In Crowley’s second and third impressions the marginal annotation reads ‘Reaso(n) taketh un(t)o hym to
rule the realme.’ (fol. xx).
system applied to the poem in both MS B.15.17 and Crowley’s edition is a neutral rendering which invites the reader to contribute his/her own meaning; however, paratext and rubrication can enhance and/or complicate the reading experience. Crowley’s desire to control his readers’ response demonstrates his zeal for the reformist cause he was propagating but also his exegetical commitment to Langland’s poem. Crowley’s treatment of the poem as a proto-Protestant text can, and often has been, overstated but the preceding discussion has highlighted and supported the recent arguments which challenge the perception of him as a radical and insensitive editor. Crowley certainly projects his assertive interpretation and steers the reader through his deployment of paratextual features. However, his polemical interventions are regulated by his desire for authenticity and the edition rejects simple classification. The subtle treatment of the punctuation and restraint with regards to the annotations implies a level of trust in the reader to navigate the verse, the doctrine and the politics.

We can turn to another B-text manuscript in order to analyse the rubrication and paratextual detail for evidence of scribal/editorial approach and reading practices. Noelle Phillips interprets CCC MS 201’s lack of marginal annotations and expressive use of rubrication as an attempt by the scribe to turn the reader ‘inward rather than out to marginal commentary’ and, furthermore, this approach suggests ‘his [the scribe’s] interest in presenting his version of the poem as both authoritative and authorial’ (Phillips 2013: 445).34 There are several points to expand upon in relation to these insights. Firstly, we can compare the lack of marginalia in MS 201 and MS B.15.17, and the effect this has on focusing the readers towards the main text, with the system of marginal annotations deployed by Crowley. In Crowley’s edition, the freedom of the verse, which is largely unfettered by punctuation, is juxtaposed with the narrowed scope of his interpretation. The reader’s attention is diverted from Langland’s poem towards the marginal annotations which offer a potentially restrictive interpretative framework. Secondly, Phillips suggests that the system of layout and rubrication deployed by the scribe of MS 201 was intended to present the text as authoritative by enhancing, but not altering, Langland’s poem. Comparing this approach once again to Crowley’s edition, we see both scribe and editor dealing with the concept of textual authority; however, while the scribe of MS 201 attempts to eliminate outside influence, Crowley looks towards external sources as a means of

34 Oxford, Corpus Christi College MS 201 is dated between the late fourteenth century and the first half of the fifteenth century. The dialect suggests an Essex provenance. The leaves are vellum and they described as being in ‘very good condition’, despite being cropped significantly. The hand is Anglicana and appears to be the work of one scribe (Benson and Blanchfield 1997: 99-101).
legitimising his version. This is achieved by the consultation of manuscripts, antiquarian scholars and the annotations referencing biblical passages.

In MS B.15.17 the punctuation and paratextual features are almost inseparable, blending together when we attempt to describe and analyse their functions. It was common for medieval manuscripts to be copied with no punctuation and it is the paratext, also minimal by modern standards, which provided the reader with the required signposts. Spacing, a principal feature in MS B.15.17, exemplifies this potential for functional overlap. The deployment of spacing in and around the text is traditionally placed in the domain of paratextual description; yet in B.15.17, it serves as a feature of punctuation in the overall system by representing a substantial pause which can be considered above the mid-line caesura in the hierarchy, but below the Passus divisions marked by the decorated initial. The spacing within the manuscript is not simply an issue of mise-en-page; it is utilised to structure and divide the poem, to mark out sections of dialogue and narrative importance. The hierarchy of decorated initials similarly serve as signposts, demonstrating the complementary relationship of punctuation and paratext in the manuscript.

Genette asserts that ‘the most essential function of the paratext’s properties...is functionality’ (Genette 1997: 433). This is a seemingly simplistic evaluation yet it expresses the fundamental role of paratext - to act as a guide for the reader. While the scope and range of paratext developed, underlying functional elements such as chapter divisions and titles remained and continue to form the basis of modern printed texts. Manuscript paratext primarily reflected the requirements of the readers; print paratext simultaneously reflected the needs of the readership and shaped their expectations. Print culture recognised the potential of paratext, and the upheavals of the Reformation certainly provided ample opportunity for political posturing and propaganda. Paratext continued in its complementary role as reader-guide alongside punctuation, but it also began to take on a supplementary role which exploited the political and/or propagandistic potential.

However, the development of paratext is less about sophistication and more about adaptation to the changing model of reader and the socio-political landscape. The paratext of MS B.15.17 is itself a sophisticated system geared predominantly towards the contemporary ‘reader-as-speaker’ model; the form responds to the function. Paratext in the
sixteenth century develops a political dimension, but this was hardly a new concept –
aristocratic patrons and monarchs had been praised and flattered in manuscripts for
centuries. The rapidly expanding publishing industry had disturbed the status quo and
authors and printers were now free from the restraints of patronage. Of course, the
restraints of patronage gave way to censorship legislation, the unpredictability of demand
and the caprice of book-buying consumers. Printing could be a lucrative trade but only so
long as the economic and political landscape could be artfully traversed. *Piers Plowman*
had been a politically charged poem since the late fourteenth century, an example of the power

However, Phillips’ analysis of the treatment of MS 201 demonstrates that paratext
need not be as conspicuous as Crowley’s efforts in order to provide evidence of
interpretation and reception. Reviewing the patterns of rubrication in the manuscript,
Phillips concludes that emphasis placed on certain characters and themes combined with
omissions demonstrate the scribe’s attempts to ‘find a cautious balance somewhere between
reform and the status quo.’ In particular, the scribe of MS 201 omits several sections
dealing with poverty, perhaps in an attempt to avoid associations with radical social reform
(Phillips 2013: 442). Indeed, David Benson asserts that it is in the role of a compiler that
the scribe of MS 201 is most ‘active’. The scribe’s reorganisation of the standard passus
divisions provides ‘new emphasis and unity to some of the most important narratives in the
poem’ by joining, for example, Meed’s narratives into a continuous story (Benson 2000:
25). The current thesis similarly seeks to demonstrate that analysis of formal features can be
used to uncover meaning and evidence for reception, bridging the gap between textual
criticism and book history. By contrast to MS 201, the ‘odd’ secondary initial contained in
MS B.15.17 which appears in Passus XIV (fol. 81r) during Haukyn’s dialogue with
Patience draws attention to the subsequent discussion of the virtues of poverty and contains
several biblical references. While it can neither be considered evidence of Lollardy nor a
radical attitude to social reform, it does demonstrate the scribe’s interest in this thematic
strand of the poem and the subtle interpretative differences between two manuscripts of the
B-text tradition.

The emphasis and scribal additions of ‘quod’ which appear in MS 201 demonstrate
a very clear focus towards dialogue and the constant interchange of speaker and speech
which, in turn, ‘emphasizes the reader’s responsibility to listen and respond to the
contesting perspectives’ contained in the poem (Phillips 2013: 458). Despite the less pronounced treatment of direct speech and dialogue within MS B.15.17, the scribe acknowledges the dialogic aspect of the text through the use of spacing. Furthermore, the deployment of two hatched initials which introduce sections of direct speech between Will the dreamer and central allegorical figures demonstrate the scribe’s awareness of the centrality of speech and its structural function when presenting and understanding the poem. However, the scribe of MS B.15.17 arguably considered the procession of dreams and visions to be the defining structural feature of the poem, as demonstrated by the deployment of subdividing initials; six out of the nine subdivisions across the poem serve to mark Will’s dream journey. As one of three manuscripts which further subdivide the poem within Passus (Benson 1997: 14), MS B.15.17 demonstrates a clear and consistent approach to setting out the structure of Langland’s work.

Although found in the majority of extant B-text manuscripts, the exact system of rubrication differs across the 12 and is therefore not considered authorial. It is this perceived lack of authority which has resulted in oversight by previous editors (Benson 1997: 18). In her 1986 doctoral thesis, Marie-Claire Uhart described the annotations and systems of rubrication (including chapter titles, headings, initials and emphasised text) found in all extant Piers Plowman manuscripts. Uhart asks whether rubrication can be considered a form of ‘critical commentary’ (Uhart 1986: 105) and, through comprehensive data collection, highlights the structural significance of what we might otherwise term ‘ornamental’ rubrication. She argues against the notion that modern textual criticism is more advanced and able to better understand the text than the ‘near-contemporary’ readers and editors (Uhart 1986: 68). The system of rubrication found in B.15.17 certainly rejects the label of simplicity and displays a purposeful response to the poem which hints at the textual transmission history of the manuscript and its potential copy-text(s). The system of rubrication may not be ‘critical’ in the modern editorial sense which demands a transparent methodology and an efficient textual apparatus, but it is certainly interpretative and the act of interpretation lies at the heart of each editorial task. Uhart’s comprehensive survey and the present qualitative study both support the view that features of paratext were integral to understanding Langland’s poem. Furthermore, features we might consider ornamental or navigational were central to the reading process, guiding the reader in the late medieval culture of ‘literate orality’ (Sponsler 2010: 1).
The rhetorical punctuation system and paratextual elements of the manuscript suggest reading practices which are linked to an oral/aural literary culture. The layout and organisation of the manuscript highlights the interchange of speech and speakers and the lack of marginal annotation places the poem centre stage. While Robert Crowley’s editions retain, in essence, the rhetorical punctuation system, the focus on speech is removed. Dialogue and speakers are not emphasised either through the use of spacing or subdivision and the poem is presented in the austere column of Black Letter, broken only by the conventional Passus divisions. If emphasising speech does indeed highlight ‘the poem’s character as an oral and, by extension, social text’ as Phillips asserts, this aspect is lost in Crowley’s prints (Phillips 2013: 452). Crowley’s editions do not encourage the reader to engage in open dialogue with the poem; the margins are already filled and readers are confronted with his controlled framing which limits the discursive potential of the text. Responses to the poem’s message and speakers are given reduced physical and interpretative space. Crowley perhaps represents the most explicit example of the compulsion to annotate and engage with the poem which has proved central to the process of textual transmission, provoking the accusation of having ‘kidnapped’ Langland’s poem for his own political ends (King 1976: 342). If it is indeed a text which invites contribution, does it also demand it? And is this part of the poem’s on-going appeal for contemporary scholars? The unique process of textual production and dissemination potentially provides editors with the opportunity to contribute to the poem itself, not just the interpretation of it.

If silent-reading practices of the sixteenth century editor and readership weakens the oral and dialogic aspect of the poem, this raises the question of whether modern editions of *Piers Plowman* can and should restore past reading practices through the deployment of paratext and punctuation. In the case of Langland’s poem, the diminishing focus on speech and speakers significantly alters the interpretation, shifting from a complex debate in which readers were invited to participate to a demonstration of early reform which forecloses the possibility of interaction on the same scale. Modern editions like the Everyman Edition edited by A.V.C. Schmidt (1995) deploy quotation marks, restoring some of the focus towards the dialogue. However, this decision necessarily overlays a grammatical punctuation system reflecting silent-reading practices onto a poem which used other methods, both linguistic and paratextual, to signal dialogue. The medieval author and scribe could assume the presence of a ‘reader-as-speaker’ who would mediate the text for a portion of the audience. Dialogue was signalled to the reader through the use of
spacing, rubrication and discourse markers; the reader then translated through their tone, emphasis and body language. The presence of the ‘reader-as-speaker’ lingers in the rhetorical punctuation system retained in Crowley’s edition, but it is set against the paratextual framing which caters to an increasingly silent, extensive readership. Crowley’s conservative editorial approach towards the textual features means punctuation is not deployed to replace the physical speaker.

Examining the paratextual and punctuation systems of Crowley’s edition does not, therefore, demonstrate a linear and straightforward development of silent-reading practices. Paratextual innovation surpasses the application of new punctuation conventions and this prompts a number of conclusions. Firstly, we can detect an uncertainty in Crowley’s approach to the punctuation and alliterative metre; he explains the verse form to his readers in the ‘Printer to the Reader’ section as ‘not after t(he) maner of our rimers that wryte nowe adaies (for his verses ende not alike)’ (second edition). The conservatism can also be considered a deliberate feature of Crowley’s editorial rationale which reveals his intentions for the text. Crowley wished to demonstrate a history of protest and reform and highlighting the poem’s medieval origins was central to that strategy. In terms of the readers who were engaging with Crowley’s edition, the contradictory evidence demonstrates that the sixteenth-century reading community was highly flexible. If the edition demonstrates a range of reading practices, we must acknowledge the diversity of the reader.

Wayland and Tottell’s contemporaneous editions of The Fall of Princes from 1554 show a more decisive, thought not conclusive, move towards embracing end-line punctuation and a grammatical approach. Lydgate’s verse is written in Rhyme Royal stanzas with a consistent end-line rhyme scheme, which perhaps facilitated the application of contemporary punctuation conventions, while Langland’s alliterative lines proved more resistant to the imposition. We now turn to compare the editorial approaches and the evidence for reading practices contained across five editions of Lydgate’s Fall of Princes, ranging from Pynson’s print of 1494 to the emergence of the Mirror for Magistrates. The textual transmission histories of Langland and Lydgate intersect during the mid-sixteenth century and particular focus will be given to comparisons of Crowley and his contemporaries Tottell and Wayland in relation to their political affiliations and editorial approaches. The chapter will consider how the political connections of the author and the
editor shaped the treatment of the text, and what that indicates about the changing functions of literature and literacy in the early modern period. The chapter will also ask if the differing content, form and structure of the two poems has any bearing on the editorial approach and the level of modernisation applied. Furthermore, analysis of Lydgate’s print history allows the development of reading practices to be followed through to the beginning of the seventeenth century, as the silent reader becomes the dominant model and punctuation must adapt to meet those changing needs.
CHAPTER FOUR

Fate, Fortune & the Printing Press: Reading John Lydgate’s *Fall of Princes*

4.1 John Lydgate and the Textual Transmission History of the ‘Fall of Princes’

*John Lydgate presents the peculiar challenge of being marginal and central at once*.

(Scanlon & Simpson 2006: 1)

It is now widely accepted that John Lydgate, Monk of Bury, was a poet whose prolificacy, versatility and popularity were unequalled in the fifteenth century (Pearsall 1970; Scanlon & Simpson 2006). However, it is also acknowledged that his contemporary reputation as the foremost English writer and successor to Chaucer was challenged by the changing political, cultural and aesthetic landscape of the early modern and modern eras. These eras found Lydgate’s Catholicism difficult to incorporate into a post-Reformation canon of English literature, while the medieval *autour* and the role of poetry in public life conflicted with changing perceptions of the artist-author and the poetic craft. This familiar narrative often portrays Lydgate’s literary success as coming to a swift end during the Henrician Reformation, and it is true that his status and popularity did not fully recover despite modest Marian and Elizabethan revivals. Nevertheless, Lydgate continued to be published throughout the sixteenth century and, as the following analysis demonstrates, the meaning of his writing was open to interpretation from Catholics and Protestants alike. Furthermore, as the transmission history of *Piers Plowman* illustrates, the lack of editions does not necessarily indicate a lack of critical appreciation.

In 1754, Thomas Warton praised Lydgate’s ‘perspicuity’ and the ‘additions’ he made to the English language (cited in Renoir 1967: 5). However, he was also highly critical of fifteenth-century literature more generally, claiming that the successors of Chaucer ‘seem rather relapsing into barbarism’ (cited in Scanlon & Simpson 2006: 3). Clarity and sharpness are not descriptions modern readers would readily associate with Lydgate’s verse but this should be considered as evidence of a shift in aesthetic ideals rather than as an indication of Lydgate’s poetic abilities. Trends and styles do change, however, and Lydgate’s aureate diction and trailing paratactic verse eventually collided...
with nineteenth century editorial and aesthetic ideals. The irascible antiquarian Joseph Ritson attempted no such balance or discretion, describing Lydgate as a ‘voluminous, prosaic and drivelling monk’ in 1802 and it would appear that this assessment had a lasting impact on critical perceptions of his writing (cited in Mortimer 2005: 3). Furthermore, nineteenth century philologists were intent upon organising the ‘unruly remnants’ of manuscript culture and Lydgate, whose poems did not fit with contemporary aesthetics, was reduced to the status of minor poet (Scanlon & Simpson 2006: 2).

Derek Pearsall’s work in the 1970s signalled the launch of a critical reassessment of the medieval poet. He acknowledged Lydgate’s prominence and asserted that he was responsible for introducing and ‘fixing’ a significant amount of new vocabulary (Pearsall 1970: 50). However, it is rather ironic that Pearsall, while noting Lydgate’s contemporary success and the inability of post-Romantic literary culture to understand and appreciate the function of poetry in the middle ages, remained a steadfast critic of his style. Pearsall attempts a sympathetic appraisal by stating that the ‘badness’ of Lydgate’s syntax is the result ‘not of drivelling incompetence, but of lofty ambitions imperfectly fulfilled’ (Pearsall 1970: 59). Yet this evaluation is once again founded upon a comparison between Lydgate and his predecessor Chaucer, and within such a comparison Lydgate will always be found wanting. Scanlon and Simpson claim that Pearsall’s evaluation is reminiscent of nineteenth- and twentieth-century philology’s approach to Lydgate and is similarly characterised by the tension between ‘precise erudition and aesthetic hostility’ (Scanlon & Simpson 2006: 4).

More recent criticism has aimed to consider Lydgate on his own terms and within the context of fifteenth century literary culture, a culture which responded to and exemplified the contemporary political pressures. The New Historicist movement had attempted to re-contextualise Lydgate’s writing but the approach remained suspicious of public poetry, requiring that such literature be categorised as either entirely supportive of the prevailing institutions or entirely subversive (Scanlon & Simpson 2006: 9). However, the acknowledgment of our own ‘modern distrust of public poetry’ (Cooper 1997: 7) has encouraged a re-evaluation of the function and complexity of public writing in the fifteenth century and produced historicised criticism which is aware of its own aesthetic prejudices. Furthermore, historians such as Andy Wood have revitalised the study of late medieval and early modern political culture by examining the forms, expressions and functions of
‘popular’ politics during this era (Wood 2009). Uniting the disciplines of social and political history has not only opened up new avenues for research; it also aims to challenge the traditional model of periodization by highlighting the variety and vigour of popular political expression in the late medieval and early modern periods.

However, fifteenth century writing has been criticised precisely because of its perceived lack of dynamism. The twentieth-century medievalist C. S. Lewis famously dismissed the fifteenth century as ‘a history of decay’ (cited in Cooney 2001: 9) and the accusations of dullness and tedium were certainly applied to the literary output. David Lawton’s essay, ‘Dullness in the Fifteenth Century’, observes that fifteenth century writing has been labelled as ‘medieval’ rather than ‘Renaissance’ due to its perceived lack of individualism. Not only does this categorisation display the kind of ‘aesthetic hostility’ (Scanlon & Simpson 2006: 4) which scholars are now attempting to confront, Lawton argues that it is the homogeneity of fifteenth century literature which proves most revealing. He asks why writers, who were attempting to chronicle and comprehend a period of political instability, would produce poetry which was bland and unadventurous? If this was indeed a common response to the political circumstances articulated through poetry, Lawton argues that the phenomenon merits investigation. Rather than dismissing fifteenth century cultural expression as uniform, Lawton asserts that it performed a specific function during this period and ‘authoritatively consolidates the public voice and the role of English poetry’ (Lawton 1987: 762). Maura Nolan echoes these thoughts and questions in relation to the fifteenth century’s most prolific poet, John Lydgate. Writing at a moment of political upheaval, Lydgate chooses ‘complex forms of literary discourse’ over ‘functional modes such as consolation, exhortation or exaltation’. Lydgate received commissions from inside and outside the court; the complex forms which he deployed must have found a diverse audience (Nolan 2005: 3). It is the concept of the ‘public’ which comes to the fore in Lawton and Nolan’s discussions and invites us to view fifteenth century literature as part of the evolution of the public voice. This voice had been rising and resonating since the late fourteenth century when, in the aftermath of the Peasants’ Revolt of 1381, the public had increasingly demanded access to authority (Nolan 2005: 6).

Jennifer Summit notes that earlier popular rebellions had balanced demands for social reform with support for the monarchy (Summit 2006: 209). These principles of non-revolutionary reform were shared and promoted by the later sixteenth century
'commonwealth men' (Wood 2009) with whom Crowley was associated, and his edition of *Piers Plowman* has been read in these terms in the preceding chapter. By contrast, the popular uprising known as the Jack Sharp Rebellion of 1431 had involved a plot to overthrow the monarch and his councillors. The rebels were Lollards and Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester and uncle of the reigning Henry VI, was charged with quelling the uprising while the young king was in France (Summit 2006: 209). The Duke commissioned the *Fall* in the same year (1431) and Lydgate’s translation, which would take almost eight years, was begun amidst a climate of rebellion, heresy and the continued uncertainty of a minority reign. Nolan has argued that the works Lydgate produced after 1422 were primarily intended to ‘bolster and support the authority of the child on the throne’ (Nolan 2005: 1). Lydgate’s connections to the powerful also extended within the Church and, around 1440, he completed the versification of the cartularies of Bury St. Edmonds which had been commissioned by Abbot Curteys. The Abbey’s charters had been the catalyst for rebellion over the control of the surrounding lands and Lydgate’s commission associated him with the ‘documentary structures of power’ against which the rebels protested (Summit 2006: 215). Langland was a voice of dissent calling from the periphery; Lydgate was a voice calling from the centre of the institution, in support of the institution. It was this perceived political centrality and capitulation to his aristocratic patrons that precluded Lydgate’s adoption as a voice of reform.

Furthermore, the very forms of expression used by Lydgate and his patron, Duke Humphrey, were in direct contrast to the modes used by the rebels. The Lollard rebels had shown through their use of bills that they could handle ‘the tools of literacy’ for propaganda purposes as constructively as the Lancastrians (Summit 2006: 210). Summit argues that Humphrey responded to this display of ‘ephemeral literacy’ by turning to ‘monumental textuality’ in the form of the *Fall*, and that this piece of literature can be read as a display of Humphrey’s political authority (Summit 2006: 211). His commission of the *Fall* can also be read in terms of his attempts to cultivate a reputation as an intellectual and humanist. Humphrey’s cultural activities are well recorded and he is credited as the first Englishman to take an interest in the principles of Italian humanism, collecting and bequeathing to the University of Oxford a collection of works by Italian humanist

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35 Nigel Mortimer also discusses the cartularies, or *Cartae Versificatae*, of the Abbey at Bury, now MS Additional 14848 with the verses relating to the land rights found on folios 243r-254r. Although Mortimer notes that the ‘idiom and style’ of the verses make Lydgate’s authorship probable, it is not certain (Mortimer 2005: 149).
His commission of the *Fall* can be seen as an attempt to nurture an independent English literary tradition based on Italian humanist principles, rather than simply consume existing works.

The *Fall of Princes* is based on Boccaccio’s *De Casibus Virorum Illustrium* and is arguably Lydgate’s most ambitious poem in both length and subject matter. One of the longest poems in the English language, it became one of his most popular and enduring works which achieved its peak of print popularity in the mid sixteenth century with editions issued by Richard Tottell and John Wayland, both in 1554. Lydgate is consistently described as the ‘translator’ and original authorship is attributed to the Italian Boccaccio, or Bochas, as he appears in the text. A text of the advisory tradition, the events unfold in Bochas’ own study as a steady procession of historical figures recount their tragic fall from grace. The poem moves in chronological sequence, beginning with Adam and Eve and ending with the defeat of France’s King John at Poitiers in 1356. Lydgate’s poem is modelled closely on the translation of Boccaccio’s original by Laurent de Premierfait, a French poet active at the turn of the fourteenth century but Mortimer claims that Lydgate’s continual ‘smoke-screening references’ to Bochas effectively suppressed his French source (Mortimer 2005: 41). During an on-going war with France, this was a prudent policy. Furthermore, Lydgate altered a number of problematic passages, many appearing in the final section dealing with the defeat and death of the French king. Premierfait had taken the opportunity to mount a scathing attack on the English, which is perhaps unsurprising given that his 1409 version was dedicated to one of John’s sons.

However, Mortimer detects another, more subtle, repercussion of Premierfait’s authorial adaptations; the section undermines Fortuna’s role in the downfall. John is not portrayed as the victim of an inescapable fate or indifferent, omnipotent deity, but of the wrath of England’s Edward III. The result is that the emotional resonance of the *de casibus* message, that all of us may be a victim of Fortuna, is subverted by ‘specificity’ and Premierfait’s ‘political protest’ (Mortimer 2005: 39). Lydgate understandably deviates from both his French source and Boccaccio’s original at this point, even rebuking Boccaccio for displaying personal bias on the matter (Mortimer 2005: 40). Lydgate also deviates from his Italian and French sources by supplying his translation with additional references to

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36 Mortimer notes that the generous donations consisted of 274 books in total, donated in 1439, 1441 and 1444 (Mortimer 2005: 57).
important medieval and classical works. This included Chaucer, Ovid and Petrarch; the most ‘significant influence’ was Petrarch, and Lydgate added a further four references in the *Fall* (Mortimer 2005: 41). Mortimer suggests that Lydgate was primarily referencing Petrarch’s *De remediis*, a work popular throughout the continent and owned by Lydgate’s patron, Duke Humphrey (Mortimer 2005: 43).

Humphrey’s book collection was renowned and Jennifer Summit’s reading of Lydgate’s *Fall of Princes* in relation to the Duke’s library is an example of the interpretative possibilities afforded by historicist criticism. The *Fall* may have been commissioned by a powerful Lancastrian amidst a period of instability, but the poem is not simply straightforward propaganda for the regime. It may also be considered as a form of personal promotion for Humphrey, part of his campaign to fashion himself as one of the first English humanists. Mortimer sensibly counsels caution when attempting to reconstruct historical figures through their book ownership; bookshelves are often intended for display purposes and do not necessarily mean engagement (Mortimer 2005: 58). Nevertheless, the first half of the fifteenth century witnessed a significant increase in literacy levels and Humphrey’s cultural activities and his library can be considered as evidence of a developing literary culture which focused on the process of reading in a ‘studious, scholarly and possibly private fashion’ (Coleman 1996: 193).

Regardless of Humphrey’s true level of intellectual commitment to the study and contemplation of these works, he would have certainly been aware of the message such a collection sent. Summit notes that critics have assumed that the ‘proto-Renaissance’ Humphrey and the medieval monk who authored the *Fall* found themselves in opposition and represent ‘conflicting cultural forces and eras’ (Summit 2006: 207). Lydgate is charged with ‘medievalizing’ the *Fall* at every turn in response to Humphrey’s progressive Renaissance principles (Pearsall 1970: 224). Pearsall concedes that the *Fall* displays a more receptive attitude to the principles of humanism than his previous classically-inspired *Troy Book*, but claims that this is a result of differences in his source material rather than evidence of Lydgate’s Renaissance awakening (Pearsall 1970: 15). From this perspective, Lydgate’s poem is a failure; its potential as a beacon for English humanism foiled by a medieval and moralising monk.
Summit challenges the traditional assumption that Humphrey was disappointed in Lydgate’s translation and asserts that the *Fall* was precisely what he had intended; the poem was ‘entirely in keeping with the aim that Humphrey embodied in his library, which was to assert literacy as a tool of royal authority’ (Summit 2006: 225-6). Furthermore, Humphrey’s active involvement in the process of composition is evidence of his genuine and continued interest in the project. Lydgate writes that his patron requested envoys to be written at the end of each narrative section and it is a feature which distinguishes Lydgate’s treatment of the *de casibus* text. Paul Budra claims that Boccaccio was primarily interested in the ‘didactic potential’ of the poem and viewed himself as a ‘moral historian’ (Budra 2000: 16). Lydgate’s addition of the envoys to the *Fall* extends the didacticism, shifting the focus from the narratives to the lessons which can be extracted from them. The envoys can be described as a summary of the preceding narrative, condensing the main events of the tale and reviewing the morally improving lessons which can be learned from them. In terms of reading practices, the envoys provide a helpful abridged version of the narrative. They proved popular in their own right and de Worde printed *The Proverbes of Lydgate* in 1519 which was mostly composed of envoys extracted from the *Fall* (Budra 2000: 6).

The envoys are also, argues Summit, the poem’s ‘most medievalizing feature’ (Summit 2006: 208), countering the perception of a medieval writer at odds with his Renaissance patron. As the analysis of Crowley and his edition of *Piers* has demonstrated, political allegiances and the definition of ‘reformist’ were complex; Crowley was a radical religious reformer but expressed his support for monarchical authority and the traditional social hierarchy. Humphrey’s interest in the principles of Italian humanism may indicate a progressive attitude towards education and culture, but he remained an ambitious politician whose power was dependant upon the immutability of royal authority. However, even royal authority had to be guided and prepared. Humphrey requested that Lydgate direct the envoys specifically towards ‘noble pryncis’, with the implication that such examples may provide advice and warning to young rulers (Mortimer 2005: 58). As Protector during Henry VI’s minority, his interest in the educational potential of the text and the *de casibus* tradition is perhaps to be expected.

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37 Humphrey was granted the title of Protector of the Realm by parliament in November 1422; however, these offices had to be relinquished when Humphrey’s older brother John, Duke of Bedford, was in England. Mortimer notes that Humphrey was a man of frustrated ambition who acted with ‘petulant persistence’ towards his claim of full regency during the minority, a position he ultimately failed to secure (Mortimer 2005: 54-55).
The sheer scale of the project and the ‘monumental textuality’ (Summit 2006:211) of the poem has also been interpreted as a means of masking the insecurity and vulnerability of the monarchy following the unexpected death of Henry V and the realities of an infant king on the throne; Nolan argues that all of Lydgate’s output after 1422 can be read in these terms (Nolan 2005: 1). Henry VI’s grandfather, Henry IV, was the usurper who deposed Richard II; the survival of the Lancastrian dynasty was far from certain. In his detailed study of Henry VI and the contemporary concepts of kingship, John Watt observes that ‘[t]o the Elizabethans, probably to some contemporaries, it seemed that the wheel of Fortune had never turned so sharply as at the death of Henry V’ (Watt 1996: 111). Watt’s choice of the Fortune metaphor is coincidental but particularly pertinent to the current analysis; England and the political elite were still reeling from Fortune’s blow when John Lydgate received his commission. Watt asserts that scholars had traditionally charted the downfall of the Lancastrian dynasty from the moment of Henry V’s premature death on French soil in 1422. More recent scholarship has re-evaluated the successes and relative stability of the minority era, proposing that it was not until Henry VI assumed control over his councillors that Lancastrian authority began to crumble (Watt 1996: 112).

Against this tumultuous political backdrop, advisory literature found a keen readership. Watt describes the broad variety of texts as ‘mirrors for princes’ and finds within them a consistent focus on the cardinal virtues of good kingship; prudence, justice, temperance and fortitude (Watt 1996: 23). Referring to Lydgate’s Fall as a ‘historical text[s] of an exemplary kind’, Watt observes that the envoys provide ‘specific and practical morals’ (Watt 1996: 56). He evaluates the themes and functions of advisory literature during the fifteenth century from a political historian’s perspective but the insights are valuable for the book historian and literary critic. He concludes:

This brief survey suggests that advice-literature did indeed appeal to the literary tastes of the nobility, that its assumptions regarding the enthusiasm of readers for advice were justified and that it may indeed, therefore, have been the chief literary influence on political views…it seems plausible to argue that the main themes of the mirrors – the emphasis on the common weal, the central role played by counsel in all political relationships, the common identity of moral and political virtues – were familiar to the nobility and other substantial people (Watt 1996: 56).

Given Humphrey’s role on the young king’s council and his own political ambition, the
‘central role’ played by advisors was an agenda worth pushing. Watt’s analysis also claims that these ‘mirrors’ functioned in the political sphere as well as the literary. In composing the *Fall*, Lydgate was not only aligning himself with the political elite or even simply propagating a set of views; he was creating and shaping them.

The following sections examine and compare the ways in which the *Fall of Princes* may or may not be representative of ‘literacy as a tool for royal authority’ (Summit 2006: 225-6) in the sixteenth century prints by Pynson, Tottell and Wayland. Section 4.4 specifically discusses the emergence of the *Mirror for Magistrates* in the early modern period and its relationship to the *de casibus* tradition. It is interesting to note that the historian John Watt describes the *Fall* as a ‘historical’ text rather than a work of poetry or literature. In accordance, Budra claims that the *de casibus* tradition has been misinterpreted by critics as early tragedy when it was, in fact, ‘a form of history writing’ (Budra 2000: xiii). He asserts that the texts of the *de casibus* tradition can, therefore, provide meaningful insights into the issues which are currently engaging Renaissance scholars - the concept of nation building and the relationship between power and cultural expression (Budra 2000: xii). This interpretation is compelling and the subsequent analysis considers the developments in form and function of the *Fall* during the sixteenth century, taking into account the printers/editors’ relationship with the prevailing political environment. James Simpson’s descriptions of the sixteenth century’s ‘centralization’ of power and the resultant ‘simplification’ of cultural output has provided much insight and debate on the expressions of authority and identity within early modern literary culture (Simpson 2007b). However, this thesis and, specifically, the qualitative analysis of the two poems, demonstrates the potential of the medieval text to disrupt or subvert this narrative of simplification.

The lines of enquiry which examine the political implications of the *Fall* and the *de casibus* tradition more generally are illuminating for the book historian and literary critic. However, this analysis runs the risk of overlooking the poem as a work of literature. Mary Flannery acknowledges the political dimension of Lydgate’s writing and the ‘lingering’ critical bias against poetry of an overtly political nature, a prejudice which has overshadowed much Lydgatian scholarship (Flannery 2012: 2). However, given that poetry was ‘one of the most effective and flattering forms of publicity available to the wealthy in medieval England’ and that Lydgate has been routinely charged with capitulating to the Lancastrian regime, Flannery argues that an examination of his use of ‘fame’ is pressing
Flannery asserts that the concept of fame is at the centre of Lydgate’s poetics and, furthermore, his treatment deviates from Chaucer’s handling of the subject. Chaucer’s fame communicates a sense of ‘powerlessness’ while Lydgate’s poems demonstrate the ‘confidence in his ability to manage both fame and Fortune’ (Flannery 2012: 2). Perhaps it was a confidence generated by his favoured position within the Lancastrian court, but the development of fame as a concept also demonstrates changing perceptions of the author and the role of literature in society. The concept of fame in Lydgate’s texts is not simply about authorial confidence, it is also characterised by the view that ‘immortality’ could be achieved through textuality. The ‘stability of writing’ is frequently praised by Lydgate in the *Fall of Princes* (Flannery 2012: 148) and the implication was that an individual’s fame could be shaped and recorded for posterity; this was the task of the poet. Not simply a piece of Lancastrian propaganda deployed to paper the cracks of a vulnerable monarchy and written by a sycophantic monk, the *Fall* promoted ‘a confident vision of poetry and of the poet’ (Flannery 2012: 150).

This confident vision persisted into the sixteenth century; Lydgate’s monumental poem was reprinted several times and his reputation as an English writer of skill remained intact. However, the last printed editions of the *Fall* occur during Mary’s reign in 1554 and the poem is not printed again in its entirety until 1924. The textual transmission history of the *Fall* mirrors *Piers Plowman* in many respects: a mid-sixteenth-century revival of a lengthy and complex medieval poem occurring at a moment of political upheaval and vulnerability, followed by a gap of several hundred years. The impulse to look to the past to understand and justify the events of the present is evident in both textual histories. However, while Langland’s poem continued to be discussed by critics in relation to the English literary canon, Lydgate’s poetic fame gradually turned to infamy. The disparity between Lydgate’s contemporary success and his later dismissal is now a familiar outline for much of the critical discussion surrounding the fifteenth century poet and his history of textual transmission. This account of contemporary fame, early modern rejection, modern critical dismissal and, finally, recent scholarly reappraisal provides a fascinating insight into the changing perceptions of this medieval author from the fifteenth century to the present day.

However, this narrative takes a potentially reductive view of Lydgate’s early modern treatment and reception. The following discussions of Lydgate’s *Fall of Princes*
range from the earliest print by Pynson in 1494 and his reprint of 1527, through the mid-century editions of Tottell and Wayland in 1554, before finally encountering the emergence, in the second half of the sixteenth century, of a new literary tradition inspired by the *Fall*, the *Mirror for Magistrates*. The analysis of the circumstances of production and the paratextual details of the editions of the *Fall* charted through the sixteenth century demonstrate the complex and shifting representations and perceptions of John Lydgate and his place within the canon of English literature. The treatment and reception of his work from the late medieval to the post-Reformation also illustrates the ways in which printers, editors and readers were attempting to find a place for the medieval in early modern literary culture. Furthermore, discussions of the *Mirror* consider how these texts draw upon the *de casibus* tradition but manipulate the genre to represent the concerns and preoccupations of the readership.

We begin to see the tension between authenticity and modernisation increase as developments in reading practices distanced the early modern reader from the medieval text. Gillespie points to Thomas Berthelet’s 1527 edition of Lydgate’s *Temple of Glas* and his efforts to ‘modernise the linguistic forms, vocabulary and orthography’ as evidence of the impulse to modernise even at this relatively early stage (Gillespie 2000: 67). Developments in paratextual features also indicate the widening gap between reader and text, and glossaries become an important addition to the printed medieval text. Thomas Speght’s 1598 anthology of Chaucer, which includes Lydgate’s *Siege of Thebes*, contains a comprehensive glossary advertised on the title-page. The section which promises ‘old and obscure words explained’ appears in the 1602 and 1687 reprints of the anthology. Owen Rogers identifies the demand for such reading aids as early as 1561 in his print of *Piers Plowman*, offering a small glossary at the end of the text.

The analysis of the selected editions allows a number of comparisons: firstly, between two editions printed thirty years apart by one of the earliest printers, Richard Pynson; secondly, between the systems of Tottell and Wayland in the 1550s; thirdly, between the editorial choices of Tottell and Wayland and their contemporary, Robert Crowley; and, finally, a discussion of the *Mirror for Magistrates* considers the relationship between the medieval text and this emerging literary tradition through textual and

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38 Gillespie supplies a date of 1527 for Berthelet’s print but the *EEBO* database suggests 1529. A colophon provides the name of Thomas Berthelet and a specific location ‘at the syne of Lucrece’, but no date (STC 17034).
paratextual details. The printed texts of Langland and Lydgate intersect in the 1550s but the diachronic analysis of the punctuation practices as witnessed in the *Fall of Princes* allows for the developments in reading practices to be charted through the sixteenth century and into the early seventeenth century. The preceding discussion of Langland’s *Piers Plowman* focused on MS B.15.17 and Crowley’s 1550 editions, and considered the developments of punctuation and paratext in relation to the shift from script to print. The final section of this chapter provides a review of the textual and paratextual features as witnessed across selected editions of the *Fall of Princes* and analyses the evidence for reading practices suggested by the various developments and interactions. However, the focus of the analysis shifts to consider how a stabilised publishing industry and increasing literacy levels shaped the treatment and reception of the medieval text, and the reading practices are considered within the context of a print culture which had ‘finally broken free of its roots in the manuscript world’ (Pettegree 2010: 65).
4.2 Richard Pynson’s Prints of 1494 and 1527

‘Inconsistent and changing representations of Lydgate’s authorship thus ensured that his work was preserved in new books even when monks were decidedly out of fashion’.

(Gillespie 2000: 66)

Richard Pynson was an immigrant of Norman descent who established a successful press in London’s Fleet Street and printed extensively between 1492 until his death in 1529/30. He earned the title of King’s Printer around 1506 after the death of the previous and first incumbent, William Facques. Documentation reveals Pynson worked as a glover before becoming a bookseller and printer, although where he learned the art of printing is unknown. Evidence that he used discarded equipment from William de Machlinia’s shop in his early prints suggests he may have taken over the premises (Neville-Sington 2008). Pynson was Wynkyn de Worde’s contemporary and main rival and both printers had a long career from the last decades of the fifteenth century into the first half of the sixteenth century. Pynson had also moved to Fleet Street at the turn of the century, fast becoming the centre of commercial book trade and the art of printing. Despite their rivalry, the two printers are known to have shared work on occasion and had also developed their own separate areas of interest and expertise. While de Worde favoured a wide variety of popular works and literary texts, Pynson focused on the area of law-book printing. It was a shrewd business decision and the printing of legal books served Pynson well throughout his career. Such was his expertise and efficiency in this field that Pynson was granted exclusive rights to print all statutes and proclamations from 1512. Exclusivity rights were to become a rather controversial issue with successive generations of printers, with such preferential appointments creating a level of censorship in the area of legal printing.

Much of Pynson’s publishing history thus consists of legal books, but he also printed a selection of literary works. These include 7 titles by Lydgate printed consistently throughout his career: The Churl and the Bird (1493), The Temple of Glas (1503), The Fall of Princes (1594 & 1527), The Assembly of Gods (1505), The Governance of Kings and Princes (1511), Troy Book (1513) and Lydgate’s Testament (1520). He also printed Chaucer’s most popular works, including The Canterbury Tales (1492 & 1526), Troilus and Criseyde (1526) and The House of Fame (1526). Pynson displays a level of support for growing Humanist sentiment and he publishes a reformist sermon by Florentine friar Savonarola in 1509. Plomer claims that
Pynson’s 1494 print of Lydgate’s *Fall of Princes* produced 600 copies at a cost of £120, which gives an indication of the numbers involved in an average print run (Plomer 1925: 117). His prints are generally considered to be of a higher quality and more carefully arranged than de Worde’s catalogue, yet it was the latter who died wealthier (Blake 2008: 149). Pynson also appears to have been receptive to changing trends and modernisation, being the first printer to introduce Roman type to England in 1509 (Neville-Sington 2008). However, he retained Black Letter for vernacular texts through to his last prints.

Richard Pynson is of further interest to historians and bibliographers due to his associations with government attempts to exploit the press as a political tool. As King’s Printer Pynson was already under contract to print all royal statues and proclamations; in 1528 he received payment for printing proclamations against heresy (Plomer 1925: 146). Pynson also issued a number of prints in support of the 1512-14 war with France. Neville-Sington asserts that during this period Thomas Wolsey deliberately enhanced the role of King’s Printer in order to use the press for his own political ends. During the 1520s a sophisticated press campaign was mounted by the cardinal and Henry VIII which aimed to discredit Luther and discourage any reform activity in England (Neville-Sington 2008). These proclamations were printed by Pynson and several survive in the EEBO catalogue.  

Henry’s reign was one of the most turbulent in terms of press controls and developments in the printing industry as a whole. As the official royal printer, Pynson was at the very centre of these complex developments and his close ties to the political agendas of Wolsey and Henry confirm his important role and influence in the years of a rapidly expanding industry.

Pynson’s 1494 edition of the *Fall of Princes* contained in the EEBO catalogue is a facsimile of a British Library copy and survives in a slightly damaged and disordered state. There are a couple of woodcut images which appear to have been deliberately excised from the text and the overall condition of the edition deteriorates towards the end and Book Eight, which is missing significant sections of text. The type-face used in the main body of text reflects the styles and conventions of scribal culture and displays features of Secretary Hand such as the long ‘s’ and two-compartment ‘b’ (Parkes 1992: 50). The text appears in two columns and consistent 7-line Rhyme Royal stanzas, and spacing around

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39 For example, the EEBO database contains a proclamation published by Pynson in London (1529) against the ‘most damynable heresyes sowen within this realme, by the disciples of Luther and other heretykes, peruerters of Christes relygion’ (STC 7772).
and between each stanza is consistent. Latin titles denoting the Book numbers run across each folio in Black Letter and pagination appears in the bottom right corner. Pynson included a selection of good-quality woodcuts which are deployed throughout the text to mark the beginning of a new Book and the scenes depicted closely follow the narrative. The woodcuts provide a welcome visual break from the parade of identically-spaced stanzas, but their placement at the beginning of major sections and their relationship to the events of the poem also allows them to function as a navigational and interpretative reading aid. The woodcuts which appear in the later Pynson edition of 1527 are almost identical in terms of placing within the text, but two have been replaced with images made by ‘more highly skilled, probably continental artisans’ (Gillespie 2006: 173) for the second print.

Aside from the six woodcuts, the decorative features in the text are modest in terms of size and complexity. However, Pynson organised the text and its various sections consistently, deploying a paratextual system which allows the reader to efficiently navigate Lydgate’s lengthy poem. The print presents three main levels of organisation within the poem: Books, subsections within Books and the individual stanza. In addition to the half-page woodcut image, each Book is introduced and ended with brief Latin Incipits and Explicit and begins with a prose summary of the major figure(s) to be discussed in the following section. The summaries stretch across both columns and in two instances, Book Two and Book Nine, appear in Black Letter and in a slightly larger type-size than the main body of text reminiscent of a Textura display script. In all other instances the description appears in the same typeface as the main body of text but are always differentiated by spacing and format. The inconsistency of this paratextual feature is a reminder of the economical considerations of early print and the availability of type and type founders during this period.

Despite the inconsistency in type, the hierarchy of textual division remains intact. Within the Books, the narrative subdivisions are clearly marked by spacing and accompanied by a brief prose summary of the following section, frequently a prepositional phrase such as ‘Of a greate flode in Tessalie’ (Pynson 1494; Book Four) or a relative phrase beginning with ‘ Howe’. These summaries are explanatory and functional, noting the name of the person or place to be discussed and allowing the reader to navigate to their chosen individual or historical episode. One of the earliest narratives in Book One involves the
Roman god Jupiter and his abduction of Europe, and is introduced by a summary stating ‘Howe Jupiter rauysshyd Europe and howe Cadmus was sent to seke hir in diuers regions’ (fol. v). The summary does not just name the figures involved in the episode, but describes the upcoming events. These narratives were presumably already familiar to readers who encountered the text and the paratextual treatment of the episodes suggests they could be read as individual units and revisited.

In addition to the prose summaries, the subdivisions are signalled by an enlarged, modestly decorated initial of approximate three-line height. However, in many cases it appears the enlarged initial was not available and Pynson has substituted a lower case letter-form which hovers in the indented space. The individual stanzas are the third level of textual division to consider. They are regularly spaced with thirteen on each page and arranged in two columns. The litterae notabiliores which begin each new stanza often exhibit a slightly more flourished characteristic than the capitals which appear at the start of each new verse line, but this is not consistent and perhaps another example of Pynson’s strict organisational system being challenged by the practicalities of print.

Pynson’s 1513 edition of Lydgate’s classically inspired epic, Troy Book, employs a similar paratextual system to organise the poem, with an impressive use of woodcut images which divide the text and provide a visual representation of key scenes from the narrative. These images and subdivisions were no doubt welcomed by readers of Troy Book, a poem running at approximately 30,000 lines and written in rhyming couplets. Unlike The Fall of Princes which is presented in regularly-spaced stanzas, Troy Book was presented by Pynson in unbroken columns of text. The 1513 print of Troy Book was enhanced by the inclusion of a detailed contents page, or ‘Tabula’, which contained a summary of each section and page numbers for navigational ease. The contents page was a feature Pynson also included in his second edition of The Fall of Princes from 1527, one of a number of enhancements which reflect the rapid pace of paratextual developments in the first half of the sixteenth century.

The transcribed section contained in the appendices contains no punctuation marks aside from the capital letter at the start of each verse line, and this is generally representative of the text as a whole. The sporadic flurries of virgule use within the verse is so infrequent that extrapolating a comprehensive system of punctuation is difficult.
However, it is still worthwhile examining the placing of the virgules in both the verse and the prose, however sporadic, and considering their appearance in relation to other textual and paratextual features. The virgules appear mid-line, commonly after conjunctions, the relative pronoun ‘which’, the prepositional ‘for’ and the relative adverbial ‘howe’. The punctuation markings therefore follow the loose paratactic structure of the verse and their placement mid-line supports an overall rhetorical application. The virgule is also deployed for purposes of structural clarification, used to separate names of people and places. The list of common nouns in the fifth stanza of the transcribed section contains no punctuation but the line can be read formulaically, evoking the scriptural associations of the ‘land of milk and honey’ from the Book of Exodus.

\[
\text{Whete mylke hony plente for euery age} \quad \text{(line 33)}
\]

Entire verse sections proceed with no punctuation beyond the capital letter, except in cases where additional clarification is required. In Book Four during the tale of King Polycrates of Samos a virgule is used to separate the use of a double word; it is the only virgule which is used in the entirety of Book Four.

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Unsure to stonde on and brotyll for to abyde} \\
\text{Whoo trusteth moost / moost lykly is to slyde} \quad \text{(lines 76-77)}
\end{align*}
\]

Book One presents a further complication when attempting to establish a system of punctuation applied to the poem as a whole. The majority of Book One proceeds with no verse-line punctuation, in keeping with the rest of the text. Several folios in the middle of the Book, however, appear with virgules marking lists and the occasional mid-line caesura.

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{And like a ribaude falsly me accusyd} \\
\text{Nat withstendynge that I full cleerly se} \\
\text{Myn unfortunys / which may nat be refusyd} \\
\text{So sore alas / they werke ayenst me} \\
\text{And though Tiestes / fals and untrue be} \\
\text{And unto the bochas with a face pale} \\
\text{Ayenst me hath forged here a tale}
\end{align*}
\]

This transcribed stanza is taken from the section detailing the tragic fall of King Atreus of Mycenae, brother to Thyestes and figure in Aeschylus’ trilogy of plays about family
revenge, *The Oresteia*. Atreus is engaging in direct speech with the author Bochas and is passionately describing the wrongs he suffered during his life.

The placing of the virgules in this section suggests a rhetorical interpretation which marks the pauses in Atreus’ spoken plea. The reader is encouraged to pause mid-line with Atreus to contemplate his ‘unfortunys’ and the pause between ‘Tiestes’ (Thyestes) and ‘fals’ draws attention to the brotherly betrayal central to Atreus’ story. Given that Pynson does not consistently deploy the mid-line caesura in this edition, we can assume it was not considered essential to processing the verse lines. Where the virgule does appear within the verse line, notwithstanding the instances of structural clarification, it must function on an interpretative level. It is notable that the increased use of punctuation appears during a direct address to Bochas and the reader in a tale that includes adultery, fratricide and cannibalism. It is certainly one of the more dramatic and emotional narratives contained in the poem and the virgule is used freely, suggesting a focused level of engagement by Pynson or within his copy-text(s). The slight increased use of the virgule appears within eight folios in Book One, but the primary system of occasional list marking and clarification is subsequently reinstated. Much like the intermittent proliferations of caesuras in Crowley’s editions of *Piers Plowman*, the appearance of these virgules might speak as much to issues of textual production as to textual editing. The occasional smattering appears on a folio basis; in other words, folios will appear entirely free from verse-line punctuation or will include a cluster. It is not definitive proof by any measure that more than one compositor was involved in preparing the text for print, nor is it enough to identify and distinguish potential copy-texts; however, it does serve as another reminder of the haphazard nature of early print production (McKenzie 1999).

While the verse contains only the regular capital and the sporadic virgule, the virgule, colon and punctus appear in the titles and brief prose summaries, albeit in a light distribution. Within these small prose sections the colon and virgule appear most frequently after conjunctions and both represent medial pauses. In both Pynson editions, the colon signals a longer medial pause than the virgule and this hierarchy is observed within the other brief prose summaries:
Howe Saul kinge of Jerusalem borne of lowe degre / as longe as he dred god was obedience to him / and rulyd by good counscile had many greate disconfitures : but at the last for is pride / presumption / and greate disobediaunce he lost his crowne / and was slayne by philistees

¶ Howe Saul kynge of Jerusalem borne of lowe degre/ as longe as he dred god and was obedie(n)t to hym/ and ruled by good counsayle/ had many great dyscomfytures : but at the laste for his pride/ presumpcion/ and great disobeduance/ he lost his crowne/ and was slayne by Philistees. The fyrst chapyter.

(Pynson 1494)

The virgule is a multi-functional mark and Pynson deploys it to separate a list and structurally independent clauses which are linked by conjunctions. The colon is also placed to link structurally independent sense units and, if we consider its placement before the conjunction ‘but’, the mark is performing the same function as the virgule. However, there is a difference in effect and the placing of the mark moves into the domain of interpretation. Saul’s achievements as a god-fearing man are juxtaposed with his fate which follows his sin of pride, and the colon acts as a hinge within the sentence. It is placed at the pivotal moment before King Saul’s fall when he is propelled over Fortune’s wheel. Within Lucas’ categorisation, the colon may be described as *expository*, revealing something of the author/editor’s interpretation, while also supporting the structure of the sentence (Lucas 1997: 170-71). This interpretative placing of the colon is retained by Pynson in his 1527 reprint, but minor alterations can be noted in the deployment of the virgule. Pynson adds two more virgules within this short piece of prose which further segments the section into smaller sense units. The additions also reflect the policy of increased punctuation across prose and verse in his second edition. Pynson’s treatment of the verse and his paratextual additions are analysed in more detail below, but the general shift in policy over a 30 year period suggests an expectation among readers for a more comprehensive system of punctuation.

There are, therefore, three different levels of punctuation which can be detected in the verse. The first is a minimal intervention which leaves the verse free from additional punctuation, except in cases of clarification. The second level uses the virgule more frequently to mark lists and names, and to provide the occasional mid-line break. The third level apparent in the eight folios of Book One shows an increased use of the virgule and
demonstrates an interpretative response through punctuation. This inconsistent distribution of marks throughout the text prompts several questions relating to the process of composition and source texts. It is possible that the copy text(s) varied within or between themselves with regards to punctuation and this is reflected in the different sections of printed text. Pynson’s flexible approach to punctuation may reflect the variety of systems available to the printer, but the differences may also suggest the involvement of more than one compositor who was responsible for compiling the text for print. Pagination in the form of roman numerals on the bottom right of the page would have allowed sections of the text to be compiled separately and collated later. However, Parkes claims that it was not until the 1580s that direct evidence appears of compositors having a hand in punctuating texts in preparation for the press (Parkes 1992: 53). As such, the proposition that the 1494 edition of *The Fall of Princes* involved a compositor other than Pynson applying their own system of punctuation would have to accept a much earlier ‘editorial’ role for compositors.

Parkes asserts that, while it may not be possible to detect and ‘disentangle’ the punctuation of the author or any other contributor, the very mixture must reflect actual usage patterns (Parkes 1992: 5). This seemingly simplistic statement is, in fact, an astute observation which acknowledges the shifting nature of early modern punctuation practices and resists the concept of a neat, linear progression from rhetorical to grammatical systems. Application of punctuation was still highly varied during this period and, while the process of type-founding allowed an increasing level of standardisation in the size and form of the marks (Parkes 1992: 51), the distribution of punctuation displays a system in transition. If we accept that the number and deployment of marks reflected and shaped contemporary reading practices, Pynson and his readers were at ease with minimal punctuation and modest paratextual apparatus. The guidance offered by the regular rhyme scheme, layout and narrative summaries was evidently sufficient.

Turning to Pynson’s second edition of the *Fall* printed in 1527 provides the opportunity to consider the developments in his editorial policy over the course of 30 years. The additions Pynson makes to his second print reveal the various ways in which the

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40 The University of Manchester’s John Ryland’s Library Special Collections contains a manuscript copy of Lydgate’s *Fall of Princes* (GB 133 Eng MS 2), dated to the mid-fifteenth-century, which has been proposed as Pynson’s copy-text for his 1494 edition. The online catalogue entry claims there is ‘some evidence’ of corresponding marks between MS 2 and Pynson’s print; within the manuscript’s Books Seven and Eight, the numbers added to the margins correspond to the page numbers in Pynson’s edition.
changing expectations of the reader exerted pressure on the systems of paratext and punctuation. Parkes’ sentiments regarding the diverse usage patterns of punctuation in early print can also be applied to the contrasting rates of development between paratextual features and punctuation systems; the mixture of reading practices suggested by the interacting features must reflect the variety of readers. Nevertheless, Pynson’s second print of *The Fall of Princes* demonstrates several significant developments in relation to silent reading which are reflected in both the punctuation and paratext.

Pynson produced his second edition of *The Fall of Princes* in 1527 during the reign of Henry VIII, having assumed the role of King’s Printer in 1506. Pynson includes more detailed publishing information in this edition in the form of a colophon and a full-page woodcut on the final leaf bearing his printer’s insignia. During the 30 years between Pynson’s first and second editions, the publishing industry had stabilised and established itself as a profitable enterprise, while the government began to acknowledge print’s value as a political tool (Pettegree 2010). Pynson’s colophon proudly includes his full title as ‘printer unto the kynges moste noble grace’ and the edition represents his advancement to established printer with a level of official endorsement. It is an altogether more confident and elaborate production which begins to show a decisive move away from mirroring scribal traditions in favour of establishing new print conventions.

The edition opens with a decorated title page naming Lydgate as the translator of Boccaccio’s original text and a brief outline of the poem. A near full-sized woodcut with ornate floral border depicts a seated figure in ecclesiastical garments presenting a book to a standing figure surrounded by a group of noblemen. Gillespie notes that the figure is not Lydgate and the woodcut had been used by Pynson in his 1506 edition of the *Kalender of Shepherdes* (Gillespie 2006: 170). However, within the context of the book, the illustration arguably serves to represent Lydgate as author. As with his 1494 edition, the text is presented in two columns throughout in regularly spaced 7-line Rhyme Royal stanzas. The typeface no longer echoes scribal conventions and both the poem and paratext appear in neat Black Letter. The use of a single typeface dispenses with the scribal convention of utilising a display script for navigational and/or interpretative purposes, and headings, titles and summaries are all presented in Black Letter. While Pettegree argues that the first

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41 The image appears, somewhat oddly, at the beginning of the section describing each of the signs of the zodiac (STC 1735: 17; copy from the British Library).
half of the sixteenth century saw print assert itself as a medium distinct from scribal culture, Parkes notes that printers were, in reality, more constrained than medieval scribes in terms of layout (Pettegree 2010: 65; Parkes 1992: 53). However, these perspectives are not mutually exclusive and such limitations can be seen to have encouraged creativity and innovation with regards to design and organisation.

The three main levels of textual division represented on the page mirror the 1494 edition; Book, subsections within the Book and individual stanzas. The majority of the woodcuts are used at the beginning of a new Book and correspond with the events of the poem. The folio number is displayed clearly in the top right-hand corner and the Book number runs across the folio in English, in comparison to the Latin running titles of the 1494 edition. Pynson is liberal with his use of paraph marks in this edition and they precede each brief prose summary which introduces the subsections. Pynson has also added a detailed contents table at the start of the edition which reproduces the prose summary of each subsection and notes the corresponding folio numbers. Furthermore, the subsections are described as ‘chapters’ within the Books. The layout of the 1494 edition supported the individual subsections which could be read as stand-alone units; arguably, the episodic nature of the poem encourages this process of reading. The inclusion of the contents table in the 1527 print is responding to and facilitating this non-linear reading process by allowing efficient back-and-forth consultation and comparison.

Throughout the text as a whole Pynson employs the capital, punctus, virgule, colon and punctus interrogativus. Proper nouns are also capitalised in the later edition and abbreviations are used more frequently. In the prose sections of the text, namely the contents table and the Book summary rubrication, Pynson is liberal with his use of punctuation markings. The following section appears as the summary title which opens Book One:

Howe Adam and Eue for their iobedience were put out of paradise and lyued in sorowe & wo / they and their ofspring : And howe they sta(n)ding naked before Bochas / desyred hym to put their wofull fall fyrst in remembraunce. The fyrst chapiter.

Not only do the prose summaries demonstrate an increase in distribution of punctuation
marks, they also illustrate a consistent hierarchy and the example above is representative of their deployment across the text. The virgule is employed as a short medial pause within the sentence. The colon, followed by a capital, represents a more definitive sense break but remains as a clause within the sentence, the end of which is signalled by a punctus. The punctus is a versatile mark and used throughout the text at the end of titles, explicits and to separate numerals. Dividing the sense units by means of a consistent hierarchy in this way supports a grammatical interpretation as applied to the prose, but the form and distribution of punctuation in the verse is more conservatively applied.

Pynson’s approach to punctuating the verse is more extensive and consistent compared with his 1494 edition. Each verse line begins with a capital and virgules are frequently employed as mid-line marks. The colon appears occasionally to signify a sense break within the verse line. The following stanza is taken from the first Book, folio iii, and describes humanity’s disgraced exit from the Garden of Eden:

In hungre and thurst / here had his lyfe
With swete and labour / and tribulations
Endured also many a mortall st(r)yfe
Of hote and colde / right stronge passyons
Of elements sodayne mutacions
Wynde / hayle and rayne : fearfull fallyng
And unware strokes / of thu(n)der & lightnyng

It is a highly descriptive and dramatic scene with vocabulary which evokes the despair and suffering following the expulsion. The virgules perform a dual function in this section, marking the mid-line caesura and separating the listed items in line 6. The colon signals a further sense break within the verse line with enjambement following over lines 6 and 7. The stanza demonstrates a combination of approaches to the punctuation; the virgule is used to mark both a rhetorical mid-line break and a list while the colon functions as a more substantial pause within the verse line. In addition to the structural function it performs by linking two independent sense units, the colon can also be considered for its interpretative role and dramatic effect within the section. In following the description of ‘Wynde / hayle and rayne’ the colon provides a pause for the reader to contemplate the tempestuous weather conditions; the extended pause is a physical and imaginative space. The placing of the colon also emphasises the alliteration and enjambement of ‘fearfull fallyng’; the reader’s
eyes tumble over the edge of the line and confront the visual stroke of the virgule, which allows a brief pause before the clap of thunder and lightning.

The section displays the more extensive and interpretative use of punctuation which distinguishes the two editions. The unpunctuated 1494 edition relies primarily on textual division, stanza spacing and the regular rhythm and rhyme scheme to guide the reader/speaker through the text. Pynson’s 1527 edition retains the levels of textual division and applies a consistent system of punctuation to the verse. The virgule is used extensively and appears in a mid-line caesura position. However, it does not appear on every verse line and the number of virgules varies between the stanzas; the occasional stanza proceeds without any punctuation markings. The punctuation in this edition represents a deictic system, whereby selective pointing introduces different levels of emphasis (Parkes 1992). The inclusion of the occasional colon introduces a hierarchy which further extends the interpretative possibilities. Pynson’s decision to extend the repertoire and distribution of marks within the prose and verse must be a response to the requirements and expectations of his readers. The addition of the comprehensive contents table can be similarly considered in relation to the reading practice it encourages and facilitates. The consultation process enabled by the table combined with the selective, hierarchical pointing might suggest a definitive shift towards silent reading practices in which the punctuation and paratextual features interact to provide the navigational and interpretative information required by a silent reader in the absence of a mediating speaker.

However, the application of punctuation does not represent a fully grammatical system. The observance of the mid-line caesura and the absence of end-line punctuation in the verse also supports a rhetorical scheme in which readers are encouraged to pause consistently. Within an edition which makes concessions to the silent-reading process, echoes of the ‘reader-as-speaker’ linger in the rhetorical system. The editorial choices made by Pynson in his 1527 edition suggest the contemporary readership expected and/or required an increased level of guidance within the verse, in addition to the paratextual features which provide consistent textual divisions and navigational aids. However, the system of punctuation is not tailored towards a primarily silent reading model and, in reality, demonstrates a mixture of approaches and features which must reflect the complexity of the reading community.
While the textual elements were responding to early sixteenth-century reading practices, the paratextual features also display Pynson’s efforts to adapt the text for a changing political environment. The description of Duke Humphrey’s original commission for the text, which appears in the 1494 edition, has been removed. Gillespie notes that the details of the poem’s commission survive in several in-text references Lydgate makes to his patron. Observing that Pynson may have simply considered a ‘distant and disgraced Lancastrian prince an unsuitable source of authority’, Gillespie raises a further proposition; Pynson was deliberately attempting to loosen the associations between the poem and a specific period in history (Gillespie 2006: 172). Furthermore, he may have been attempting to align his edition with a new patron, Cardinal Wolsey. Of the two woodcuts which have been re-commissioned for the 1527 edition, one shows a king ‘more Henrician in aspect’ than the 1494 print. The second new woodcut replaces the 1494 image of Fortuna confronting Boccaccio in his study with a depiction of Fortuna’s wheel, supporting at its top an image Gillespie describes as a ‘distinctive portrait of Wolsey’ (Gillespie 2006: 173).

Neville-Sington asserts that Wolsey frequently used Pynson’s office of King’s Printer for political gain, including during the ‘campaign’ against Martin Luther and in support of Henry’s title of ‘defender of the faith’ (Neville-Sington 2008).

By discreetly removing the problematic Humphrey and courting the powerful Wolsey through the use of imagery, Pynson is acknowledging and manoeuvring around the poem’s political dimensions. The poem and its author remain medieval, but the book and the editorial choices which shape it are undergoing a conscious reworking. Given the context of the poem and its warnings on the caprice of fortune and the recurring pitfalls of power, this opportunistic reworking is undercut with irony. Indeed, hindsight encourages us to view the portrait of Wolsey atop Fortuna’s wheel not in terms of a man who has learned to master and control his own fate, but as a man about to be propelled over the edge. 

The poem’s main themes of fortune and history are enacted within the paratextual frame and the wider circumstances of the book’s production. The ability to ‘loosen’ the poem’s ties to a specific period of history (Gillespie 2006: 172) and the potential flexibility to re-align with the prevailing political environment becomes an increasingly important aspect of the text as it moves through the sixteenth century and inspires a new literary tradition, the *Mirror for Magistrates*.

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42 Cardinal Wolsey died in 1530 while travelling to London to face charges of treason. It is widely acknowledged that Wolsey’s failure to secure an annulment for Henry VIII’s marriage to Katherine of Aragon, combined with the political ambitions of the opposing Boleyns, led to the cardinal’s downfall.
In addition to the alterations which seek to address contemporary political culture, Gillespie also argues that Pynson’s 1527 edition of the Fall ‘provides further evidence of a trend towards the visual and verbal representations of Lydgate in large editions of his works’ (Gillespie 2000: 69). However, while visual and verbal representations of Chaucer continue to be developed and expanded in the early anthologies of his works, this trend was curtailed in Lydgate’s case. In the years between the Act of Supremacy (1534) and the accession of Mary (1553), there are no surviving prints of Lydgate; it is interesting to note that the last edition of Lydgate published before the twenty-year hiatus was a saint’s life, *The Lives of Saint Alban and Saint Amphibal*, issued by John Herford in 1534 (Gillespie 2000: 59). Another three-decade gap occurs in the Fall’s publication history and the next printed editions by Richard Tottell and John Wayland both appear in 1554. The five years of Mary’s reign (1553-1558) proved difficult for the Protestant printers who had thrived during the relative press freedom of Edward’s reign and the stewardship of Protector Somerset. Unlike the radical reformer Crowley, both Tottell and Wayland’s religious affiliations proved less uncompromising, allowing them to weather the storms of the 1550s and continue to operate as successful printers after the accession of Elizabeth.

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43 The edition, confirms the colophon, was ‘put in print / at request of Robert Catton / abbot of the exempte monasterye of saynt Alban’ (STC 256). Gillespie asserts that this text was important for the promotion of St Alban’s abbey and argues that the paratextual framework allowed a distinct emphasis on ‘England’ (Gillespie 2000: 62).
4.3 The Marian Revival: The Editions of Richard Tottell & John Wayland

‘The medieval text was old ground worth reworking’.

(Gillespie 2006: 211)

Richard Tottell was born into a relatively wealthy family and served successive apprenticeships to printers William Middleton and William Powell. Tottell appears to have been well connected with the London legal community and his printing business proved successful from the outset (Knott 1996: 308). Just a few months before Edward VI’s death in 1553, Tottell was granted exclusive rights to print common-law books for seven years. When Mary came to the throne in the same year, Tottell was able to rely upon the support of a number of influential lawyers who had previously been in exile; in 1556 his patent for common-law books was renewed (Greening 2009). Around 1559 he married Joan, the daughter of reformist printer Richard Grafton, but Greening asserts that Tottell was ‘probably a Roman Catholic’ (Greening 2009). His caution and discretion in these matters allowed him to survive political instability. Nevertheless, the gap left by several successful Protestant printers during the reign of Mary I worked to Tottell’s great advantage (Knott 1996: 308). His ability to adapt to the political circumstances saw him win the exclusive rights to print law books again in 1559, with Elizabeth renewing his patent which had been originally granted under Mary for life (Greener 2009).

Tottell ‘contributed much’ to the Stationers’ Company in its early years but his success and growing influence within the Stationers’ Company caused a considerable level of resentment and tension among his contemporary printers. A union of printers petitioned William Cecil, Lord Burghley, in 1577 to complain about Tottell’s monopoly and its effect on the price of law books for students. In addition, Knott describes Tottell as holding ‘a kind of intellectual monopoly’ and could have potentially censored any work he deemed unsuitable (Knott 1996: 309). The petition evidently failed and Tottell continued to benefit from his monopoly. When John Jugge died in 1577, Tottell competed for the role of King’s Printer but the title was awarded to Robert Barker and both men went on to consolidate the influence and monopolies of the most powerful members of the Stationers’ Company (Knott 1996: 310).

44 Evenden includes Thomas More’s nephew, William Rastell, as one of the influential clique (Evenden 2008).
Legal works did constitute the majority of Tottell’s output, and Knott asserts that he became less willing to take commercial risks as his career progressed. The majority of non-legal texts he printed date from the earlier years of his career (Knott 1996: 311). He is perhaps best remembered for his edition of Tudor poems, *Songes and Sonettes*, which were first published in 1557 and became commonly known as *Tottell’s Miscellany*. It included poems by contemporary Tudor poets Thomas Wyatt and John Heywood, remaining a popular edition throughout the sixteenth century and printed at least eight times before 1600 (Knott 1996: 312). Tottell’s preface to his 1559 edition confidently claims that the English language is ‘as prayse worthely’ as Latin and Italian for its diversity and eloquence. He also makes the point of commending the ‘sundry good Englishe wryters’ who contribute to the volume (Tottell 1559: STC 13863.7). The *Miscellany* can be considered as the first deliberate collection of English poetry to be put to print and, combined with Tottell’s clear focus on the merit of the native tongue and its poets, the edition takes on a distinctly English focus. However, Alexandra Gillespie asserts that Tottell’s *Miscellany* is distinctly medieval in style (Gillespie 2006: 221), despite the preoccupations with English literary culture which might suggest the compilation contained an element of post-Reformation self-fashioning. It is interesting that a printer concerned primarily with the business of law-book printing and profit would be credited as an important advocate of English literary culture. However, it also serves to remind that early printers and publishers played an influential role in shaping as well as responding to the contemporary literary culture.

Tottell’s policy and publishing history demonstrates both his own business acumen and the growing profit-making potential involved in the printing industry, if the political environment could be successfully negotiated. Tottell was an establishment figure in many respects, serving as master of the Stationers’ Company in 1578-79 and again in 1587-1588, and making large donations throughout his career (Greening 2009). His contemporary John Wayland was a rather more erratic businessman, winning licenses but unable to remain free from debt or dispute. Wayland began printing in the year 1537, also operating as a bookseller based in Fleet Street. During the 1540s, however, Wayland appears to have taken a break from the printing trade and he worked primarily as a scrivener before returning to the press in 1553. Evenden suggests that Wayland must have exacted some level of influence because in the same year he secured a royal patent to print primers and
all books of private devotion.\textsuperscript{45} Despite this commercial advantage Wayland was involved with various legal suits, both personal and professional, during his lifetime and spent time in prison for unpaid debts – circumstances which no doubt hindered attempts to consolidate his business dealings (Evenden 2008).

In yet another instance of good fortune or good connections, Wayland took over Edward Whitchurch’s print shop in 1554. Edward Whitchurch and Richard Grafton had collaborated and printed the Great Bible in 1539 under the supervision of Thomas Cromwell, but both retired from the printing trade following Mary’s accession. Given that Wayland had taken over Whitchurch’s shop at the sign of the Sun in Fleet Street and printed Lydgate’s Fall of Princes in the same year (1554), Gillespie proposes that the project was originally planned by Whitchurch and taken over by Wayland (Gillespie 2006: 214). This suggestion is further supported by the suppression of William Baldwin’s poem, A memorial of such princes, which was initially intended as an addition to the Fall. Baldwin was a reformist and began his career working for Whitchurch; it does indeed seem plausible that Whitchurch planned to publish an edition of the Fall and commissioned Baldwin to pen a supplementary section, and that it would exhibit reformist attitudes (Gillespie 2006: 216). Baldwin’s poem, with further additions, would eventually be published by Thomas Marshe as the Mirror for Magistrates in 1559 but the exact reasons for the initial censorship are unclear. Gillespie argues that ‘subversive cracks’ were spotted and publication was halted by Mary’s Chancellor, Stephen Gardiner (Gillespie 2006: 216).

One of the Mirrors’ primary contributors, George Ferrers, had composed several poems relating to Humphrey, duke of Gloucester, Protector of the Realm during the minority of Henry VI. The figure of Humphrey, asserts Lucas, is closely paralleled with Ferrers’ contemporary Edward Seymour, duke of Somerset and Protector during the minority of Edward VI. As a supporter of Somerset before his deposition and execution, Ferrers was motivated to confront the circumstances of Somerset’s downfall and did so by paralleling his life with that of Humphrey, duke of Gloucester. Furthermore, Ferrers’ poems cast Henry Beaufort, Henry VI’s Lord Chancellor as the villain of the piece responsible for Humphrey’s downfall and this was intended as a ‘satiric and bitter portrait’ of Mary’s Chancellor, Stephen Gardiner. Scott Lucas’ analysis of the circumstances

\textsuperscript{45} Reformist printers John Day and William Seres had printed primers during Edward VI’s reign but both were imprisoned by Mary (Evenden 2008).
surrounding the poem’s suppression clarifies earlier scholarly views of the potentially
subversive content. While Lucas acknowledges that, unlike Beaufort, Gardiner had no
hand in Somerset’s downfall he maintains that the topicality of Baldwin’s text was central
to its suppression (Lucas 2003: 47). The decision to remove Baldwin’s poem must have
been taken relatively late in the printing process as a small number of editions bearing the
original title page which advertises both texts has survived.46

Gillespie asserts that we might ‘perceive in Lydgate a kind of Edwardian hero’ who
would have been rendered ‘thoroughly Protestant’ had the joint edition gone to print
(Gillespie 2006: 216). The suggestion, although speculative, is tantalizing, particularly in
view of the analysis of Langland and Lydgate’s textual transmission history presented in the
current thesis. Piers Plowman could be reworked to fit with a narrative of reform which
stretched back to the middle ages. Texts such as John Foxe’s Book of Martyrs sought to justify
the Anglican faith and confront accusations of illegitimacy (Kidd 1999: 107-109), while
Crowley was primarily motivated by the desire to unveil a history of social reform in
Langland’s poem. Had Wayland’s joint edition gone to press as planned, it would have
reinforced the associations and aligned Lydgate’s poem with the reformer William
Baldwin, creating a sense of continuity between the medieval text and sixteenth century
politics, in the same way Crowley’s edition of Piers established links between historical
moments of popular revolt and the events of the mid-sixteenth century.

The title-pages of both Tottell and Wayland’s editions are striking in their
resemblance, enclosing the title information in an architectural, Classically-styled frame.
Both designs deploy columns and robed figures to support the royal coat of arms above and
represent a departure from Pynson’s 1527 edition. The medieval presentation scene is gone
and the title-pages of both editions frame Lydgate’s poem, physically and interpretatively,
as a text of Renaissance concerns. Tottell’s title-page reinforces the links to Classical
culture further through his description of the text’s origins, noting that the poem was ‘first
compyled in Latin by the excellent Clerke Bocatius, an Italian borne’. Lydgate, argues
Gillespie, has ‘never looked so much like a humanist…perfected, polished, and stamped,
like the Roman armour in Tottell’s title-page compartment’ (Gillespie 2006: 221). Lydgate
is aligned with the Classical, not the medieval. However, both Tottell and Wayland are

46 The edition chosen for analysis is one of the few which bears the original title page advertising the
additional text: ‘Whereunto is added the fall of al such as since that time were notable in England: diligently
collected out of the chronicles’ (STC 3177.5).
keen to advertise the textual and editorial authority of their editions through reference to the manuscript sources and John Lydgate’s authorship.

In his short preface, Wayland describes his editorial process which involved the text being ‘red over and amended in dyuers places wher it was before eyther through the wryters or the Prynters fault corrupted’. Given that only Pynson had printed the poem previously, Wayland clearly felt his own edition could provide the necessary corrections and improvements. He does, however, complain of the ‘lacke of certayn copies’ which would have further enhanced his edition (The Prynter to the Reader). Perhaps Wayland’s shortage of source material was due to his rival Tottell’s editorial endeavours; Tottell’s title-page proudly claims his edition is ‘newly imprynted, corrected, and augmented out of diuerse and sundry olde writen copies in parchment’. Crowley’s edition of *Piers Plowman* utilises the consultation of manuscript sources as a means to trace the history and narrative of reform; the medieval origins of the text are integral to his interpretation and reworking. In both Tottell and Wayland’s editions, however, the visual elements of the title-page combine with the descriptions to suggest a process of liberation from the manuscript tradition. Tottell’s title-page claims to organise and ‘augment’ the chaotic manuscript sources, and Wayland is similarly keen to describe his process of correction. Both editors are attempting to provide an edition fit for the mid-sixteenth-century readership but we might also detect a sense of commercial rivalry in the claims of editorial diligence.

Despite the efforts to re-contextualise Lydgate’s *Fall* as a work steeped in the principles of humanism, Gillespie argues that the monk-poet was also ‘at his most medieval’ during the Marian years (Gillespie 2006: 221). During this period the press re-issued a number of anonymous romances, late medieval and early Tudor poems, and Lydgate’s *Fall of Princes* and *Troy Book* experienced a revival of interest alongside these texts rooted in medieval literary and religious culture (Gillespie 2006: 221). The simplified view that the Catholic Church was resistant to the press and unable to harness its political potential is no longer accepted, and scholars now acknowledge Mary’s pragmatic relationship with the press. She signed the charter of the Stationers’ Company in 1557 and Finkelstein and McCleery assert that ‘[i]n reaction to Protestantism, evangelical Catholic reform became more organised and disciplined and in doing so acknowledged the importance of the printing press as a means of transmission’ (Finkelstein & McCleery 2008: 55). Only four years previously Robert Crowley had revitalised *Piers Plowman* for his
sixteenth-century readership, but the impulse to revisit medieval literary culture was not limited to Protestant reformers. Richard Tottell recognised the trend for late medieval material and published his own edition and the *Miscellany* proved extremely popular from its first publication in 1557 and was reprinted at least eight times before the turn of the century (Greening 2009).

The pragmatism of both editors with regards to their political and religious affiliations was undoubtedly central to their success and survival and Tottell’s *Miscellany* may have simply been an attempt to capitalize on the prevailing literary trend. However, Gillespie detects in Tottell’s print canon evidence of ‘religious conservatism’ which is displayed in the ‘bibliographical and visual as well as literary features of Tottell’s books’ (Gillespie 2006: 222). Tottell’s decision to append Lydgate’s *Daunce of Machabree* (as it is titled in Tottell’s book) is consequently framed in political rather than commercial terms. Lydgate’s translation of the *Daunce of Machabree* had been displayed on a wall of Pardon Churchyard near St. Paul’s Cathedral since 1430 when it had been commissioned by the Town Clerk, John Carpenter. Words and images had blended in the original mural but this was demolished by Protector Somerset in 1549 on the basis that it encouraged superstitious worship. The only printed version of the *Daunce* in English which predates Tottell’s edition is found in a book of hours. Not only did Tottell’s edition resurrect Lydgate’s text, the inclusion of a woodcut image depicting the dance reintroduced the visual element, once more mixing text and image. Furthermore, the woodcut clearly depicts the pope at the head of the line, first among equals in the dance of death, and seeks to revive ‘deeply rooted, medieval religious traditions’ (Gillespie 2006: 223). Tottell’s decision to include the *Daunce* may have been intended to distinguish his edition from a rival’s, but there were also clear political implications.

Lydgate’s poem was composed during and, arguably, *for* a period of political instability (Nolan 2005). The traditional moralising of the text offered reassurance and advice, and found a mid-sixteenth-century audience willing to listen. However, perceptions of the poem and its political dimensions during this period are difficult to determine. Knott asserts that Wayland was a ‘fierce Catholic’ and Tottell was less stringent, although his faith was not simply a ‘political or economic expedient’ (Knott 1996: 309). Analysis of the

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47 The demolition may not have been solely motivated by religious conviction; the stones from the Churchyard provided Somerset with the materials he needed to build Somerset House (Gillespie 2006: 223).
paratextual material and circumstances of production surrounding both editions of the *Fall* suggest a more complex picture. Wayland was able and willing to exploit the gaps left by the Protestant printers but a reformist context for Lydgate’s *Fall* beginning with Wayland’s edition was supressed. Wayland includes a dedication to Queen Mary in the short preface to his readers in which he expresses his gratitude for the patents granted to him by the ‘quenes highnes’ and mentions the printing of ‘an uniforme Primer to be to used of her Subiectes’ (*The Prynter to the Reader*). He then continues to discuss the addition of Baldwin’s text which he trusts ‘shalbe to the weale of the whole countrey’:

I have added a continuacion of that Argument, concernynge the chefe Prynces of this Iland, penned by the best clearkes in such kinde of matters that be thyss day liuing, not unworthy to be matched with maister Lydgate.

This prefatory material was also clearly intended to be part of the original edition. Wayland’s proud advertisement for the supplementary text and his explicitly-stated allegiance to Queen Mary supports the assertion that he was a staunch Catholic. He must, then, have been unaware of the potentially subversive interpretation, or perhaps his fervent commitment to the Catholic faith was tempered by commercial considerations. Wayland’s involvement with printing a primer in 1539 presents a further challenge to the description of Wayland as a ‘fierce’ Catholic (Knott 1996: 309). The primer was printed in the years following the Act of Supremacy in 1534 and was commissioned by Thomas Cromwell. Ian Green’s analysis of the role of primers in Reformation politics and devotional practices leads him to conclude that ‘the first instinct of both Protestant reformers and orthodox Catholics trying to respond to Protestant challenges was to adapt it to suit the new situation’ (Green 2000: 245). He describes the 1539 primer printed by Wayland as exhibiting ‘a number of Protestant features in a work built up of essentially Catholic material’ (Green 2000: 245). This process is described by Elizabeth Salter as the ‘Trojan-horse model’ in which Protestant authorities ‘smuggled’ the new ideology via traditional and familiar forms of devotional texts (Salter 2012: 76). Given the complexity of his printed devotional material and the circumstances surrounding the suppressed edition of the *Mirror*, John Wayland’s Catholicism might be more accurately described as pragmatic.

Tottell’s paratextual choices also demonstrate the tension between modernisation

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48 Salter references Eamon Duffy’s discussion of the concept of the ‘Trojan-horse’. Duffy considers the bilingual primers which appear in the 1530s as being ‘orthodox in content but introducing the Trojan horse of the vernacular into traditional liturgical observance’ (Duffy 2005: 222).
and maintaining the links to medieval literary culture and are, arguably, more explicitly Catholic. Lydgate is the ‘perfected’ humanist in the title-page but, later in the same edition, his connections to medieval religious traditions are restored (Gillespie 2006: 221). These editions of 1554 present Lydgate’s poem as both Classical and conservative, both humanist and Catholic, and prove that these principles were not mutually exclusive. Lydgate’s Fall, far from being perceived as rigidly didactic and problematic, was still highly flexible and open to a range of interpretations during this period. The same is true of the editors and readers in the sixteenth century who were experimenting with the medieval text and the various ways it could be reworked and reshaped.

Both Tottell and Wayland present the poem in two columns with consistently spaced stanzas and utilize Black Letter throughout their editions for the paratextual material and the main text. In this respect, they closely resemble Pynson’s 1527 edition. Black Letter remained a popular choice for vernacular texts through the sixteenth century, but within printed editions of medieval works the type-face also functions as a visual reminder of the text’s medieval origins. Tottell’s edition also includes a traditional colophon on the final folio, giving his name, date and location of publication. Echard takes a particular interest in the printed colophon in her study and argues that its survival in printed texts is one of various methods of ‘bibliographic coding’ which work to present the book as ‘authentically medieval’ (Echard 2008: vii). Tottell’s edition also uses the full set of Richard Pynson’s woodcuts from his 1527 edition which are similarly placed at the start of each Book. Tottell had clearly acquired the full set and this included the woodcut depicting Fortuna with the ‘portrait’ of Wolsey (Gillespie 2006: 173). Within Tottell’s edition, the image acquires a rather different political edge. Wolsey was a key figure in Henry VIII’s campaign to achieve an annulment for his marriage to Mary’s mother, Katherine of Aragon. Although his diplomatic missions proved ultimately unsuccessful and he fell from Henry’s favour, it is unlikely that Mary remembered Wolsey favourably and his position atop Fortuna’s wheel appears, in Tottell’s edition, decidedly precarious.

Tottell’s other politically-charged woodcut at the beginning of the Daunce of Machabree with its depiction of the pope is the additional, final image. By contrast, Wayland’s edition uses only one woodcut which introduces Book One. The composite image recounts key scenes from the story of Adam and Eve, from Eve’s creation to their expulsion from the Garden of Eden at the hands of a sword-wielding angel. Thereafter,
each new Book is introduced by a rubricated title which stretches across both columns. Notwithstanding the aesthetic element, the lack of images in Wayland’s edition eliminates a helpful navigational and narrative feature. Perhaps Wayland possessed neither the materials nor the inclination for including woodcuts; his distinctive selling point was supposed to be Baldwin’s supplementary text after all.

The use of images in Tottell’s edition connects the poem to its earlier stages of print production through the use of Pynson’s woodcuts, and to its period of original composition through the addition of the text and image of the *Daunce of Machabree*. Leaving aside the political overtones, the inclusion of the *Daunce* woodcut reunites text and image in a form that would have been familiar to many readers who had visited or passed the painted mural in Pardon Churchyard. It was also representative of a very distinct form of reading; the narrative and the image were presented as one. Claire Sponsler observes that the ‘blurring of boundaries’ in many of Lydgate’s smaller texts poses problems for identifying those which were intended to accompany a performance of some kind (Sponsler 2010: 1). She excludes the *Daunce* on the basis that it is ‘purely visual’ and does not appear to contain any mimetic or kinetic elements (Sponsler 2010: 1). The act of visiting and ‘reading’ the mural may not be performative, but it constitutes a distinct sensory and conceptual experience. The mural in Pardon Churchyard supported a range of literacy levels and reading practices very different from those employed by a reader with the book on their lap. Tottell’s addition of the text and image of the *Daunce* is, to an extent, a recreation of the original experience and connotations. However, unlike the variety of literacy levels catered to by the mural, the edition expects and assumes a degree of reading proficiency. Moreover, as analysis of the punctuation practices will demonstrate, the systems deployed by both Tottell and Wayland suggest a further shift towards silent reading practices.

Both Tottell and Wayland discard the mid-line caesura and employ consistent end-line punctuation. The removal of the caesura immediately distances the poem from previous rhetorical interpretations and, where Pynson is likely to have followed or at least acknowledged the punctuation of his manuscript copy-texts, Tottell and Wayland make a definite attempt to update their systems. The similarities in overall approach between Tottell and Wayland’s editions illustrate wider developments in punctuation form and application. However, while the choice to remove the caesura and add end-line punctuation results in similar structural alterations to Lydgate’s verse, closer analysis
reveals nuances in interpretative application.

Tottell and Wayland utilise the capital, comma, colon, punctus and punctus interrogativus, making use of a larger array of marks in the first instance. Unlike Pynson’s 1527 edition, the array of marks used in the prose sections of the texts also appear in the verse. Although the regular caesura is removed, both printers occasionally employ the semi-circular comma within the verse line, often placed after a conjunction or used to mark parenthesis. The change in the form of medial pause is significant in itself; the virgule had become ‘almost as common a mark of punctuation as the punctus’ during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, both marks primarily being used to denote a medial pause and often used interchangeably (Parkes 1992: 46). Parkes notes the adoption of the semi-circular comma in England was relatively slow and printers did not begin to replace the virgule until the 1520s (Parkes 1992: 51). Retiring the virgule and the rhetorical system it represented is a significant departure from the manuscript exemplars.

In both Tottell and Wayland’s editions the comma is the most common mark used as end-line punctuation, with the colon representing a longer medial pause but appearing much less frequently. The colon functions on two levels: firstly as a structural marker by supporting the application of end-line punctuation; and secondly, interpretative nuance is introduced by the hierarchy of pauses. The longer pause can signify a more definitive break between independent sense units, but it can also encourage the reader to pause and contemplate the content of the preceding and following lines. The end-line punctuation is consistent and regular in both editions but Tottell and Wayland are discriminating in their application, observing instances of enjambement and allowing the verse to flow onto the next line unimpeded by punctuation. Wayland places a capital letter at the beginning of each verse line but Tottell’s use of the capital is influenced by enjambement and syntax, and a lower-case letter will appear when the sense unit continues onto the next verse line.

A number of Tottell and Wayland’s choices are demonstrated within the transcribed sections of Book Eight and presented here for comparison:49

49 Wayland resets the pagination at the start of each new Book while Tottell’s folio numbers run continuously. Thus, the above lines are found on Folio xiii in Book Eight of Wayland’s edition and Folio Clxxvii according to Tottell’s system of continuous pagination.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tottell</th>
<th>Wayland</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Set farre westward as ye shal understand</td>
<td>Set farre westward as ye shal understand,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hauing Spayne set in the opposite,</td>
<td>Hauing Spayne set in the opposite</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Of a smal Angle called England:</td>
<td>Of a small Angle called Englanďe:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frau(n)ce about him descrying this his seite</td>
<td>Frau(n)ce about hi(s) discryuing thus his sight,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>with many a riuere pleasant of deyte.</td>
<td>With many a riuere plesaunt of delite,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whote bathes and welles, &amp; there be found</td>
<td>Bothe bathes and welles there be founde,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dyuers mynes of metalles ful habound.</td>
<td>Diuers mynesof metalles full habounde.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>About which renneth the Occian,</td>
<td>Aboute whiche ronnest the Occian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Right plenteous of al maner vittayle,</td>
<td>Right plentuous of all maner vitalle,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the name of which at Brutus fyrst began.</td>
<td>The name of which at Brutus fyrst began,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>London hath shippes by the sea to sayle,</td>
<td>London hath shyppes by the sea to sayle:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachus at Winchester greatly doth auaile</td>
<td>Bachus at Wynchester grety doth auaile,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worcestre with frutes haboundeth at the ful</td>
<td>Worcestre with frutes haboundeth at the ful,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Herford with beastes, Cotswolde with wull(,)</td>
<td>Herford with beastes, Cotswolde with wul.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The punctus represents the definitive pause in both Tottell and Wayland’s hierarchies and, like the colon, is occasionally deployed within the stanza. Although very occasionally disrupted by enjambement which flows across the stanzas, Tottell and Wayland’s editions both place the punctus at the end of each stanza. The punctus is not functioning grammatically or interpretatively in this instance, but rather as a conventional feature of presentation. The distribution of hierarchical marks shown in the above example illustrates the nuances in application between Tottell and Wayland. Wayland, for example, applies the colon as a medial pause more frequently across his edition as a whole, while Tottell is more likely to deploy the comma as a minor pause and the punctus as the definitive pause within the verse. These interpretative differences combined with the observance of enjambement and the inclusion of a hierarchy of pauses demonstrates the process of close-reading and textual criticism which underpins both Tottell and Wayland’s editorial task.

Despite the minor interpretative differences, Tottell and Wayland’s editions demonstrate a similar approach overall and a commitment to modernisation through the
removal of the mid-line caesura and the addition of consistent end-line punctuation. The form and distribution of marks in Tottell and Wayland’s editions eliminate the rhetorical, or *elocutionary*, system which had been transmitted through manuscript and into the early prints of Pynson. The end-line punctuation draws the reader’s attention towards the rhyme scheme which becomes the primary structural feature of the verse, rather than a balance between rhyme and mid-line pausing which is supported by the caesura in Pynson’s edition. Unlike their contemporary editor Robert Crowley who chose to retain the virgule and the rhetorical punctuation system it supports in *Piers Plowman*, the editions of the *Fall* apply an updated repertoire of marks which reflect an updated system.

While paratextual features such as the Black Letter type, woodcut images and colophon are representative of the poem’s medieval origins, Tottell and Wayland’s editions display their comprehensive attempts to modernise the punctuation practices. The verse lines are divided according to grammatical principles with the punctuation used, not to support a rhythmical pausing, but to signal the relationships between and within sense-units. The extended repertoire of marks used by Tottell and Wayland also allows a greater degree of interpretative nuance to be conveyed to the reader. The inclusion of a detailed contents table in Pynson’s second edition of 1527 represented the development of a model of reading which involved consultation and revisiting. Tottell and Wayland both provide similarly detailed contents tables but demonstrate a further shift towards silent reading practices through the modernisation of the punctuation systems. The marks to indicate when a ‘reader-as-speaker’ should pause are eliminated in favour of marks which divide the verse into grammatical units. The extended repertoire of punctuation is required to function in the place of the ‘reader-as-speakers’, providing a hierarchy of pauses and a variety of interpretative possibilities.

Robert Crowley’s edition of *Piers Plowman* aimed to re-contextualise the fourteenth-century poem for his sixteenth-century readership through the manipulation of textual and paratextual features. The editors of Lydgate’s *Fall* can also be seen to rework the medieval text and author. Lydgate is linked in both editions, via word and image, to the intellectual developments of Italian humanism and Classical learning. Wayland prioritises Lydgate’s medieval poem but his original intention was to provide a continuation of the text which encompassed, and alluded to, contemporary Tudor political concerns. However, while Crowley attempted to portray Langland as a voice of early reform, the editors of Lydgate’s
Fall were Catholics working under Mary and the watchful eye of her Chancellor, Stephen Gardiner. Lydgate may be a Renaissance man in the intellectual sense but he is also rooted in medieval literary and religious culture. The paratextual features of Tottell’s edition, in particular, are emphatic in their connections and connotations. Crowley, Tottell and Wayland are each reading and rewriting literature of the preceding centuries, looking back to moments of historical significance, scrutinizing them, and lauding them, for what they can reveal about contemporary, sixteenth-century culture. However, Crowley sought to uncover a history of dissent and frame the Reformation within a long-standing tradition of English reform; the disruptive politics of the past were used to inform and justify the disruptive politics of the present. Tottell and Wayland’s editions were printed during a revival of interest in medieval literary culture (Gillespie 2006: 221) and under a government which vigorously curtailed further Protestant reforms. The years following the Act of Supremacy in 1534 subsequently become the aberration and these editions of the Fall can be viewed as an act of restoration and reassurance.

Lydgate has been variously described as a ‘transition poet’ (Renoir 1967: 31) and as a writer definitively medieval in style and substance (Pearsall 1970: 4). What Tottell and Wayland’s editions prove is that whatever Lydgate was perceived to be and whatever he represented remained fluid into the sixteenth century. Gillespie asserts that Lydgate offered an ‘opportunity’ for reviving old textual traditions and beginning new ones (Gillespie 2006: 223). The ‘old’ provided reassurance and familiarity in an era of political upheaval, while the de casibus tradition was reworked to more accurately reflect the concerns and preoccupations of early modern society. After the initial setback of Wayland’s suppressed edition in 1554, the poem inspired by Lydgate’s Fall of Princes was extended and printed as the Mirror for Magistrates in 1559. The Mirror owes much to Lydgate’s Fall but it was also a work of literature in its own right with a complex history of composition and production. The following section aims to examine how Lydgate’s ‘old’ text was assimilated into the ‘new’ tradition and what this reveals about developing reading habits and practices in the second half of the sixteenth century.
4.4 A Mirror for Magistrates: de casibus for the Early Modern Reader

‘To read the ‘Mirror’ in terms of an aesthetic which excludes contemporary political reference is surely to miss the point’.

(Hadfield 1994: 93)

Lydgate’s Fall of Princes proved marketable with English readers during the sixteenth century but several other editions of the de casibus poem printed in Europe survive and attest to the widespread popularity of the tradition in both Italian and French forms. Mortimer records two prints of the A-version of Boccaccio’s poem and one edition of his revised B-version. Two prints of Laurent de Premierfait’s A-version and five prints of his expanded B-version are recorded; Premierfait’s second version was the source for Lydgate’s own translation (Mortimer 2005: 259). The continuation written by William Baldwin and planned as an addition to Wayland’s 1554 print indicates the enthusiasm for the tradition within sixteenth century English literary culture. This section reconnects with the textual transmission of the Fall as Lydgate’s poem falls out of print and favour, and the Mirror for Magistrates emerges as a dynamic text with its own complex circumstances of production.

Following the suppression of the 1554 edition, Thomas Marshe succeeds in publishing Baldwin’s Mirror in 1559, the first year of Protestant Elizabeth’s reign. Popular from the outset, the work was published with additions in 1563; this version was itself reprinted in 1571, 1574, 1575 and in 1578. In 1578 another version, further expanded, was issued. In 1574/5 Thomas Marshe published a separate edition with a further sixteen narratives composed by John Higgins. The edition was known as the ‘Firste Parte’ and focused on figures from Britain’s pre-history (Mortimer 2005: 267). Mortimer notes that this collection was expanded and reprinted in 1575 and 1587. In 1587, Higgins’ additional narratives, totalling forty, were printed together with Baldwin’s poem. A further contributor, Thomas Blenerhasset, composed a ‘Seconde Parte’ of twelve narratives which were intended to ‘make good certain omissions in the Baldwin-Higgins coverage of pre-1066 figures’ (Mortimer 2005: 267). Blenerhasset’s compositions were not, however, merged with the Baldwin-Higgins collection and were printed separately, suggesting ‘an awareness of the integrity of the Mirror sequences’ (Mortimer 2005: 267). The popularity of the Mirror continued into the seventeenth century and Felix Kyngston printed an edition in
1610 which included ten additional narratives by Richard Niccols. Mortimer asserts that Niccols’ additions represent ‘the end of the textual dynasty which sprang from Baldwin’s tragedies’. As Mortimer also notes, however, the bibliographic details of the Mirror are more easily resolved than the motivations of the various contributors (Mortimer 2005: 268).

Paul Budra argues that the Mirror was conceived of as a continuation of Lydgate’s Fall and he analyses the text on this basis (Budra 2000). The paratextual details of the earlier editions would indeed seem to support this conclusion and demonstrate a sense of continuity with the form and purpose of the medieval poem. The surviving title-page of Wayland’s suppressed 1554 edition makes the links with Lydgate’s poem explicit, describing Baldwin’s verses as a ‘continuacion of that Argument, concernynge the chefe Prynces of this Iland’ (The Prynter to the Reader). The first edition of 1559 contains an address from Baldwin to the reader which is introduced as A Briefe Memorial of sundrye unfortunate Englishe men and describes his desire to have the story ‘contynewed as from where as Bochas lefte, unto this presente time’ (STC 1247). However, these extracts also demonstrate the point of divergence between Lydgate’s Fall and Baldwin’s Mirror. The narratives of the Fall span the biblical and the classical era; it is an account of humanity’s tragic falls from a wider Christian perspective. The narratives of the Mirror focus on the figures, mythological and historical, who were considered to have shaped the history of the British nation. The 1559 edition is also explicit in its aims to provide an updated narrative which encompasses more contemporary figures up to the ‘presente time’.

The printing history demonstrates that the Mirror was at its peak of popularity at the end of the sixteenth century and the political implications are clear. Mortimer describes the main contributors to the Mirror – Baldwin, Higgins, Blenerhasset and Niccols – as ‘children of the Reformation’ who weave anti-Catholic sentiment into their narratives (Mortimer 2005: 273-4). The involvement of the Catholic printer John Wayland in the initial suppressed edition of the Mirror has been considered odd given the perceived Protestant ambitions of the poem (Mortimer 2005: 274). However, the bafflement expressed by critics is perhaps skewed by a focus on the subsequent involvement of these contributors and their political affiliations. The suppressed 1554 edition had yet to establish a connection with reform writers. Taken on its own merits, Wayland’s print positioned the Mirror as an

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30 Niccols’ 1610 edition was reprinted twice in 1619, twice in 1620 and again in 1621. Mortimer notes that Niccols’ also ‘rationalizes’ the existing collections to avoid duplications (Mortimer 2005: 268).
addition to Lydgate’s mighty medieval text; it may have made a clever selling point by distinguishing it from the edition of his rival Tottell but it remained, like Tottell’s own addition of the *Daunce of Machabree*, supplementary. The paratextual material demonstrates the desire to align the *Fall* with the growth of humanist intellectual enquiry in England but it cannot, however, be considered as a Protestant text. It was during the reigns of Elizabeth and James that the *Mirror* evolved into a distinct textual tradition and became disconnected from the medieval poem which had inspired it. Mortimer suggests that the *Mirror for Magistrates* came into its own when the politics diverged from those of Lydgate and the *Fall*. Thus, the editors can be seen ‘harnessing the tragic possibilities of the *Fall*’ at the moment when Lydgate’s text and reputation was in decline, and they reworked its ‘obvious literary appeal in a new ethical and Protestant idiom’ (Mortimer 2005: 274). Unlike Crowley who was required to rework from the margins of Langland’s text, the editors of the *Mirror* were able to create their own literary tradition with a distinct focus on the matters most pressing to them and their readers. The lines between literature and history blur in the *Fall* but the *Mirror*, with its attempts to create an unbroken narrative running from pre-historical England to the ‘presente’, is history presented as literature.

The tightly chronological structure of the poem and the steady addition of narratives intended to provide a comprehensive history may suggest a text which is also thematically consistent. However, Scott Lucas notes that the seemingly contradictory moral lessons dispensed in the *Mirror* have resulted in scholars describing the poem as inconsistent at best and incoherent at worst (Lucas 2003:45). He praises scholars like Paul Budra and Andrew Hadfield for directing the focus of *Mirror* criticism towards the topicality of its poems. He argues that the *Mirror* is not a procession of inconsistent moral teachings but ‘engaged topical commentary’ (Lucas 2003: 45) and, as discussed above, offers evidence for reading the poems of the ‘good Duke Humphrey’ as a thinly-veiled allusion to Protector Somerset, a hero to many mid-century reformers and contributors to the *Mirror* project (Lucas 2003: 47).

Edward Seymour, Duke of Somerset was the uncle of Edward VI and Protector during the minority reign. The similarities between Somerset and Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester extend to their public image as well as their political role. Somerset was also a highly popular figure, his skill on the battlefield making him something of a ‘national hero’ (Lucas 2003: 48) but, like Gloucester, he clashed with other members of the nobility and
the Privy Council in the on-going struggles for power and influence. His downfall, a source of much anguish for his supporters, followed the events of the summer of 1549. Somerset was charged with bringing the rebels under control but while his attempts to negotiate were received positively by the commons, his approach ‘outraged his fellow Privy Councillors’. It was thought that Somerset had capitulated to the rebels and a coup soon followed which stripped him of his offices (Lucas 2003: 50). He was later tried for treason and beheaded in early 1552, another victim of Fortuna’s wheel. Lucas reads the relevant poems in the Mirror as an attempt by his supporters to ‘rehabilitate’ Somerset’s reputation (Lucas 2003: 52). The rehabilitation could serve the reformist cause by promoting a view of Somerset’s fall not as a sign of divine retribution against the religious reforms he had endorsed, but as a tragedy in which the popular Duke was another victim of fate. This suggests that the tragic potential of the de casibus form could be deployed over the historical when it was deemed appropriate.

The contributors to the Mirror were disappointed and frustrated by the fate of Somerset and the curtailing of his programme of social and religious reforms. Robert Crowley was also frustrated by the pace of reform and his edition of Piers Plowman, it has been argued, attempted to highlight the political continuity between Langland’s poem and his own social reform agenda. To emphasise the continuous narrative of reform, Crowley chose an established medieval text and the authority and authenticity of the poem was central to the message of the edition. Baldwin and the editors of the Mirror chose not a medieval text but a medieval tradition, reworking and reshaping it to reflect the political circumstances of the late sixteenth-century and the concerns of the readership. In the process of rewriting, both Langland and Somerset (as represented by the poems concerning Lydgate’s patron, the Duke of Gloucester) were modelled as enlightened and progressive men who were limited or undermined by the orthodox environment in which they lived.

Despite the Mirror being originally conceived as a continuation to Lydgate’s Fall, the political gap between the two textual traditions widened following the 1559 publication of Baldwin’s poem as a standalone text. A brief survey of editions of the Mirror also illustrate the divergence between Lydgate’s poem and the early modern text through features of

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51 Lucas suggests that the revolts of summer 1549 were an outraged reaction against Somerset ordering the execution of his own brother, Thomas Seymour, also a popular figure. While this may have been a component which inflamed the revolts, it is argued in this thesis that the 1549 rebellions were caused by a complex range of factors which centred on the exploitation of the commons and reactions against the imposition of unpopular religious reforms (see Chapter Three, Section 2.3).
layout and presentation. The 1559 edition printed by Thomas Marshe still retains the use of Black Letter throughout the book. The title-page is similar in style to those deployed by Tottell and Wayland and encloses the title description within an architectural, Classically styled border. This is followed by an Epistle penned by Baldwin and a direct address from him to his readers. Previous sections in this thesis have argued that the development of contents tables as sophisticated tools for navigation aligned with changing reading practices. The contents table facilitated a non-linear reading process which involves back-and-forth consultation and selective reading. Pynson added the feature in his second edition of 1527 and both Tottell and Wayland’s 1554 editions contain a detailed contents table. A much smaller text than the mighty Fall of Princes, Baldwin’s 1559 Mirror contains a basic contents list at the end of the text preceding a list of emendations and the printer’s colophon.

Turning to one of the last versions of the Mirror, Felix Kyngston reprinted Richard Niccol’s ten additional narratives together with the Baldwin-Higgins collection in 1619 (Mortimer 2005: 267). The title of the book is not given as the Mirror for Magistrates, but the Falles of Vnfortunate Princes, providing a link to Lydgate’s original medieval poem. The Kyngston print departs significantly from the earlier version of the Mirror in terms of layout and style, expanding the prefatory material and dispensing with Black Letter. The print is a mix of Roman and Italic type-face throughout and the progression of inductions and dedications preceding the text conveys a sense of confidence in the established textual tradition. The edition includes a narrative to celebrate and commemorate the life of Elizabeth I which is advertised on the title-page:

WHEREVNTO IS ADDED THE
FAMOVS LIFE AND DEATH OF
Qveene Elizabeth, with a declaration of all
the Warres, Battels and Sea-fights, during her
Raigne : wherein at large is described the Battell
of 88. with the particular service of all such Ships and men of note in
that action.

The narrative section dealing with Elizabeth is introduced by a full-page title including printing details and a separate preface, suggesting the poem may have also been conceived of as a stand-alone text. Several decades of additions to the Mirror project have produced a
text to rival Lydgate’s in scale and an extensive contents table is placed at the beginning of the text. In addition to the enlarged decorated initials which introduce each new section, the later post-Conquest narratives are also accompanied by a small, detailed portrait of the historical figure.

Despite the political and paratextual developments applied to the *Mirror* during the second half of the sixteenth century, Lydgate’s Rhyme Royal structure is retained. Baldwin’s 1559 edition utilises the hierarchy of the comma, colon and punctus as consistent end-line punctuation. The overall application is similar to both Tottell and Wayland’s systems; the majority of verse lines end with a mark but this may be waived in cases of enjambement. The comma can appear within the verse line, marking parenthesis and clause boundaries and supporting a grammatical interpretation. The much expanded 1619 edition deploys an increased repertoire of punctuation marks in the verse, utilising the comma, semi-colon, colon, punctus, exclamation mark and question mark. The extended repertoire allows a wider range of interpretative and expressive possibilities. The comma, semi-colon, colon and punctus provide a hierarchy of pauses which denote the relationship between sense-units and clauses. The exclamation and question marks appear occasionally and invite the reader to engage with the moral dilemmas or appreciate the more dramatic or emotional aspects of the narratives. In addition to their structural and interpretative functions, there is a distinct tonal quality attached to the exclamation and question marks. In speech these marks would represent the lifting of the voice in enquiry or a sudden interjection. This is conveyed to the reader through the application of punctuation and clearly demonstrates the increased array of marks assuming the interpretative role of the ‘reader-as-speaker’.

The *Mirror’s* handling of speech and speakers represents an interesting development from Lydgate’s *Fall*. The *Mirror* adapts the narrative device of the *de casibus* genre in which ghostly figures appear before the writer and recount their tales of woe; in Baldwin’s *Mirror*, the figures do not speak for themselves but are spoken for by the editors. The speakers in Lydgate’s *Fall* range from the tyrannical to the pitiful and they recount their own tragic tales to an attentive Bochas who records the narratives with the appearance of a neutral observer. Lydgate’s envoys counter the speakers’ freedom to an extent by providing Lydgate the last word and allowing him to guide the reader in moralistic contemplation at the end of the narrative. Baldwin, however, is overt in his dismissal of the literary device
and his framing of the poem ‘emphasises the absence of ghosts from the Mirror’. In its place, Baldwin presents a ‘pseudo-nonfictional behind-the-scenes account of the process of research and composition’ (Geller 2007: 47). Baldwin describes at length the supposed process of the poem’s inception and composition which involved the meeting of a number of enthusiastic and scholarly men with the express aim of compiling a history of important historical figures. Baldwin describes how each contributor, upon completion of their complaints, must impersonate the figure and asks that his fellow poets – and by extension, the text’s readers – imagine that they see or hear the dead figure speaking (Geller 2007: 47). The Mirror therefore reverts back to the first person where Lydgate had deviated from his source material and adopted the third person.

Detailed analysis of the paratextual material demonstrates that critics have frequently misinterpreted the function of Baldwin’s framing device and its relationship to the text. Sherri Geller notes that this feature of the Mirror has been described by critics in the past as innovative, but argues that it is not the first person narrative which represents the innovation, but the framing device which enacts a process of ‘ventriloquism’ (Geller 2007: 48). The assumption that it is the ghosts who speak and not the poets may appear to be an ‘inconsequential’ inaccuracy which can be easily rectified. However, Geller argues that the misrepresentation of the frame by later contributors to the Mirror project and by modern editors has produced an ‘inappropriate reading strategy’ which subjugates the framing device to such an extent that readers no longer refer to it at all (Geller 2007: 49).

Aligning with recent studies in bibliography (McGann 1983; Gennette 1991; McKenzie 1999), the article argues more broadly for a reassessment of the treatment of early modern paratext by modern editors:

…numerous critical studies have demonstrated that attending to the interaction among textual components and to bibliographical details like type size can improve our comprehension of, for instance, a) authorial strategies for constructing meaning; b) an editor’s, printer’s, or commentator’s means for influencing interpretation of someone else’s work; and c) possible or actual reader response to the distribution of multiple textual components on the page or in the volume. (Geller 2007: 50)

Baldwin’s framing device sought to ‘destabilize the textual hierarchy’ and encourage the reader to consider the frame and the poem as equal components (Geller 2007: 50). This intention has been overlooked and dismantled by subsequent editors, complicating our
understanding of the original poem and Baldwin’s intentions. Richard Niccols removed the
frame in its entirety in his 1610 edition and the subsequent reprints of 1619, 1620 and
1621 (Geller 2007: 55). Geller points to the layout of the frame and text as evidence of
Baldwin’s intentions, noting that the type size used for the frame is larger than that used for
the narratives. This is contrasted with the prints of Lydgate’s *Fall of Princes*, in which the
frame and narratives are presented in a continuous flow and in the same type size. Geller
speculates that, had the 1554 joint edition gone ahead, readers would have noticed the
comparably larger type size in Baldwin’s frame and, presumably, it would have encouraged
the ‘appropriate’ reading strategy (Geller 2007: 58).

Geller’s arguments support and reflect those made in the present thesis; namely,
that paratextual features are an important source of evidence for the treatment and
reception of a text. Geller has demonstrated, furthermore, that we must reassess our
perception of paratext as being always subordinate to the ‘main’ text. She argues the case
in relation to early modern prints and their presentation in modern editions; however, the
observations can be extrapolated to include paratextual material across manuscript and
print. Particularly in the area of reception studies, analysing the various ways in which
paratextual material can generate its own meaning(s) and shape interpretation through
interaction with the text, it must always be a central consideration for editors, book
historians and literary critics. The analysis of reading practices is a specific facet of
reception theory which takes account of developments in literacy and literary culture, and
paratextual evidence is central to building up a comprehensive picture of past reader
engagement. The preceding qualitative analysis has demonstrated the insights which are
provided by diachronic study of punctuation and paratext and we now turn to review these
insights in the following section.
4.5 Lydgate’s Style & the Evidence for Reading Practices

‘…if Lydgate was capable of writing good syntax of both simple and complex kinds, why did he apparently choose to write in a way that has drawn such hostile and exasperated criticism from so many modern readers?’

(Hardman 2006: 16)

In the first printed edition of Lydgate’s *Fall of Princes* in 1494, Pynson left the verse almost entirely devoid of punctuation. The mid-line caesura marked by the virgule was added in his second edition of 1527. Tottell and Wayland utilise an increased repertoire of marks and apply it to both prose and verse. Their editions demonstrate the appearance of recognisable poetic conventions which were being transmitted by the sixteenth-century printers. The mid-line caesura is removed in favour of end-line punctuation and, although punctuation occasionally appears within the verse line, it does not represent a neutral *equiparative* application indicative of a rhetorical system. Furthermore, the form of the mark has changed from the virgule deployed by Pynson to the semi-circular comma. The virgule was a mark with a long history closely associated with scribal culture, but it was gradually usurped by the comma which replaced it as the minor medial mark within the hierarchy of pauses.

As the printers necessarily responded to the demands of the reading public, the expectations changed significantly in the 30 years between Pynson’s issue and the mid-century editions. Tottell and Wayland both engage in a comprehensive process of modernisation with regards the punctuation system. The rhythm and rhyme scheme of the Rhyme Royal stanza is no longer sufficient in guiding the reader through the text. By introducing consistent end-line punctuation and removing the mid-line virgule, Tottell and Wayland impose a structural system which indicates the hierarchical relationship between verse lines. This provides the reader with an interpretation based primarily on grammatical sense units rather than the rhetorical reading encouraged by Pynson. Using Peter J. Lucas’ system of classification, structural punctuation requires further subdivision into the *grammatical* function of separating sense-units within or between sentences, and the *notional* function of linking or associating sense-units or groups of sense-units (Lucas 1997: 170). After categorising the punctuation according to these descriptors, the interpretative intent is considered. Interpretation is also further subdivided into the *elocutionary* (or rhetorical) and the *expository*. The *expository* function, which describes Tottell and Wayland’s usage is
closely related to the structural category, intended to ‘clarify the sense of the text’ (Lucas 2007: 170). However, it does so by marking the relationships between sense-units and sentences within a hierarchy, and this emphasis is necessarily interpretative.

The neutral systems applied in both of Pynson’s editions support a rhetorical interpretation and indicate that the ‘reader-as-speaker’ was still the primary reader model; at the very least, systems of punctuation had yet to fully assume the role. Tottell and Wayland’s editions illustrate punctuation gradually acquiring a more nuanced and interpretative function which accompanies the growth of silent reading. Richard Niccol’s 1619 edition of the Mirror extends the repertoire further and his system of consistent end-line punctuation, which includes the expressive use of question marks and exclamation marks, is grammatical in function and affords a greater range of interpretative possibilities.

The consistent feature found across each of the editions of the Fall of Princes is the observance of the textual divisions. Organising Lydgate’s mighty poem and providing the reader with sufficient navigational aids was less of a choice and more of a necessity. However, as the discussion of certain B-version Piers Plowman manuscripts demonstrated, structure is interpretative. Edwards and Pearsall’s survey of the manuscripts of the major English poetic texts suggest the use of illustration as a form of ordinatio, organisation (see also Parkes 1986). The systematic use of illustration is limited to certain texts but they note Lydgate’s Troy Book developed ‘a standardized sequence of miniatures’. However, of the thirty extant manuscripts of the Fall recorded by Edwards and Pearsall only four contain illustration, two of which are described as extensive (Edwards & Pearsall 1989: 265). Mortimer also observes what he describes as a ‘striking dearth’ of illustrated manuscripts of the Fall. He references Catherine Reynolds’ suggestion that the ‘moralizing spirit’ of Lydgate’s envoys were appreciated by his English readers but were less suited to illustration than Boccaccio’s ‘more explicitly narrative style’ (Reynolds 1999: 268-9, cited in Mortimer 2005: 61). It is interesting to note, then, that Pynson and Tottell decide to include a full set of woodcuts in their prints, placed at the beginning of each Book and closely following the narrative. The addition of woodcut images would have certainly appealed to their customers and, in Tottell’s case, it was a feature to distinguish his edition from his rival Wayland’s. Within such a lengthy poem, perhaps the sixteenth-century readers appreciated

52 See Chapter Three, Section 3.4.
the visual break provided by the illustrations. As discussed in Section 4.3 above, the inclusion of the image of the *Daunce of Machabree* by Tottell has particular political connotations and, it has been argued, reconnects Lydgate’s poem, and the edition as a whole, to the mural in Pardon Churchyard and to a pre-Reformation expression of religious identity.

The mid-century editions of the *Fall* printed by Tottell and Wayland acknowledge the silent reader through both the punctuation and the paratext. The detailed contents tables facilitate non-linear reading practices. This is not to say non-linear reading was the dominant model; it does, however, demonstrate that the variety of ways an early modern reader might wish to engage with the text is reflected in the paratextual material. The prefatory addresses included in both editions also suggest a readership interested in the editorial and/or printing process. The information provided is far removed from the comprehensive apparatus and editorial transparency which is the aim of modern critical editions; however, each additional layer of paratextual material reveals the changing interests of the editors and the readers of the medieval text. Paratextual material can draw the reader closer to the text and its history of composition and transmission, but it can simultaneously create a gap between the reader and the text, a gap in which the author or editor’s aims and interpretations can shape reader response.

The punctuation responds to the reader; the paratext responds to the reader and the environment. Gillespie observes that the paratextual material applied to Lydgate’s texts had both a ‘practical and promotional function’ and was specifically sensitive to changing perceptions of the medieval author (Gillespie 2000: 65). The description can also be extended to the function of paratextual material in general which, at its most basic level, acts as a reader guide, dividing and organising the text into more manageable units. The promotional aspect of paratext predates the printing press – the system of patronage was the cornerstone of scribal culture. Within the manuscript of *Piers Plowman* (MS B.15.17) and the early prints of the *Fall of Princes* by Richard Pynson, the function of the paratext is primarily organisational and navigational. Spacing, textual divisions and decoration are all used to guide the reader through the text. The practical function of paratextual material does not exclude interpretative possibilities and the very act of dividing and emphasising can reveal how the scribe or printer was engaging with the text. In the mid-sixteenth century we witness the ‘promotional’ function evolve into a more explicitly political
function as the printing press became the battleground, and literacy and literary culture the weapons of choice, in the upheavals of the Reformation.

As the later editions of the *Mirror for Magistrates* demonstrate, however, the inclusion of paratextual material or a framing device does not guarantee the reader will employ the ‘appropriate’ reading strategy, and Geller’s detailed bibliographic analysis sets a persuasive argument for the role of paratextual material in reader engagement (Geller 2007: 49). Geller’s comments suggest that reading practices may be evaluated either as a proper response to the (para)text or as a subversion of authorial or editorial intent. This thesis supports the call to reprioritise paratextual material in modern editions and argues that the interaction(s) between text and paratext can provide insight into past reading practices. However, the preceding analysis has been wary of recreating an idealized reader who exhibited an idealized reading practice. Robert Crowley’s paratextual frame is an attempt to guide and control his readers’ responses to Langland’s poem, pulling his readers from the text and into the margins. His attempts were not always successful; Andrew Bostock’s reading strategy involved highlighting the perceived inaccuracies of Crowley’s frame and was certainly a subversion of the editorial intentions (Douce L 205, cited in Brewer 1996:18).

The paratextual elements of the *Fall* appear less radical and less intrusive in contrast to Crowley’s system. Neither Tottell nor Wayland proclaim Lydgate as a voice of reform or insert their own voices into the margins. However, they both make choices regarding the paratextual and textual features of the poem which reveal their own political affiliations, commercial ambitions, and the expectations of the readership. In addition to the less radical nature of the paratextual material contained in the *Fall*, Tottell and Wayland’s editions also appear less inconsistent in terms of the reading practices they support. Crowley’s punctuation practices are conservative in comparison to the innovative use of paratext; Langland’s long alliterative lines perhaps proved resistant to the imposition of additional punctuation, but Crowley’s editorial rationale also expresses a concern for textual authority which extends to the treatment of the punctuation. Despite Tottell and Wayland’s competitive claims of source manuscripts and corrections, the punctuation is considered fit for modernisation. Tottell and Wayland both ‘follow their own habits or inclination’ when dealing with the *accidental* feature of punctuation (Greg 1950: 22). This attitude eventually comes to encapsulate the conventional approach of modern editors.
whose concern for the substantial features of the text often comes at the expense of the accidental. However, Tottell and Wayland were not producing a modern critical edition, they were producing an edition for their mid-sixteenth-century readership and it is the contradiction and complexity of the printed medieval text which allows us to analyse their choices in relation to changing models of literacy.

Tottell and Wayland’s editions demonstrate an impulse to modernise. Lydgate is not portrayed as a voice of radical reform but through the paratextual material he is aligned with the principles of Italian humanism. Furthermore, had Wayland’s proposed joint edition gone ahead, the link between Lydgate’s medieval poem and the sixteenth-century re-imagining of the de casibus tradition would have been established and it is tempting for the book historian to consider an alternative, ‘thoroughly Protestant’ history of the Fall (Gillespie 2006: 216). The punctuation, meanwhile, is updated to reflect the conventions of layout and the reading practices of the mid-sixteenth century readership. However, the process of modernisation initiated in the mid-sixteenth century stalled and the Fall was not printed in its entirety again until 1924 (Mortimer 2005: 276). Phillipa Hardman points out that Chaucerian texts were subject to sustained editorial interest; Lydgate’s were not and this has further compounded the negative comparisons. Furthermore, the act of modernising the punctuation applied to Chaucer’s syntax over the years has convinced us that his writing is inherently more modern and accessible (Hardman 2006: 26).

If the last few decades have generated a renewed interest in Lydgate’s career and writing, the most recent scholarship has began to acknowledge the difficulty in categorising his vast output. ‘Genre’ may be an anachronistic term for literature of the middle ages, but as modern critics we nevertheless find ourselves attempting to describe what kind of poems Lydgate wrote and uncover who his readership was. As Claire Sponsler has noted, a large proportion of Lydgate’s output was poetry intended for entertainment or ceremonial purposes, and they necessarily reject our neat classifications of ‘poetry’ or ‘drama’ (Sponsler 2010: 1). Nolan similarly describes Lydgate’s dramatic texts as standing at the ‘intersection of genres and media’ which challenge, not just our descriptions of Lydgate’s writing, but the ‘assumptions from which both literary and dramatic criticism proceed’ (Nolan 2006: 169). The Fall of Princes also blurs certain boundaries between literature and history we may wish to impose and, despite its ‘monumental textuality’ (Summit 2006: 211), the poem
retains a link, through Lydgate’s style, to the oral reading culture in which it was composed.

Much of the frustration aimed at John Lydgate, Monk of Bury, is directed towards his literary style and syntax. Hardman observes that the stylistic feature for which Lydgate has been most criticised, the perceived failure to produce a main verb amidst tumbling verse lines, often occurs at the beginnings of texts. Lydgate’s openings can be used to recap past events or information, or to signal a new narrative direction; the ‘accumulation of adverbial clauses’ which has aggravated many modern readers can be explained as ‘functions of their situation in the text’ (Hardman 2006: 21). In other words, Lydgate’s trailing paratactic style was entirely deliberate and we must acknowledge that his syntax demonstrates how he expected his texts to be read. Lydgate organises his verse into segments which are much longer than the sentences and paragraphs we encounter as modern readers, but this too was deliberate (Hardman 2006: 24). Taking Lydgate’s *Troy Book* as an example, Hardman argues that the textual divisions support the structure and aims of Lydgate’s verse. Within each major section of the poem there is a ‘high level of connectedness’ achieved through the use of discourse markers, while the boundaries between major sections are clearly marked in the verse by ‘narratorial conclusions’ (Hardman 2006: 24). Hardman notes that the major textual divisions are also marked in the manuscripts by enlarged or decorated initials; this is an example of paratextual and textual features interacting and blurring the lines between punctuation and paratext.

Hardman’s essay comes out in full defence of Lydgate’s style, turning accusations of trailing syntax into ‘openness’ and fluidity of ideas (Hardman 2006: 16). In relation to Lydgate’s frequent habit of beginning verse lines with conjunctions, Hardman observes that ‘[c]onnectedness is a quality Lydgate must have valued highly’ (Hardman 2006: 23). Furthermore, this connectedness, argues Hardman, ‘has much in common with habits of oral speech’ (Hardman 2006: 30). It is our insensitivity to the orality of Lydgate’s writing, whether in mural or monumental form, combined with our desire to impose an ill-fitting system of punctuation, which informs our notions of Lydgate’s syntax as unruly and unrefined. Reading Lydgate’s poems in their original manuscript form may provide an antidote:

Reading Lydgate’s text in manuscript, on the other hand, makes it evident that the
inherent punctuation of metrical verse, visibly presented by lineation and in many cases caesura marks as well, with small coloured capitals sometimes added to indicate minor narrative subdivisions, is perfectly adequate for understanding the flexible construction of the poet’s syntax and for enabling a reader to deliver the text intelligibly to a listening audience. (Hardman 2006: 26)

The preceding analysis has shown, however, that while the ‘inherent punctuation of metrical verse’ is adequate for the ‘reader-as-speaker’ and his/her listening audience, the ‘reader-as-hearer’ required more in the way of textual and paratextual guidance. Hardman argues that we must first acknowledge the orality of Lydgate’s verse before we edit and evaluate. The call to re-contextualise aspects of past literary cultures and reading practices echoes Geller’s arguments regarding paratext, and aligns with the broader concept of the ‘sociology’ of the text and the need to respond to the complex circumstances of textual production (McKenzie 1999; Geller 2007).

The evidence we have for oral culture and the development of the literate survives in writing and so the acknowledgements necessarily begin with the text. The combined analytical and interpretative abilities of the book historian and the literary critic come to the fore in this venture; as the current thesis demonstrates, the development of literacy and reading practices can be charted in the interactions between the textual and paratextual features of the book. The term ‘oral residue’ was devised by Walter J. Ong in his 1965 essay *Oral Residue in Tudor Prose Style*. The term acknowledges the echoes of orality which persist in early modern texts and suggests the complex and gradual nature of the shift from orality to literacy. Suzanne Fleischman discusses the phenomenon and argues that ‘[e]ven after the introduction of printing, a ‘literate’ textuality only gradually achieved the place it has today in cultures where most reading is silent. Hence it is not surprising to find “oral residue” in texts known to have been composed in writing and under circumstances of increasing literacy’ (Fleischman 1990: 20-21). Fleischman’s observations on the pace and mechanisms behind the shift edges towards Jajdelska’s description of the ‘critical mass’ of silent readers which emerged in the late seventeenth century and shaped the style and structure of prose (Jajdelska 2007). The ‘openness’ of medieval syntax and the fluidity of its transmission is representative of the literary culture in which it was composed.

Joyce Coleman, however, is highly critical of scholars who invoke Ong’s theory of
‘oral residue’ as a means to ‘explain away any apparent overlap in traits’ (Coleman 1996: 8). The perspective perpetuates the narrative of a march towards silent reading and the polarity between orality and literacy. In this narrative, the practices of aurality and public reading are misrepresented as an intermediate stage which occurred before the development of ‘literate’ culture rather than, as Coleman argues, ‘the modality of choice for highly literate and sophisticated audiences’ (Coleman 1996: 1). Coleman’s arguments are a reminder of modern critical bias which has traditionally prioritized the development and practices of silent reading and overlooked the importance of aurality in late medieval literary culture. Furthermore, the arguments turn attention back towards the reader and places reading practices centre stage in the processes of composition and production. However, it is possible to chart the growth of silent reading practices while rejecting a teleological view and acknowledging the complexities and overlaps in the process. The inherent orality/aurality and mouvance of the medieval text met with the increasing literate fixity of an early modern and modern literary culture and the preceding analysis of Langland and Lydgate has gone some way to show this process as it is represented in the paratextual and punctuation practices on the page.

The relationship between Jajdelska’s theory of the ‘critical mass’ and the role of philological analysis in the discourses of the medieval text is discussed in detail in the following Chapter. Chapter Five also provides an overview of the analysis and an opportunity to assess the theoretical approach taken in the thesis. It shall reassert the central argument outlined in Chapter One – that the interactions between and within systems of punctuation and paratext can be used as an indicator of reading practices. Finally, the Chapter proposes a re-assessment of the underlying function of punctuation during the shift from a culture of orality to a culture of silent reading.
CHAPTER FIVE

Book, Page & Reader: Towards a Theory of Medieval & Early Modern Reading Practices

5.1 Silent Reading and the Medieval Text

‘…medieval writing does not produce variants: it is variance…’

(Cerquiglini 1999: 78)

Cerquiglini claims that medieval writing is, by definition, variance. The concept of variance and fluidity of the medieval text and medieval textual culture has not only been acknowledged by scholars in recent decades, but celebrated. From an editorial perspective, an acceptance of the shifting nature of the medieval text has freed scholars from the constraints of stemmatic theory and the reconstruction of the ‘best’ text. It is a process of democratization which necessarily shifts the focus from the author to the reader and opens up new avenues for research in reception theory and reader engagement. Paul Zumthor’s term *mouvance* encapsulates the fluidity and mobility of the medieval text and encourages us to acknowledge that the authority of any given text is derived from its own circumstances of composition, production and reception (Zumthor 1992). These theoretical perspectives support and encourage the process of historicisation; analysis in the preceding chapters has attempted to contextualise each poem and each edition by evaluating the affiliations and motivations of the author and editor(s), and by surveying the political and historical events which shaped both the production and reception.

Scanlon asserts that ‘the greatest methodological strength of new historicism is its intensely synchronic bias, its capacity to situate particular texts in a thick description of their own historical moment’ (Scanlon 2007a: 53). The detailed synchronicity has allowed a re-evaluation of Robert Crowley’s politics and the editorial approach of his 1550 editions of *Piers Plowman*, demonstrating the nuance and complexity of Crowley as reformer and as editor. The notions of authenticity and authority were fundamental to Crowley’s aims for the edition but they also moderated and shaped his editorial decisions, producing a version which is notably conservative in its handling of the textual elements. The analysis of the prints of the *Fall of Princes* illustrates that perceptions of John Lydgate and his writing remained flexible during the sixteenth century and he had yet to be dismissed from the
emerging canon of early English literature. The focus on Lydgate’s Catholicism as the primary reason for his decline in popularity does not hold much weight; after all, each of the medieval writers who were successfully accommodated into the narrative of reform were also Catholic, and Crowley’s editorial policy demonstrates that even a staunch reformer could deal tactically and sensitively with problematic doctrinal issues.

Chapter Three and Four, therefore, examined in detail the content and function of both poems in order to understand their diverging treatment and transmission. Langland’s literature of complaint could be repurposed in support of the Protestant cause and, specifically in Crowley’s edition, presented as a critique of the slow-moving pace of reform. However, Lydgate’s celebratory writings, composed for and about the ruling elite, were less easily incorporated; his political centrality, often characterised as capitulation to the Lancastrian regime, fostered a sense of distrust which continues to shape modern critical responses to the fifteenth-century poet. The eventual dismissal and disparagement of Lydgate was largely due to the inability of early modern and modern society to understand the form and function of public poetry in the fifteenth century.

The textual transmission histories of Langland and Lydgate are also compelling examples of the legacy of early editorial interpretations and decisions; the suppressed ‘Protestant’ element of Wayland’s 1554 edition of the Fall offers a tantalizing glimpse into an alternative history of Lydgate as a voice of early English humanism (Gillespie 2006: 216). Despite the insights afforded by historical contextualisation, the ‘bias’ of synchronic analysis can result in distortion or limitation. The potential reformist interpretation of the Fall, while compelling, should be treated with caution. This thesis, therefore, has combined the interpretative strengths of synchronic analysis with the broader evaluative possibilities afforded by diachronic study, situating the text within its own ‘historical moment’ (Scanlon 2007a: 53) but also within a wider history of textual transmission. It has demonstrated how these medieval texts moved through the sixteenth century and were subject to various intra- and extra-linguistic pressures which shaped the perception, production and reception of the medieval text. The combined synchronic and diachronic approach has provided the opportunity to consider the relationship between the editions, in addition to their connections to literary culture more generally. The central theoretical assertion outlined in Chapter One proposed that textual continuity must be an aspect of textual mouvance, and the subsequent analysis was used to examine this claim.
The editions have been evaluated as much for the textual and paratextual links they demonstrate as for the differences and developments. Each edition displays innovations: a new form of punctuation mark, for example, or the inclusion of a contents table. Each edition also contains echoes of the history of textual transmission and/or past reading practices; descriptions of sources consulted, or the retention of the mid-line caesura. The thesis has both acknowledged the connections and attempted to explain them. Some links can be considered in terms of the practicalities of the printing process; Tottell’s use of Pynson’s woodcut images illustrates the principles of trade and economy which underpinned the early publishing industry. Other links have cultural or political resonance; Tottell’s inclusion of the Daunce of Machabree with the accompanying image is not only a visual link to a previous stage of the text’s transmission history, it can also be understood as a reaffirmation of Lydgate’s connection to medieval religious culture at a time when the Henrician and Edwardian reforms were being dismantled.

The printed medieval text both exemplifies and further complicates this picture of diverse literacy practices existing in the sixteenth century as editors attempted to balance the tension between the desire for authenticity and the need for modernisation. Sian Echard discusses the ‘imperatives’ of authenticity and authority which govern the treatment of medieval texts in post-medieval society. She argues that visuality remains key in this endeavour and features such as type and illustration were deployed as markers of authority (Echard 2008: vii). Several choices relating to the paratextual material in the selected editions demonstrate these imperatives at work; Black Letter is utilised in each print, save only Kyngston’s edition of the Mirror from 1619 which deploys a hierarchy of Roman and Italic type-faces. The printer’s colophon, of particular interest to Echard as a mark of past book-making practices, appears in each of Crowley’s impressions and Owen Roger’s reprint from 1561. Pynson did not include a colophon in his 1494 print but includes one along with a full-page printer’s emblem in his 1527 edition. Wayland eschews the colophon but his contemporary Tottell includes the details in a traditional pyramid layout on the final leaf of the text. Perhaps most interestingly, Baldwin’s first edition of the Mirror from 1559, a poem inspired by Lydgate’s medieval text, also includes a colophon. The traditional features appear alongside paratextual innovations such as the increasingly detailed contents page, marginal annotations and the editor’s address to the reader which could contain biographical and bibliographical information, in addition to providing the
reader with an interpretative frame.

On a solely paratextual level, readers of the printed medieval text were engaging with a variety of reading practices, a mix of the traditional and the innovative, often within a single edition. The systems of punctuation are similarly complex and demonstrate the gradual nature of the developments and the richness of literary culture. The late medieval and early modern period witnessed a growth in literacy levels and increased demand for access to literary culture. Before the emergence of the ‘critical mass’, however, silent reading was one practice among many in a culture of ‘literate aurality’ (Sponsler 2010: 1). The preceding chapters have considered the various systems in relation to the editorial approach as a whole, tracing the extra-linguistic factors down to the intra-linguistic detail. The form and function of punctuation markings across the selected manuscript and prints have also been analysed diachronically, linked to technological developments and conventions of presentation. Ultimately, the evolution of the form and distribution of punctuation has been aligned with developments in reading practices and mapped onto the changing model of reader. Parkes’ monumental study provided the foundations for the diachronic analysis and has been combined with reader-focused theories of punctuation development (Parkes 1992; Lucas 2003; Jajdelska 2007). Jajdelska’s theory of the ‘critical mass’ of silent readers which emerged in the late seventeenth century has been adopted and adapted, and the model extended back to the sixteenth century and the period of transition. Joyce Coleman’s criticisms of scholarship which has ‘institutionalized the triumph of private reading’ disrupts the traditional narrative and calls for a reassessment of the complexity and overlap of reading practices which existed in the late medieval period (Coleman 1995: 64).

The subverted narrative of literacy development is spreading across disciplines and Arnold Hunt’s detailed study of early modern preaching examines the traditionally polarised concepts of orality and literacy in relation to sixteenth and seventeenth century sermon culture. He finds within the Protestant and Puritan sermon cultures an emphasis on the ‘verbal’ over the ‘visual’ which was considered to be ‘an integral part of Protestant self-definition and a deliberate break from the pre-Reformation Catholic past’ (Hunt 2010: 20-21). These observations do not contradict traditional conceptions of the polemical divide between Catholic and Protestant forms of worship, but Hunt does not overlook the questions this raises in relation to our conception of the ‘word-centred nature of early
modern Protestantism’ (Hunt 2010: 19) and the development of a literate and predominantly silent reading culture. The acknowledgement of the role of orality and aurality in early Protestantism sheds further light on Crowley’s own ‘dialogic’ polemics and his engagement with Langland’s poem (Wood 2009: 103). In a wider sense, however, it poses yet another challenge to the grand narrative of silent reading development and the associated teleology of reform. The following sections of this chapter critically examine the oral/literate dichotomy in response to the evidence gathered from the printed medieval text and concludes that the oral/literate descriptors are in need of revision.

The chosen texts in the thesis range from MS B.15.17 (c. 1400) to one of the last prints of the Mirror for Magistrates published in 1619; the focus, however, has been the intersection of the transmission histories of Langland and Lydgate in the mid-sixteenth century. The thesis, then, positions itself between the period of ‘literate aurality’ (Sponsler 2010: 1) and the emergence of Jajdelska’s ‘critical mass’ (Jajdelska 2007), and the shift from a culture of orality and aurality to a culture of increasingly silent readers has been charted through the developments of the paratextual features and systems of punctuation. The results of the qualitative analysis display a level of disparity between the pace of paratextual development and the adoption of grammatical punctuation markings which are indicative of silent reading practices. The disparity has been discussed in terms of editorial concerns with issues of authority and authenticity which moderated and influenced the treatment of the medieval text. However, while the printed medieval text may complicate our attempts to chart the development of silent reading, the complexity is also evidence of the mix of practices which existed in the sixteenth century. Parkes observes that ‘[p]unctuation was developed by stages which coincided with changing patterns of literacy, whereby new generations of readers in different historical situations imposed new demands on the written medium itself’ (Parkes 1992: 2). This thesis has demonstrated that the same is true of paratextual features which can be similarly mapped onto the changing model of reader.

The approach towards the paratextual material in this thesis has aligned with Bonnie Mak’s study which rejects the traditional divide imposed between manuscript and print. The page, argues Mak, is a constant and must always act as an ‘interface’ between the reader and the text (Mak 2011: 21). Thus, the basic function of paratext as a reader guide has been acknowledged across the manuscript and printed editions. The developments in paratextual form and function witnessed in the printed text are not
considered as more sophisticated systems, only as systems which necessarily reflect the requirements and interests of the contemporary readership. It is, however, argued that punctuation and paratext developed more distinct roles during the sixteenth century. The underlying function of both punctuation and paratext continues to be the division of text into more manageable units, but the sixteenth century also recognised and exploited the political and propagandistic potential of paratext.

As the preceding analysis has demonstrated, a comprehensive picture of reader engagement and reading practices emerges only when the systems of paratext and punctuation are considered in conjunction. Evaluating the interaction between punctuation and paratext within a given edition can build a detailed synchronic picture of reader engagement. Evaluating the interaction between systems of punctuation and paratext across a number of editions demonstrates how both were shaped by the changing model of reader during the sixteenth century. Furthermore, this diachronic approach can illustrate the changing patterns of paratext and punctuation usage. John Lennard’s essay attempts to outline a theory of punctuation development along historical principles and brings together several observations regarding the interaction between punctuation and paratextual elements on the page. Lennard has formulated an 8-level ‘axis’ which aims to categorise the ‘lexical’ and ‘bibliographic’ features which appear in the written text (Lennard 2000: 5). Each of these ‘levels’ – spacing, punctuation markings, pagination, etc. – develop chronologically and Lennard’s reasoning echoes Paul Saenger’s assertion that the changing functions of the written text, combined with increasing demand, exerted pressures on the physical format of the book (Saenger 1982: 390). Lennard’s ‘axis’ separates the textual and the bibliographic (or paratextual) features, but each level is considered a form of punctuation in the broad sense, aligning with the views of the current thesis. He argues that by the later middle ages each of the eight levels is likely to have been deployed in the text; MS B.15.17 analysed in Chapter Three exhibits each feature to a greater or lesser extent.

However, the emergence of humanism witnessed a proliferation and ‘conventionalisation’ of new marks and, subsequently, the use of certain paratextual features decreased, namely the decorative elements and attention to the overall mise-en-page (Lennard 2000: 6). The use of decorated initials, rubrication and illustration were

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53 A reproduction of Lennard’s ‘axis’ can be found in the Appendices (fig. V, pp. 238).
features commonly deployed by scribes to divide and subdivide the text and functioned as a reader guide; emphatic rubrication might also communicate something of the scribe or exemplar’s interpretative frame. Lennard discusses the economics of print as an extra-linguistic factor which influenced the decrease in certain paratextual features; commercial viability was certainly the central consideration of the early printers attempting to consolidate their business and achieve the balance of supply and demand (Lennard 2000: 6). However, this thesis has argued explicitly that the increase in form and distribution of punctuation markings during the late medieval and early modern periods is a consequence of the changing reader model. Punctuation marks were required to convey the levels of interpretative and expressive nuance previously communicated by the ‘reader-as-speaker’.

Discussing the axis on a syntactic level, Lennard describes the shift from a ‘rhetorically maximal definition, to the modern sentence, which has a grammatically minimal definition’ and he credits the emergence of the novel format with shaping the ‘complexity of internal sentence architecture’ (Lennard 2000: 7). While Lennard observes the overall development of grammatically constructed syntax which replaced the rhetorical, he falls back on the notion of a ‘conceptual change’ as an explanation. Jajdelska’s research rejects such vague notions of attitude and concept, and explains this development in syntactical ‘architecture’ in terms of an internally constructed narrator who was required to replace the ‘reader-as-speaker’ within a culture of silent reading (Jajdelska 2007: 3). An increase in the form and distribution of punctuation accompanied the increase and silent readers; extensive readers require more extensive punctuation. Furthermore, this thesis has demonstrated that developments in the structure, or ‘architecture’, of paratextual material can also be viewed in terms the changing requirements of the reader model. The greater the distance between the reader and the text – linguistically, thematically, diachronically – the more extensive the paratextual material needs to be. Thus, editions of Chaucerian Workes emerging in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries contain paratextual features that may be more accurately described as ‘apparatus’ intended to help the reader contextualise and interpret an older text.54

In considering the silent reader and the medieval text, and the associated systems of

54 Thomas Speght’s 1598 edition of Chaucer’s Workes printed by Adam Islip advertises the features of the textual apparatus on the title page. In addition to the biographical material included – the ‘Portraiture and Progenie Shewed’ – the edition also claims ‘Difficulties opened’ and ‘Old and obscure words explained’ (STC 5079).
paratext and punctuation, this thesis has synthesised and adapted a variety of theoretical perspectives relating to paratext, punctuation and literary culture. The research has also demonstrated, in the broad sense, a connection to the discipline of historical sociopragmatics. Historical sociopragmatics attempts to account for developments in speech and the associated forms of behaviour, but the information must be mined from written records and the ‘interaction between specific aspects of social context and particular historical language’ (Culpeper 2011: 1). It requires a process of historicisation to account for the factors which shaped the composition and production of the text combined with a diachronic, philological approach towards the linguistic details. In this way, the methodology reflects that of the current thesis which similarly unites detailed synchronic contextualisation with diachronic analysis. Furthermore, there has been a continued focus on the process and effects of interaction within and between editions, and within and between systems of paratext and punctuation. Pragmatic meaning is generated by these interactions occurring on the page; these interactions are always dynamic and attest to the complexity of early modern literary culture. More specifically, this thesis has utilised the pragmatic methodology to attempt the (re)construction of past reading practices which are evidenced in the interactions on the page, in the book, and in literary culture.

While the thesis has been primarily concerned with the written word rather than the spoken, it has acknowledged aspects of orality which are contained within the poems and discussed how these aspects may or may not be physically represented across the various editions. We now turn to the next section which offers a theoretically focused discussion of the orality of medieval texts and the implications for our understanding of reading practices as they transitioned from the oral to the literate.
5.1.1 Speakers & Speeches: Representing the Oral

‘Transcribed on paper, spontaneous spoken language often strikes the literate observer as unstructured and incoherent – in a word, ungrammatical’.

(Fleischman 1990: 23)

The analysis undertaken in the previous chapters has demonstrated the potential of the historical sociopragmatic approach to recover meaning and evidence for reader engagement in the interactions of the book and the page. Suzanne Fleischman views the discipline of pragmatics as a welcome reaction against descriptive grammars which traditionally focused on ‘elegant descriptive formalisms of isolated (and often constructed) sentence types’, and overlooked the evidence for usage patterns contained in spontaneous constructions of speech (Fleischman 1990: 23). The insights provided by the analysis of ‘real’ speakers and their behaviour in ‘real’ contexts can and should, argues Fleischman, be applied to the study of the medieval text:

…many of the disconcerting properties of medieval vernacular texts – their extraordinary parataxis, mystery particles, conspicuous anaphora and repetitions, ‘proleptic’ topicalizations, and jarring alterations of tenses, to cite but a few – can find more satisfying explanations if we first of all acknowledge the extent to which our texts structure information the way a spoken language does, and then proceed to the linguistic literature that explores the pragmatic underpinning of parallel phenomena in naturally occurring discourse. (Fleischman 1990: 23)

While it is an examination of reading practices found within the medieval text, Fleischman’s article is, more broadly, a defence of the discipline of philology and a call to re-invigorate this long-standing area of study by acknowledging the insights provided by pragmatic theory and approach. She does not argue that medievalists have ignored the oral context of medieval texts, only that they have failed to fully understand the implications of the orality and ‘carry [it] forward into critical analysis’ (Fleischman 1990: 22). In other words, the failure to confront the orality of the medieval text shapes our perception and analysis of medieval syntax, often negatively. This echoes Phillipa Hardman’s claims that John Lydgate’s verse ‘has much in common with habits of oral speech’ and supports her view that critics of his syntax have misunderstood its relationship to the culture of residual orality in which it was composed (Hardman 2006: 30).
If the medieval text is imbued with orality and the associated reading practices are performative, we might consider how these aspects developed within the printed editions of the sixteenth century, as orality became increasingly residual and silent reading became the dominant practice. Marilynn Desmond’s essay entitled *The Visuality of Reading in Pre-Modern Textual Cultures* aligns with Zumthor’s theory of textual *mouvance*, asserting that all medieval texts should be considered as ‘transcripts of an oral performance’ (Desmond 2009: 220). By freeing pre-modern texts from the constraints of stemmatic theory and by acknowledging the ‘aural/oral component’ of textuality, the theory of *mouvance* also provides a framework for considering the ‘inherent performativity’ of texts and reading (Desmond 2009: 220).

Fleischman similarly asserts that, in relation to grammar and syntax, ‘the language of medieval documents is essentially a spoken language’ but that it is also, by virtue of its medium and the surviving evidence, a ‘text language’ (Fleischman 1990: 24). She argues that this apparent contradiction raises the issue of ‘the gap that separates the performance from the manuscript, the voice from the text’ (Fleischman 1990: 24). The mediating role of writing obscures the orality and renders our attempts to reconstruct the oral and performative context(s) approximate. This reality should not deter the efforts, however, and Fleischman asserts that there are ‘clear traces of the oral infrastructure that have survived the transformation from performance to manuscript’ (Fleischman 1990: 24). These traces she finds in the linguistic detail – the survival of tense switching, for example, which is indicative of spontaneous speech.

Fleischman describes the written documents themselves as ‘fixed’, asserting that ‘much of the paralinguistic and pragmatic information they contain as “storytelling events” has been lost’. This is further complicated, she argues, by the process of scribal transmission and later editing processes which remove the text almost entirely from its original oral context (Fleischman 1990: 24). Salter similarly points to the challenge of uncovering ‘ephemeral’ reading practices from the ‘fixed’ written text (Salter 2012: 4). However, this thesis has argued, in theory and in practice, that analysis of the systems of punctuation and paratext can uncover layers of pragmatic meaning. Furthermore, in the ‘gap’ between the performance and the manuscript and between the reader and the text lies the page. The page is ‘an interface, standing at the centre of a complicated dynamic of interaction and reception’ (Mak 2011: 21), and the interactions between the textual and paratextual elements on the page can be used as evidence of past reading practices. A diachronic analysis of how the page develops during the late medieval and early modern
period is a process of reconstruction and will always be ‘approximative’ (Fleischman 1990: 24). Nevertheless, the preceding analysis has demonstrated that an approach which unites the disciplines of book history and textual criticism and which is ‘unashamed of its own historicity’ (Simpson 2007a: 30) can prove to be a fruitful avenue for research.

Chapter Three discussed the representation of speakers and speeches within the manuscripts of the *Piers Plowman* B-text tradition. Features such as spacing, rubrication and decorated initials were deployed by scribes to mark the beginning of a speech or the introduction or change of speaker. MS B.15.17 is one among a clutch of manuscripts which refer to the poem as a ‘dialogue’ (Benson 1997: 20). Phillips has taken the analysis of speech marking in the tradition further by asserting that the frequent marking of ‘quod’ in Corpus Christi College MS 201 actively encourages reader participation (Phillips 2013: 440). The marking of the dialogic aspects of the poem does not only provide evidence for early interpretations of the poem, it suggests how it was being read. If the text was indeed a ‘transcript of an oral performance’ in the first instance (Desmond 2009: 220), each reader is engaging in a unique re-performance. MS B.15.17 is less explicit in its marking of Langland’s speech elements but Chapter Three argued that the use and patterns of spacing can be similarly considered as evidence of reader engagement and of the treatment of the oral elements of the poem. The layout or ‘ordinatio’ of the manuscript page presents ‘a complex and competing set of visual codes for the reader to decipher’ (Desmond 2009: 220) and, by highlighting the speech in this way, the scribe encourages a reading strategy which places the focus on the dialogue and the interactions between the speakers. Furthermore, the use of spacing can be mapped onto the reader model. The manuscript page invites the reader to insert themselves into the dialogue but it also requires the presence of the ‘reader-as-speaker’; the system of punctuation is minimal and the physical speaker must translate the verse and the ‘visual codes’ (Desmond 2009: 220) surrounding it for the listening audience.

The prevalence of and inter-textual links between these features demonstrate the centrality of speech and speakers to early interpretations of the poem, but Crowley’s edition printed a century or more later does not highlight the dialogic aspect. Andy Wood observes that Crowley’s own polemical writings were ‘both dialogic...and multivocal’ (Wood 2009: 103), a description which can be easily applied to Langland’s rich tapestry of dreams, speakers and speeches. The decision not to mark the dialogic aspects was
undoubtedly influenced by the technological limitations of the press and Crowley’s economic considerations. However, Lawrence Warner has argued that Crowley’s edition was a reaction against, not an endorsement of, the orality of the poem and its previous mode of transmission (Warner 2014: 83). Crowley re-contextualised Piers Plowman for his readership by connecting the poem’s historical moment to the contemporary events of the mid-sixteenth century. The 1550 editions are also an attempt to re-textualise and recover the medieval poem from its origins in a culture of orality through the editorial choices. This thesis would propose, however, that Crowley’s emphasis on the printed word requires further refinement in relation to his role as a Protestant polemicist and popular preacher. As Arnold Hunt has demonstrated, Protestantism remained closely tied to ‘oral forms of communication’ through its active sermon culture (Hunt 2010: 57). As a polemicist, preacher and editor, Robert Crowley embodies the complex early modern attitudes towards orality and literacy.

When Crowley closes a dialogic door he opens a discursive window and his marginal annotations chart the editor in dialogue with the text. Whether Crowley’s polemical paratextual framing of the poem forecloses the possibility of reader engagement or encourages it is open for debate. But if we consider Warner’s proposal that the Latin interpolations in Piers Plowman are evidence of early reader engagement (Warner 2014: 54), Crowley’s marginal annotations present continuity of reader interaction. Crowley’s sixteenth-century reworking of Piers Plowman involved the insertion of his own voice into the poem; he becomes a speaker. It may be a subversion of Langland’s authority and intentions, but it is also evidence of Reformation engagement with the Catholic medieval text.

The concept of the ‘voice’ and of speakers and speeches is also central to the de casibus tradition and how the voices are represented and distorted during its history of transmission can provide insight into the changing function(s) of the poem in late medieval and early modern society. Lydgate’s addition of the envoy represents a unique reworking of the poem for his English vernacular readers and indicates the fifteenth century taste for moralising anecdotes. The envoy also served a more explicitly political function; commissioned by Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester, uncle and Protector to the young king Henry VI, the ‘monumental textuality’ of the poem has been read as a display of Humphrey’s power and as an attempt to conceal the vulnerability of the Lancastrian
The envoys were specifically intended to provide advice for ‘noble pryncis’ (Mortimer 2005: 58) and in the context of Humphrey’s commission, we might be inclined to read them as a message from the Protector to his young ward. This raises the question of whether to consider the envoys as Lydgate’s voice or his patron’s. Within Lydgate’s version of the poem, the voice of the ghost retains its prominence while Bochas is cast as an observer and tasked with recording their tales in writing.

This fictional process represents a complex interaction between speaker and scribe, and between scribe and reader. The process also involves the transference and blurring between orality and literacy, between the spoken and the written. The fictional speeches are recorded by Bochas and, within the culture of oral/aural reading practices, the ‘reader-as-speaker’ would be expected to re-introduce the ‘voice’ and re-perform the speech. Joyce Coleman traces the development of the verb ‘read’ in fifteenth century texts and argues that the term gradually came to connote a sense of private engagement. Lydgate’s Fall of Princes contains an interesting mix of references to the practice of reading which, she argues, demonstrates Humphrey’s ‘scholarly tendencies’ outstripping those of the poet. The prologue and epilogue, which feature Humphrey prominently, invoke a ‘scholarly, apparently private reader’ with many references to the process of ‘seeing’ the text; the main poem, by contrast, contains references to aural reading practices (Coleman 1996: 205):

How it [the Roman triumph] was vsid, he [Boccaccio] maketh mencioun,
Ceriousli reherseth the manere,
Which I shal write, yf ye list to heere. (Book IV: 516-518, cited in Coleman 1996: 206)

The transferal of written word to spoken word and from page to performance is alluded to by Lydgate in his verse; he assumes that his readers will ‘heere’ the text. This passage, asserts Coleman, illustrates the ‘complete aural-narrative constellation’ of the poem which passes from a ‘(re)writing author’ to an audience of listeners (Coleman 1996: 206). The references to silent, scholarly reading are linked to Humphrey and his intellectual endeavours but there are no explicit value judgements attached and aural reading practices were clearly at the forefront of Lydgate’s mind during the process of composition. Furthermore, as Phillipa Hardman has argued, the paratactic structure of Lydgate’s verse is evidence of how he expected his texts to be read (Hardman 2006: 21). The failure to acknowledge the orality/aurality of the verse, combined with the lack of editorial attention, has resulted in a misinterpretation of the form and function of Lydgate’s poetry.
In the second half of the sixteenth century and with the emergence of the *Mirror for Magistrates*, the function of speeches and the role of the speaker shifts again. Geller observes that Baldwin’s framing device has been frequently misinterpreted; his frame represents a significant reworking of the tradition, and an example of the role played by paratext in early modern reading practices (Geller 2007). Baldwin adapts the literary device, removing the ghostly figures and inserting the *Mirror’s* editors in their place – a process of ‘ventriloquism’ which aims to enact full control over the voices of the figures (Geller 2007: 49). Baldwin’s prefatory material is explicit in its references to the scholarly process of research, collaboration and composition of the poems and in prioritising the voice of the editors over those of the historical figures, he is prioritising the historical over the literary. The literary device underpinning the *de causibus* tradition involves ghosts of historical figures appearing before Bochas in his study to recount their tragic tales and falls from grace.

Developments in the treatment of speeches and speakers across the transmission histories of *Piers Plowman* and the *Fall of Princes* suggests a change in reading habits and literary trends. It also indicates a development in reading practices; as the silent reader became the dominant model, the ‘reader-as-speaker’ was gradually erased from the process and their role was performed by the extended repertoire and distribution of punctuation markings. Jajdelska’s study asserts that in the absence of the ‘reader-as-speaker’ silent readers positioned themselves differently in relation to the text. Reading aloud creates a ‘discourse structure’ which involves more than one participant; silent reading reduces these participants to a silent reader and an absent author, and this in turn encouraged the development of the internal narrator (Jajdelska 2007: 3-4). The presence of this ‘fictive persona’ acted as mediator between the author/text and the reader. Uri Margolin describes the concept of the narrator as a ‘strictly textual category’ which is distinct from the author or any ‘real’ person; it is a ‘linguistically indicated, textually projected and readerly constructed function’ (Margolin 2007: 351). More specifically, it is a function constructed in response to the changing model of reader. However, the decline of the ‘reader-as-speaker’ did not eradicate the ‘performative qualities of reading’ (Desmond 2009: 220). The narrator, real or imagined, is still a mediator with a ‘voice’. Furthermore, systems of punctuation and paratext fulfil the interpretative and expressive role previously performed by the ‘reader-as-speaker’. Within a silent reading culture, the ‘performance’ remains internalised.
We turn now to the final discursive section which evaluates the existing scholarship relating to the function of punctuation in the context of the shift from orality to literacy. The section proposes a reassessment of the role of the pause within both the rhetorical and grammatical systems, and discusses the implications for our understanding of the development of silent reading practices.
5.2 Pausing for Thought: A Reassessment of Function

'There is evidence to suggest that ‘pausing’ is not an alternative to processing syntax but an aid'.

(Jajdelska 2007: 45)

We turn once more to address the intra-linguistic evidence in the interpretation of reading practices. The conflation of punctuation systems evidenced in the editions suggests we require a re-evaluation of the function of punctuation within different reading cultures. Jajdelska argues that many scholars, including Parkes, see a clear distinction between punctuation which marks syntactic relationships and punctuation which marks temporal pauses (Jajdelska 2007: 45). The traditional notion of a shift, however gradual, from rhetorical to syntactic necessarily runs along the same fault lines as the move from orality to literacy. Yet this perspective can erroneously assume a change in the function of punctuation, as well as a change in form and distribution. Recent research, including Jajdelska’s own study, suggests that commas create pauses even during silent reading. Physical pauses are not only a feature of the ‘reader-as-speaker’ model, but continue to function in a silent reading environment: ‘pausing is not an alternative to processing syntax, but an aid’ (Jajdelska 2007: 45). This challenges the view of opposing rhetorical and grammatical systems vying for prominence in the sixteenth-century. Jajdelska’s study of changing reading models and the effects on seventeenth-century prose leads her to conclude that the fundamental function of punctuation remains consistent during the shift to literacy and a silent reader model. The marks continue to represent pauses of ‘varying lengths’ and the hierarchy of marks which governs the length also remains consistent. What changes ‘is that the constraint on pauses as a reader speaker are replaced by constraints on pauses for the reader as a hearer’ (Jajdelska 2007: 46).

We might conclude on this basis that grammatical marking is a refinement of a fundamental imperative which underscores all punctuation practice: the elucidation of sense. Parkes asserts that both the rhetorical and grammatical systems display general agreement as to what constitutes ‘incomplete and completed sense’ (Parkes 1992: 4). From this perspective ‘sense’ comes first and the refining system, rhetorical or grammatical, comes second; sense is fundamental, system is interpretative. If pausing is a core feature of both the ‘reader-as-speaker’ and ‘reader-as-hearer’ models, we might further conclude that pausing is the key to clarifying sense, and the subsequent punctuation system is responding to the ‘constraints’ of the particular reader model. Walter Ong’s view of punctuation asserts
that an additional layer must be considered and he describes ‘breath-marking’ as a physiological imperative which is distinct from rhetorical and/or syntactical systems. The rhetorical (or elocutionary) model of punctuation was a subsequent development and can be considered more attuned to the physiological necessity than the grammatical approach, hence its earlier origins. Within Ong’s system the physiological (or temporal) factor takes precedence and refinements of the system occur later. In other words, breath-marking is the central feature of the oldest systems of punctuation and it continued to inform the practices of medieval grammarians and influence texts of the early modern period. Ong’s central argument is that the principle of breathing had been overlooked by scholars who were unable to fully account for the ‘mixed set of principles’ found in early modern texts (Ong 1944: 359).

Ong maintains that ‘interest in both breathing and sense is quite independent of formal attention to grammatical structure’ (Ong 1944: 351). It is of course quite possible for a text to make sense with little or no punctuation, as medieval texts demonstrate. Similarly, a system of punctuation applied on rhetorical principles which pays no heed to grammatical structure is still able to elucidate the sense of the text. If the terms ‘breath-marking’ and ‘breathing’ in Ong’s description are replaced with ‘pausing’, a similar theory of punctuation fundamentals emerges. We are once again confronted with the concept of physical pauses as the basic means of elucidating sense, the foundations upon which a more complex system of punctuation is built. However, Ong also claims that the breath-marks (or pauses) were designed to meet the demands of an oral culture on a ‘very practical level’ (Ong 1944: 350) suggesting that pausing was a purely physiological demand, indifferent to sense and semantics. Yet it would be inefficient if the physical act of breathing were to obstruct the sense of the text being read. We can therefore assume that the act of breathing or pausing, even at the most basic physical level, cannot interfere with sense. By extension, this general rule must also apply to silent reading; after all, a pause, even a mental one, would not be taken at a point where it might hinder the understanding.

The psychological, intellectual and social repercussions of the shift from orality to literacy intersect in Ong’s examination and his discussions of punctuation necessarily involve a broad, historical perspective which aims to chart the development of literacy (Ong 1944 & 2002). Lucas’ more focused, qualitative analysis of Capgrave’s punctuation practices aims to consider the medieval author’s own intentions and the overall effect of his
system on the readability and interpretation of the text. The focus on authorial intent and effect prompts Lucas to subdivide each mark into various categories which account for authorial attitude alongside more basic structural markings (see fig. IV, pp. 237). Lucas’ method of describing marks in terms of primary and secondary functions is a useful approach which recognises that individual marks are not fixed; rather, their function must be interpreted with reference to the system of punctuation as a whole. Indeed, Lucas notes that in assessing function ‘much depends on the kind of work contained in the manuscript, since practice almost certainly varied according to subject matter and style’ (Lucas 1997: 167). Although Lucas is referring specifically to the distinction between punctuation which allows the reader the quickly navigate sections and that which points the main body of the text, the observation stands.

The paraph mark is deployed frequently in Capgrave’s holograph, CUL MS Gg.4.12, and Lucas describes it as performing a dual function in many cases. In accordance with his schematic, the paraph functions primarily at the notional level; in other words, it is a structural marker used to link independent sense-units. At the secondary level it performs an interpretative function, deployed at sections Capgrave considered to be of particular importance (Lucas 1997: 175). He further notes that ‘previous studies of medieval punctuation often seem to be vitiated by a failure to recognise (in deed as well as word) that even structural and elocutionary punctuation, though different in aim, are not fundamentally different in effect’ (Lucas 1997: 194). Lucas’ approach appears to support the hypothesis established in the current project which maintains that all systems of punctuation are an exercise in refinement; that sense is fundamental and system is interpretative. However, Lucas’ interpretation still makes a distinction between punctuation which marks syntactic relationships and that which marks pauses, a view Jajdelska calls into question (Jajdelska 2007: 45). He argues that the ‘evidence’ for determining if a text was punctuated to aid reading aloud can be found by answering two questions: firstly, does the punctuation divide the text into ‘convenient units for speech delivery’; and secondly, to what extent does the system give ‘indications for pause and intonation’ (Lucas 1997: 195)? This analysis suggests that pausing is a feature of rhetorical punctuation and limited to the act of reading aloud. This thesis argues that punctuation continues to denote pauses ordered hierarchically and that pausing remains central to syntactical processing (Jajdelska 2007: 45). Regardless of rhetorical or grammatical nuance, the underlying function of punctuation is to produce pauses which aid syntactical understanding. This function remains consistent across all systems including the shift from
If we accept the continuity of the basic function of punctuation marks, analysis must focus on how these marks are re-formed in line with technology and redistributed within the developing grammatical system. Accepting pauses as a fundamental feature of syntactic understanding in both oral and literate cultures requires a significant reassessment of how we view the development of punctuation. The function of punctuation was not replaced in the shift from orality to literacy; rather, the fundamental features of the older systems were assimilated, expanded and reworked within the grammatical approach. The hierarchy of pauses, necessary for syntactic understanding, continued to form the basis for the system of punctuation. The repertoire was expanded as the physical presence of the speaker could not be relied upon to interpret and mediate the meaning of the text, and punctuation was required to identify subtle semantic relationships and distinctions. This evaluation may suggest that medieval scribes were limited by the available punctuation and the capacity for subtlety restricted. However, different modes of punctuation were freely utilised. Parkes asserts that the development of hermeneutic analysis in the middle ages produced different ‘modes’ of punctuation which were used to clarify the text in different ways. The same marks were applied with ‘differing degrees of discrimination’ (Parkes 1992: 70). The terms *equiparative* and *deictic* are used by Parkes to distinguish the options open to scribes when punctuating medieval texts. The *equiparative* approach utilised extensive pointing to produce a more neutral interpretation by attributing equal value to each sense unit. The *deictic* system offered a lighter touch with more selective pointing used to indicate where emphasis should be placed.

A survey of Lydgate’s early prints display variation in punctuation systems according to the genre of the text in question. The *Fall of Princes* retains the consistent, *equiparative* mid-line caesura in the majority of prints. This is in contrast to the light pointing displayed in the courtly love poem the *Temple of Glas* which encourages a dramatic interpretation of the text by using punctuation sparingly to draw attention to emotionally charged stanzas and dialogue. Despite working under the constraints of the ‘reader-as-speaker’ model, scribes and early printers had options with regards to the system of punctuation best suited to the text and, presumably, prospective readership. These options expanded in line with the increased repertoire of punctuation marks and new conventions were disseminated more rapidly by the press. Although neutral in the interpretative sense,
the frequency of *equiparative* punctuation allowed the general structure, both rhetorical and grammatical, to be elucidated in the text. Yet as it was often a single mark used repeatedly, *equiparative* punctuation was not able to distinguish syntactic relationships or indicate emphasis within the sense-unit (Parkes 1992: 71). In other words, it can indicate basic structure without performing the distinguishing, interpretative task that we expect of modern punctuation.

Lydgate’s *Siege of Thebes* can be used as an example, displaying the effect of *equiparative* punctuation which continues to be applied in sixteenth-century prints. A succinct poem by Lydgate’s standards at approximately 5,000 lines, The *Siege of Thebes* is composed in rhyming couplets and presents a dense column of text. De Worde’s 1497 stand-alone print of the poem retains the mid-line break marked by a punctus, and capital letters appear at the start of each verse line but there is little else in the way of punctuation. The medial pause is placed consistently after the fourth or fifth syllable in the verse line, producing a flowing, neutral interpretation of the poem where the steady current of text is broken only by the occasional chapter heading. The reader is encouraged by the positioning of the caesura to pause systematically; any further expounding is the responsibility of the reader. With no paratextual distraction and consistent caesuras, De Worde’s edition highlights the basic prosodic units of Lydgate’s poem. The lack of visual features combined with a rhetorical system of punctuation presents the poem as a text for a ‘reader-as-speaker’ audience in which the tone, emphasis and body language of the speaker is relied upon to perform the act of interpretation.

At the very end of the sixteenth century Islip’s Chaucerian anthology included Lydgate’s *Siege of Thebes* as an appended text. The layout and level of paratextual material contained in Islip’s 1598 edition is a clear move towards the conventions of modern book production. However, the editor chooses to retain the mid-line caesura marked by the comma in a regular, though not frequent, deployment. It is a distinctly conservative system which disregards the growing convention of end-line punctuation and utilises only the capital, comma and punctus throughout. Overall, however, the infrequent use of the mid-

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55 The full title is *The workes of our antient and lerned English poet, Geffrey Chaucer, newly printed. In this impression you shall find these additions: 1 His portraiture and progenie shewed. 2 His life collected. 3 Arguments to every booke gathered. 4 Old and obscure words explaned. 5 Authors by him cited, declared. 6 Difficulties opened. 7 Two bookes of his neuer before printed.* The anthology was edited by Thomas Speght and printed in London by Adam Islip (STC 2nd edition 5078).
line caesura alters the metrical pattern of the poem by removing the steady four-beat rhythm at the start of each verse line. The residual mid-line breaks are placed in contexts which would generally support both a grammatical and rhetorical interpretation. Turning to evaluate the edition as a whole, the inclusion of extensive paratextual material suggests an edition which is aimed towards the silent, individual reader able to peruse the volume and its added biographical material at their leisure. A glossary intended to help the reader decipher the ‘old and obscure words’ not only hints at the increasing complications faced by an early modern reader approaching a medieval text, but it also suggests how the book was being read. A glossary is used during reading, often in a ‘back and forth’ consultation process; a process which is incompatible with reading aloud. Islip’s edition is also an interesting conflation of punctuation systems, displaying both a lingering conservatism and a shift away from the steady equiparative pointing which indicates a primary reader-as-speaker model.

The fundamental purpose of punctuation is to produce pauses, and these pauses are essential to syntactical understanding across reader-models. If the underlying function of punctuation remained the same, it was adapted and reshaped to meet the needs of the readers. Punctuation was no longer catering primarily to intensive readers or marking the text for rhetorical, performative purposes. The growing silent, extensive readers required signposts to guide them through the text and the expanding repertoire of punctuation could meet those needs. The paratextual material was central to the concept of reader ‘guides’ and developed to address reader requirements in similar ways to punctuation practices. Peter Lucas’ study leads him to assert that it is often difficult to determine whether Capgrave’s punctuation was intended to help the reader identify the ‘structure of what was written’, referring to features such as chapter headings and paragraphing, or whether it was intended to ‘primarily assist the reading aloud of a text to an audience’ (Lucas 1997: 167). Although Lucas is specifically discussing Capgrave’s system of punctuation, the observation is relevant to the analysis of paratext and punctuation generally. It demonstrates that there is often an overlap in function, and both paratextual and punctuation features exist to help the reader navigate through the text.

Bonnie Mak’s study argues for a re-evaluation of paratext and the theoretical perspectives which inform our descriptions and analysis. Scholarly conversations examining the shift from script to print are well established; those discussing the shift from
print to screen are still emerging. In her study of popular reading in the late medieval and early modern periods, Elizabeth Salter muses that ‘the issue of materiality has perhaps become particularly resonant in the age of digital technologies…’ (Salter 2012: 3). More specifically, an unexpected outcome of digitisation is the heightened awareness of the physical and the related insights into how people engage with the page. Mak examines the importance of physical space and argues that ‘the spaces between words, between lines, and around the text block can be understood as visual and cognitive breaks, employed by designers and readers as a way to moderate the pace of engagement with the page’ (Mak 2011: 17). This evaluation raises several pertinent issues with regards to the function of paratext and its role in the reading process.

In addition to arguing that space is an important paratextual feature, Mak also suggests that these ‘breaks’ control the speed and progression of the reader navigating the page. If ‘break’ is replaced with ‘pause’ and applied to the analysis of punctuation, a comparable theory emerges. Mak asserts that ‘blank space is crucial to the activity of reading’ (Mak 2011: 17); this current thesis maintains that pausing is central to the process of reading, regardless of the refining punctuation system. From both perspectives, pauses – visual, physical and mental – are a fundamental requirement in the reading process and underpin systems of paratext and punctuation. We can extend this analysis further by observing the hierarchical nature of paratextual space which mirrors the hierarchy of pauses deployed within systems of punctuation. In terms of understanding the physical production of the text, a generous use of space within a manuscript or print often signifies an expensive edition. However, spacing is also a form of textual interpretation and a scribe/editor’s deployment of space can provide insights into how they variously understood the text at hand. Chapter Three discussed Piers Plowman Trinity College, Cambridge MS B.15.17 and considered the significance of spacing in relation to the wider scribal system of paratext and punctuation practices.

As the preceding analysis has demonstrated, readers at the end of the sixteenth century were clearly still encountering a complex mix of influences within the printed medieval text. However, the editions selected for analysis predate Jajdelska’s identification of the ‘critical mass’ of silent readers by around a century. It was not until the end of the seventeenth century that Jajdelska claims a new majority of silent readers prompted a change in the syntactic structure of prose. The sixteenth and seventeenth-centuries, then,
can be seen as a period of transition and conflation, during which the various socio-political and socio-economic factors combine to define the reading habits of the literate population. However, the notion of a ‘critical mass’ suggests that this growing literate population also exhibited an agency of its own which shaped the progress of literary culture and commercial book production. The printing industry during the sixteenth-century, following uncertain beginnings, was learning to negotiate the complex arrangement of supply and demand. Printing could not survive by following the bespoke business model of scribal culture; printing required numbers to ensure financial viability.

Concepts such as ‘mass’, ‘popular’ and ‘demand’ highlight an important aspect of the new, flourishing print industry by emphasising the link between literacy, literary culture and public engagement. Jajdelska’s research sheds new light on the reader-led mechanisms behind change in the written language as it is only when silent readers represented an overall majority that there was a decisive impetus for change. It is a perspective which complements the reader-focused theories of contemporary book history, advocating the study of reception and dissemination rather than strict adherence to the concept of authorial intention. The conflation of punctuation systems witnessed in sixteenth and seventeenth-century prints is a result of assorted intentions and motivations, both personal and political. However, the complexities and contradictions also depict a reading community in flux, gradually moving towards a predominantly silent reading model and reaching a point of ‘critical mass’ at the end of the seventeenth-century. The notion of an expanding reading community which transcends traditional social boundaries and provides the impetus for linguistic change might prove to be an attractive example of social momentum originating from below. Indeed, literacy was no longer the reserve of the aristocracy and clergy as the ambitious middle classes recognised the benefits of education. Further endorsed by the reform agenda, literacy was both a means of expressing Protestant devotion and a pathway to social mobility. However, it would be rash to declare that literacy was a fully democratised social phenomenon during the early modern period. It is perhaps more accurate to conceive of the ‘critical mass’ as pervading all social strata at different rates but nevertheless continuing in a gradual move towards a primarily silent reading community. By describing silent reading as the principal, but not exclusive, reader-model in the early modern period, we acknowledge the complementary practices of orality and aurality as facets of a dynamic literary culture.
Once again referencing contemporary book history scholarship, the central acknowledgement of textual instability leads to the consideration of reader instability. In recent years scholars have come to recognise that a ‘definitive edition’ is as abstract and unobtainable as the notion of an ‘original’ text (McKenzie 1999: 2). Perhaps we must also acknowledge that readers can be similarly unstable, behaving differently in different contexts and with varying expectations based on the type of text being read. Ultimately, there is no idealised reader to accompany the idealised text; studies of reading habits and practices must recognise that readers from the middle ages to the present day encounter literacy as a multi-faceted phenomenon. It is clear that readers in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were particularly flexible in their reading practices, having to negotiate traditional oral and aural culture in old texts while simultaneously encountering new texts and conventions being disseminated rapidly by the printing press. In addition, the press was politically sensitive and sixteenth-century publishing was especially prone to periods of intense scrutiny and censorship. The theory of ‘critical mass’ provides an insight into the complex social mechanisms behind language change – specifically, the syntactic developments observed in early modern prose. However, that is not to suggest that the mass was a homogenous group and, just as individual texts were a result of multiple influences and motivations, so too were early modern readers. This thesis has demonstrated that the concept of mouvance can be applied to the reader as well as the text; no individual or reading community employs only one type of practice and readers in the sixteenth century were particularly flexible in their habits and practices.
5.3 Addressing the Research Questions

‘…the texts are all we have’.

(Fleischman 1990: 29)

The opening section of this thesis posed a number of research questions: how did the editors of *Piers Plowman* and *Fall of Princes* negotiate the politics of printing a pre-Reformation text in the Reformation and post-Reformation era? How did they negotiate the tension between authenticity and modernisation? How do the systems of paratext and punctuation interact in these texts, and how do certain features and conventions develop during the shift from script to print, and from uncertain beginnings to a stabilised publishing industry? What can this interaction tell us about the evolution of reading practices and modes of literacy? And what does the reworking of medieval texts indicate about the changing functions of literacy and literary culture? The analysis and discussion contained in the previous chapters has answered some, problematized others and suggested future avenues for research.

Chapter One argued that texts act as cultural barometer, and how they are reworked and reinterpreted by successive generations of readers reveals much about developments in literary culture and the changing function of the text within society. The book is a reflection of, and catalyst for, social change and the preceding analysis has demonstrated the complex and shifting relationship between politics and the medieval text. The mid-sixteenth-century editions in particular illustrate the various ways the early modern editor could interpret, frame and (re)present the medieval text in accordance with their own aims and/or the prevailing political circumstances. Robert Crowley’s 1550 editions of *Piers Plowman* present a Protestant interpretation of a medieval Catholic text and scholars have traditionally concerned themselves with his attempts to reshape the poem into a work of Reformation literature. However, this thesis has argued that the motivations behind the edition went beyond Crowley’s desire to present Langland as voice of early religious reform and maintains that he engaged with the poem on a primarily political level. Crowley is explicit in his rejection of Langland as a prophet; rather, he chooses to portray the fourteenth-century poet as a voice of social justice, and Chapter Three outlined the case for reading these editions in relation to the uprisings of the summer of 1549.
The notion of Langland as a marginal voice denouncing the injustices of society appealed to Crowley’s politics and his engagement with the fourteenth century poem is as personal as it is political. Crowley’s desire to comprehend and expound leads him to physically insert himself into the margins of Langland’s poem – a marginal voice commenting upon a perceived marginal voice. However, while Crowley was undoubtedly a radical reformer in many respects, his more conservative attitude towards social hierarchy and monarchical authority requires a broader acknowledgement. Hunt makes similar observations in relation to sixteenth and seventeenth century sermon culture, noting that:

…the familiar stereotypes of radical puritan preachers scattering the seeds of revolution from their pulpits has come to seem less and less plausible in the light of recent revisionist scholarship showing that the vast majority of early modern sermons operated within a set of utterly traditional assumptions about the necessity of government and the divine origin of political authority.

(Hunt 2010: 16)

Crowley’s own polemical writing and his treatment of Piers Plowman align with Hunt’s observations regarding the complex politics of the early reformers. The poem’s descriptions of a fair but ordered society in which each estate paid its dues and fulfilled its responsibilities also appealed to Crowley as a supporter of the prevailing power structures. Furthermore, the problematic doctrinal aspects of the poem were handled with more delicacy than has been traditionally ascribed to Crowley’s editorial approach. The preceding analysis has argued that the early modern editor of the medieval text was concerned with authenticity and authority, and these concepts influenced and constrained their editorial approaches.

The mid-sixteenth century editions of Lydgate’s Fall of Princes demonstrate a similar concern with authenticity and authority and the prefaces to both Tottell and Wayland’s prints are keen to record their careful editorial process. Published during the short reign of Mary I, these editions demonstrate an opposing set of religious and political affiliations. Tottell’s editorial decisions are particularly direct in their attempts to reconnect Lydgate with pre-Reformation literary culture. Wayland’s attitude towards Lydgate and reformist literature is rather more complex: his involvement in the printing of a primer commissioned by Thomas Cromwell in 1539, combined with the suppression of reformer William Baldwin’s poem Mirror for Magistrates, suggests the description of his ‘fierce’
Catholicism requires a re-evaluation (Knott 1996: 309). Despite the differences, both Tottell and Wayland’s editions choose to align Lydgate with the emerging humanist movement and their title-pages physically enclose the monk-poet in a classically-styled frame. Perceptions of Lydgate in the mid-sixteenth century remained open to interpretation, and this perhaps serves as an example to modern criticism which has been swift to label Lydgate and engage in reductive comparisons between his writing and Chaucer’s. However, the whole is greater than the sum of its parts and Lydgate was a number of things: he was a monk and a poet; a commentator and a Lancastrian; a Catholic and a humanist; and he was a medieval writer who found an early modern audience.

The analysis of the editions of Langland and Lydgate have demonstrated the various ways editors interpreted and presented the medieval author and the medieval text. Underpinning each act of re-reading and reshaping the medieval text, however, is the early modern desire to engage with the past. Despite differences in approach and political affiliation, the early modern editors sought to highlight the continuities between the medieval text and the contemporary political or intellectual circumstances. Thus, a sense of intellectual continuity is fostered by the presentation of Lydgate’s poem as a work of early humanism. Tottell and Wayland’s editions demonstrate the potentially divergent interpretations the poem’s themes of fate, fortune and good governance offered: Tottell reconnects the poem to medieval literary culture through the paratextual material and the addition of the Daunce of Machabree; Wayland’s suppressed edition offers a glimpse into an alternative, reformist interpretation of the poem which failed to develop.

Within Crowley’s edition, history could be seen to repeat itself and the desire to give voice to the poor and denounce the corruption in the ruling classes was urgent once more. The poem also served as evidence of a long-standing English tradition of popular protest and reform and, by extension, as justification for the upheavals of the Reformation. Not until the end of the twentieth century did critics begin to seriously interrogate this post-Reformation narrative which characterised the upheavals as a universal force for good sanctioned from below (Duffy 2005; Simpson 2007). If the Renaissance is indeed characterised by its attempts to ‘constantly seek authority in the past’ (Le Goff 1992: 19), the medieval text presented an opportunity to re-interpret and reshape that authority to suit the prevailing socio-political circumstances. James Simpson has argued that the sixteenth century was a period of centralization and witnessed a simplification of cultural
output (Simpson 2007b), but the early modern printed edition of the medieval text disrupts this narrative. The sixteenth-century editors rejected simplification and turned instead to rework and reinterpret the complex medieval text for their early modern readers. The medieval text was, as it is now, shifting and unruly, inviting a variety of interpretations and rejecting any attempts at classification. The printed medieval text, therefore, presented the early modern reader, and continues to present the modern critic, with the very antithesis of simplification.

Jajdelska’s research and theoretical approach has been promoted throughout this thesis but the preceding analysis demonstrates that clarification is required in relation to the term ‘reader model’. Jajdelska argues that, unlike the perceived polarity of oral/literate and spoken/written descriptors, the contrast between models of reader cannot be conceived of or expressed in terms of a sliding scale (Jajdelska 2007: 7). Readers cannot be a ‘reader-as-speaker’ and a ‘reader-as-hearer’ simultaneously: during any one ‘literate activity’ (Salter 2012: 67) they can only exhibit one practice and embody one model. However, scholars concerned with the history of reading and reading practices are increasingly aware of the variety of ‘activities’ available to late medieval and early modern readers within a complex and dynamic literary culture. Therefore, while the ‘model’ of reader cannot be expressed on a sliding scale, readers can embody different models in different situations; a reader can be a ‘reader-as-speaker’ in one context and a ‘reader-as-hearer’ in another.

The thesis supports the perspectives of scholars who reject the teleological view of the development of silent reading and instead highlight the complexities and overlaps between reading cultures (Fleischman 1990; Coleman 1996; Jajdelska 2007; Hunt 2010; Salter 2012). Coleman demands we acknowledge the ‘modality of choice’ available to late medieval readers and re-evaluate the role played by aurality in fifteenth-century literary culture. Aurality was neither a substitute for literacy nor an intermediary stage; rather, it was a distinct practice which lasted through to the late fifteenth century (Coleman 1996: 1). The readiness to problematize the orality/literacy dichotomy can been seen across the interdisciplinary field and Arnold Hunt’s *The Art of Hearing* approaches the issue from the perspective of a historian of religion and the early modern Church. Aligning with Coleman, Hunt challenges Walter Ong’s treatment of early modern preaching within his narrative of literacy development. Hunt recognises that Ong was ‘aware’ that Protestant
preaching and sermon culture challenged his narrative but does not satisfactorily confront the issue and instead presents oral preaching as a ‘side effect of the rise of print technology’ (Hunt 2010: 57). Highlighting Ong’s reliance on the oral/literate dichotomy and the teleology of reform, Hunt argues that:

Ong’s crucial mistake is to associate Protestantism with modernity and to assume that it must have promoted, and been promoted by, the emergence of a modern literate and print-centred culture – whereas in fact…early modern Protestants remained deeply and stubbornly attached to oral forms of communication. (Hunt 2010: 57)

It has been argued more generally in this thesis that early modern readers were both familiar with and interested in the medieval text, and that the features which marked the text’s orality/aurality such as syntax, punctuation and layout were handled with notable restraint. Furthermore, while Hunt rejects the concept of a strict polarity between orality and literacy, he argues that early modern Protestantism would belong ‘on the oral rather than the literate side of the divide’ (Hunt 2010: 57); indeed, his careful analysis of sermons and sermon culture is a compelling argument for the re-evaluation of Protestantism’s relationship with the printed text.

Evidently, the triumphalist narratives relating to both the Reformation and literacy practices are being roundly challenged, and scholars across the historical disciplines are wary of constructing a grand narrative in which to place their research. The preceding analysis in this thesis has demonstrated that the diversity of reading practices continued into the sixteenth century and this is particularly evident in the printed medieval text. The inherent mouvance of the medieval text meets the increasing fixity of print, and the editorial tension between authenticity and modernisation plays out across the page. The analysis of the punctuation and paratextual systems across the selected editions reveals that readers in the sixteenth century were engaging with a variety of practices within one book and, often, within the bounds of the page. The printed medieval text, therefore, both problematizes our understanding of the development of silent reading practices, and provides a glimpse into the complexity of early modern literary culture.

David McKitterick asserts that ‘[t]he printed word is fixed. The manuscript word is
flexible. The words on the computer screen are fleeting and mobile’ (McKitterick 2006: 220). These definitions of the different stages of literacy and literary culture are currently, in reaction to our shift towards the digital, developing into more comprehensive theoretical perspectives. The discussions emerging from recent book history projects are fascinating and suggest the many exciting new avenues for textual scholarship offered by the application of a historical perspective in the age of the digital. The concept of the Gutenberg Parenthesis holds as a central hypothesis the notion that the digital age heralds a return to the fluidity of pre-print culture. The implications of circularity are clear; many of the texts we encounter as modern readers are an attempt to represent the spoken and should be approached as ‘transcripts of an oral performance’ (Desmond 2009: 220).

This theory offers a compelling insight into the development of literary culture from script to print, and from print to digital; it also provides an opportunity to evaluate and theorise our conceptions and reactions to the emerging digital phenomenon. However, defining print as an extended hiatus in the development of Western literary culture has the potential to descend into teleology. Furthermore, the description potentially overlooks the dynamism of print and the complexities of early print culture in particular. What is striking is that the broad theoretical implications of mouvance are becoming increasingly relevant as we shift from the physical page to the digital and, as modern book history scholars, from the digital back to the physical. The term must evolve to encapsulate the fluidity of the digital page, but it should also acknowledge the process of shifting between these various stages of literary culture and the associated reading practices.

In response to the research questions and thesis objectives, the preceding analysis and discussions have produced a number of outcomes. Firstly, the detailed synchronic and diachronic studies of the textual transmission histories of Langland and Lydgate have examined the editorial treatment of the texts at various stages and highlighted the importance of ‘authenticity’ in early modern perceptions of the medieval text. The editions have been placed in political context and the analysis has provided insight into the changing functions of these late medieval poems in early modern society. The thesis has also provided a detailed synchronic and diachronic study of the systems of punctuation and paratext across the selection of manuscript and print versions of Langland and Lydgate, aligning with Bonnie Mak’s call for an inter-disciplinary approach towards the evaluation of paratextual systems and with Sherri Geller’s demands for a reassessment of the role of
paratext in reader engagement (Geller 2007; Mak 2011).

Furthermore, the analysis has demonstrated that the interactions between the systems of punctuation and paratext provide evidence of reading practices and can be understood in relation to the changing model of reader. The existing scholarship relating to punctuation, paratext and literacy has been synthesised and the thesis has produced a theoretical framework which examines the relationship between systems of punctuation and paratext, and the developments in literacy and literary culture. More specifically, the diachronic analysis has demonstrated how the needs and expectations of silent readers shaped the systems of punctuation and paratext during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.
Appendices

Figures

Figure I.

Trinity College Cambridge, MS R.3.14
Figure II.

Inventory of the hierarchy of textual divisions contained in Trinity College, Cambridge MS B.15.17.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Passus</th>
<th>Pages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prologue</td>
<td>First Initial* ; 4v^b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passus I</td>
<td>5r^a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passus II</td>
<td>8v^a ; 8v (cw) ; 10v^b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passus III</td>
<td>13r^a ; 16v (cw)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passus IV</td>
<td>19v^a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passus V</td>
<td>23r^a ; 24v (cw) ; 32v (cw)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passus VI</td>
<td>35r^a ; 40v (cw)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passus VII</td>
<td>41r^a ; 43v^b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passus VIII</td>
<td>45r^a ; 46r^b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passus IX</td>
<td>47r^a ; 47v^d ; 48v (cw)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passus X</td>
<td>51r^a ; 56v (cw) ; 58r^b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passus XI</td>
<td>59v^a ; 64v (cw) ; 65v^b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passus XII</td>
<td>67v^a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passus XIII</td>
<td>72v^a ; 72v (cw)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passus XIV</td>
<td>80r^a ; 81r^c</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passus XV</td>
<td>86r^a ; 86v^d ; 88v (cw)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passus XVI</td>
<td>96v^a ; 96v (cw) ; 99v^b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passus XVII</td>
<td>101v^a ; 104v (cw)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passus XVIII</td>
<td>108r^a ; 112v (cw)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passus XIX</td>
<td>115v^a ; 120v (cw)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passus XX</td>
<td>124r^a ; 124v^b ; 128v (cw)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* = initial at start of poem (10 line height) x 1
a = passus initials (4-5 line height) x 20
b = secondary initial within passus (4 line height) x 9
c = elongated paraph initial resembling top-line flourishes x 1
d = paraph initial displaying hatching technique x 2
(cw) = catchword
Figure III.

Percentage of mid- and end-line punctuation marks within four 200-line samples across each of the three Crowley impressions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>The Prologue</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(192 lines)</td>
<td>mid 28%</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>end 18%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Passus V</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(255 lines)</td>
<td>mid 46%</td>
<td>96%</td>
<td>96%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>end 16%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Passus IV</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(205 lines)</td>
<td>mid /</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>end /</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Passus XX</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(187 lines)</td>
<td>mid 47%</td>
<td>101%*</td>
<td>101%*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>end 34%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* percentages above 100% are a result of parenthesis with both commas counted in one verse line.
Lucas’ categorisation and representation of John Capgrave’s punctuation usage. This schematic has been reproduced without alteration from Lucas’s study (Lucas 2007: 170).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DESCRIPTION OF CATEGORY-TYPE</th>
<th>CATEGORIES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>intentional</td>
<td>structural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>expository</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>functional</td>
<td>grammatical  notional</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The vertical lines signify an opposition and the broken line signifies an indirect association.
Lennard’s ‘8-Level Axis’ accounting for the various levels of division and presentation within the book, organised hierarchically and diachronically (Lennard 2000: 5). The schematic below is an adapted visual representation of Lennard’s original descriptions.
Transcriptions

The following transcriptions follow a consistent and basic diplomatic policy and are listed chronologically.

The *Piers Plowman* transcriptions are taken from a variety of sources; *Early English Books Online*, a facsimile copy of Trinity College, Cambridge MS B.15.17 and editions consulted at the University of Glasgow Special Collections. The GUL Special Collections editions includes Crowley’s first impression (1550) and Thomas Wright’s second edition dating from 1856. The other *Piers Plowman* editions – Owen Rogers (1561) and Crowley’s second and third impressions (1550) - are taken from the EEBO database.

Within this thesis, Crowley’s three impressions are considered as separate editions for the ease of reference and, more importantly, as a means of charting the developments in punctuation policy. However, it should be noted that Crowley himself appears to have considered both the second and third impressions as a second edition, evidenced by his title pages.

The Short Title Catalogue classifies Crowley’s three impressions thus: First Impression STC 19906; Second Impression STC 19907a; Third Impression STC 19907. Although some debate remains regarding the order of Crowley’s three impressions, this thesis follows this order.56

All transcriptions of Lydgate’s *Fall of Princes* have been taken from the *Early English Books Online* database.

All primary source texts are referenced in full in the bibliography. Details of the physical text’s current location, original publication dates and printer’s details are provided below. Where paraph marks, hedera or other basic rubrication appears, this has been replicated in the transcription. Where enlarged initials appear, the transcription has attempted to reflect the relative size compared to the main body of text. Folio and page numbers provided follow the original text as far as possible.

Where physical texts have been consulted, any additional points of interest, such as

56 For further discussions and evidence in favour of the printing order outlined above, see Warner (2008) and Hailey (2008) both contributors to the Yearbook of Langland Studies, Vol. 21. See also the English Short Title Catalogue Online (www.estc.bl.uk).
annotations and physical condition of the book, have been included before the transcription. Similarly, any relevant details (e.g. condition and omissions) pertaining to the transcribed sections of text taken from the EEBO editions have been noted. Expansions are signalled throughout by the use of rounded brackets and any missing or illegible text is denoted by [...]. In the case of MS B.15.17 curly braces have been used to denote the rubrication surrounding Latin text.
The following transcriptions of Langland’s *Piers Plowman* begin with Trinity College Cambridge MS B15.17 and progress chronologically to Thomas Wright’s second edition of the poem dating from 1856. At least one transcription has been provided from each of Crowley’s three impressions, all dating from 1550.

Crowley’s editorial approach, like many later editors dealing with medieval texts, is complex and can appear inconsistent to modern critics. The textual authority of the poem is demonstrated by the review of manuscript copies and the text is presented in Black Letter, a visual reminder of the poem’s medieval origins. However, Crowley chooses to modernise a number of linguistic features, including eliminating the y-prefix and inflections, and modernising pronouns. He also changes the Northern dialectal ‘ac‘ to ‘and’ in the majority of instances and removes the thorn and yogh. The occasional ȝ appears in the poem but this is not in line with the editorial policy in general. The words which retain the yogh in these instances often represent particularly archaic vocabulary and it may be that Crowley was unable to provide a substitute (Brewer 1996: 16).
Piers quod a preest þoo. þi pardon moste I rede
ffor I wol constue ech clause. and kenne it þee on english

And Piers at his preiere. þe pardon vnfoldeþ
And I bihynde hem boþe. beheld al þe bulle
And in two lynes it lay. and noþt a leef moore
And was writen riþt þus. in witnesse of truþe

{Et qui bona egerunt ibunt in vitam eternam
Qui velo mala in ignem eternum}

Peter quod þe preest þoo. I kan no pardon fynde
But dowel and haue wel. and god shal haue þi soule
And do yuel and haue yuel. hope þow noon oþer
But after þi deeþ day. þe deuel shal haue þi soule

And Piers for pure tene. pulled it atweyne
And seide {Si ambulauero in medio vmbre mortis
non timebo mal quoniam tu mecum es}

I shal cessen of my sowynge quod Pierœ. & swynke noþt so harde
Ne aboute my bely ioye. so bisy be namoore
Of preieres and of penaunce. my plouþ shal ben herafter
And wepen whan I sholde slepe. þouþ whete breed me faille
The p(ro)phete his paynte in penaunce and in sorwe

By þat þe Sauter seith so dide othere manye
That loueth god lelly. his liflode is ful esy

{ffuerunt michi lacrime mee panes die ac nocte}

And but if Luc lyce. he lereþ vs by foweles
We sholde noȝt be to bisy. aboute þe worldes blisse
{Ne soliciti sitis} he seith in þe gospel
And sheweþ vs by ensamples. vs seluc to wisse
The foweles in þe feld. who fynt hem mete at wynter
Haue þei no garner to go to. but god fynt hem alle

What quod þe preest to Perkyn. Peter as me þinkeþ
Thow art lettred a litel. who lerned þee on boke

Abstynence þe abbesse quod Piers. myn a.b.c me tauȝte
And conscience cam afterward. and kenned me muche moore

Were þow a preest quod he. þou myȝt test p(ri)che wher þou sholdest
As diuino(r) in diuinite. wiþ {Dixit insipie(n)s} to þi teme

Lewed lorel quod Piers. litel lokestow on þe bible
On Salomons sawes. seldom þow biholdest

{Ecce desisores & iurgia cum eis ne crescant &c}

The preest and Perkyn. opposeden eiþe(o) oþ(e)
And I þorȝ hir wordes awook. and waited aboute
And seiȝ þe sonne in þe South. sitte þat tyme
Metelees and moneilees. on Malu(er)ne hulles
Musynege on þis metels. and my wey ich yede

Many tyme þis metels. haþ maked me to studie
Of þat I seiȝ slepynge . if it so be myȝte

And also for Piers þe Plowman . ful pencif in herte

And which a pardon Piers hadde . al þe peple to conforte

And how þe preest inpuugned it . wiþ two p(ro)pre wordes

Ac I haue no sauour in Songewarie . for I se it ofte faille

Caton and Canonistres . conseillen vs to leue

To sette sadnesse in Songewarie . for {Somniah ne cures}

Ac for þe book bible . bereþ witnesse

How Daniel diuined . þe dreem of a kyng

That was Nabugodonosor . nempned of clerkes

Daniel seide sire kyng . þi dremels bitokneþ

That vnkouþe knyȝtes shul come . þi kyngdom to cleyme

Amonges lower lordeþ . þi lond shal be departed

And as Daniel diuined . in dede it fel after

The kynge lees his lordship . and lower men it hadde

And Ioseph mette m(er)ueillously . how þe moone and þe sonne

And þe elleuene sterres . hailsed hym alle

Thanne Iacob iugged . Iosephes sweuene

Beau fitȝ quod his fader . for defaute we shullen

I myself and my sones . seche þee for nede

It bifel as his fader seide . in Pharaoes tyme

That Ioseph was Iustice . Egipte to loke

It bifel as his fader tolde . hise frendes þ(e)rc) hym souȝte

And al þis makeþ me . on þis metels to þynke

And how þe preest preued . no pardon to dowel

And demed þ(at) dowel . Indulgences passed

Biennals and triennals . and Bisshopes lettres

And how dowel at þe day of dome . is digneliche vnderfongen

And passeþ al þe pardon . of Seint Petres cherche
Yet I corbed on mi knees & cried her of grace
And seid merci madame for maris loue of heuen
That bare (that) blisful barne (that) bought us on (the) rode
Ken me bi some crafte to know (that) fals.
Loke apon thy lefte halfe and lo where he stondeth
Both false and fauel and her feris many
I loked on my lefte halfe as the ladie me taught
And was ware of a woman worthilech clothed
Purfiled wyth plesure the fynest upon erthe
Crowned wyth a crowne the kyng hath non bitter
Fettisleche her fyngers were fretted w(ith) golde wyer
And there on red Rubies as red as any glede
And dyamo(n)ds of derest price & double maner saphirs
Orientales and Ewages venemis to destroye
Hyr robe was full riche, of red scarlet engrayned
With Rybandes of red golde and of rych stones
Her arraye me rauished, such Riches sawe I neuer
I had wonder what she was, & whose wyfe she were
What is this woman quod I so worthilie atyred.
That is Mede (the) maid quod she hath noied me ful oft
And lacked my lemmman that beautie is hote
And bilowe her to lordes that lawes haue to kepe
In the popes palaice, she is preuy as my selfe
But Sothenes wolde not so, for she is a bastarde
For false was her father that hath a fyckell tounge
And neuer sothe sayd sithen he cam to erth
And Mede is maried after hym right as kind asketh
Qualified father, such as son, good tree, bears good fruit.

I ought be hier than she I cam of a better
My father the gret God is, and ground of al graces
One God with outer beginning, & I hys good daughter
And hath gyuen me mercie to marrie wyth my selfe
And what man be mercifull and lelie me loueth
Shalbe my lorde and I his life in the heigh heuen
And what man taketh mede my hede dare I leye
That he shal lease for her loue a lyppe of Charitatis
How construeth Dauid the kyng of me(n) (that) take mede
And men of this molde that mayntaynith truthe
And howe ye should saue youre selfe (that) psalter berith (witnes
Domine quis habitabit in Tabernaculo tuo & c
And nowe worthe this Mede maried unto a ma(n)/3ed (shrewe
To one fals fikell tounge a fendes byete
Fauel through his fair spech hath this folk enchau(n)tid
And al this liers ledinge that she is thus wedded
The morowe was made the maydens bridalle
And there might thou wit if (the) wilt, which thei ben al
That longen to that lordship, the lesse and the more
Knowe hym there if thou canst, & kepe thou thy tou(n)g
And lak he(m) not, but let he(m) worke tyl leutie be Justice
And haue powr to pun(n)ysh he(m) than put forth thi reaso(n)
For I biken(n)e the Christ quod she & his clene mother
And let no conscience acu(m)bre the for couetise of Mede
Thus lefte me that ladie a ligging a slepe
The Special Collections department of Glasgow University Library holds one copy of Crowley’s First Impression which survives in excellent condition. The book contains a number of reader annotations in at least two different hands, both displaying Secretary features. One previous reader by the name of ‘John Gil’ has gone to significant lengths to impose his ownership, signing his name experimentally several times throughout the book. The signature of a ‘Robert Barton’ also appears at the back of the edition above an inscription warning against the evils of the ‘Antechriste’; here is a reader displaying clear religious affiliations.

(lines 1-40)

TRuth hearde tell herof, and to Pierce sente,
To make his teme, and tile the earth
And purchased a pardone, A pena et culpa
For hym & for his heyres for euermore after
And bade hym holde him at home, and erye his laies
And al that helpe him to eyre, to sette, and to sowe
Or any other mistery that might Pierce auaile,
Pardon w(ith) Pierce Plowman Truth hath graunted
Knyghts and kynges that kepeth holy kyrke,
And ryghtfully in realmes ruleth the people
Have pardon through purgatorie to passe ful lightly
With patriarks & prophets, in Paradice to be felow
Byshops blessed, if they bene as they shoulde,
Legisters of both lawes the lewde therw(ith) to preach,
And in as much as they may amend all sinful
Are peers w(ith) thapostles , such pardo(n) Pierce sheweth
And at the day of dome at the hygh deyse to sitte
Merchauntes in the mergen had many yeres
And none A pena et culpa, the Pope wyll hem graunte
For thei hold not her holi daies, as holi kirke techeth
And for they swere by her soul, & so god must he(m) help
Agayne clene conscience, her castell to sell.

And under his secrete seale Truth se(n)t hem a letter
That they shoulde bugge boldly that hem beste liked
And sythen sell it againe, and saue the wynnynge
And ame(n)d Meso(n)dieux her mede, & misease folk helpe
And wycked wayes wyghtly amende,
And do boote to Brugges that to broke were.
Marian maydens or maken hem Nunnes.
Pore people amd prisons fyndem hem herfode
And set scholers to schole, or to some other craftes
Releue religion, and reuten him better,
And I shal send you.S.Mihel myne archangelle,
That no deuil shal you dere, ne fere you in your doing
And wrtyen you fro(m) wanhope if ye wyl thus worke,
And send your soules in safety to my saintes in Joye
And prayed Pierce the Plowman t(hat) purchased t(he) bul
Men of lawe least pardon had, that pleden for Mede
For the psalter saueth hem not, such as take(n) giftes,
And namely of Innocent that no cuyl ne canneth
Yet I corbed on mi knes, & cried her of grace
And seid merci mada(me), for maris loue of heue(n)
That bare (that) blisful barne, (that) bought us on (the) (rode
Ken me bi some craft, to know (that) fals.
Loke apon thy lefte halfe, and lo where he stondeth
Both false and fauel : and her feris many
I loked on my lefte halfe, as the lady me taught
And was ware of a woman, worthilech clothed
Purified with pleasure, the finest upon erthe,
Crowned with a crowne, the kinge hath non better
Fetisleche her fingers, were fretted w(ith) golde wier
And there on rede rubies, as red as any glede
And diamo(n)ds of derest price, & double maner saphirs
Orientales and Ewages, venemis to destroye
Hyr robe was full riche, of red scarlet engrayned
With rybandes of red gold, and of rich stones
Her array me rauished, such riches saw I neuer
I had wonder what she was, & whose wyfe she were
What is this woman (quod) I, so worthilie attyred.
That is mede (the) maid quod she, hath noied me ful oft
And lacked my lemman, that leaute is ihote
And bylow her to lorde, that lawes haue to kepe(n)
In the popes palaice, she is preuy as my selfe
But sothenes wolde not so, for she is a bastarde
For false was her father, that hath a fyckel toung,
And neuer soth sayd, sithen he came to earth
And mede is maried after him, right as kinde asketh.
Qualis pater, talis filius, bona arbor, bonum fructu[m] facit.
I ought be hier then she : I cam of a better
My father the great God is : and ground of al grace
One God w(ith)oute beginning : & I his good daughter
And hath geuen me mercy, to mary with my selfe
And what man be mercifull, and lelly me loueth
Shalbe my lorde and I his lyfe, in the hygh heauen
And what man taketh mede, my head dare I lay
That he shal lease for her loue, a lyppe of Charitatis
How co(n)strueth Dauid the king, of men (that) take mede
And men of this mould, that mainteneth truth
And howe ye should saue your selfe, (that) psalter bereth (witnes
Domine quis habitabit in Tabernaculo tuo& c
And nowe worth this Mede, maried unto a man3ed (shrewe
To one fals fikell tonge, a fendes be3et
Fauel through his fair speach, hath this folk enchaunted
And all is lyers ledynge, that she is thus wedded
The morowe was made, the maydens brydale
And there might (thou) wit if thou wilt, which they be(n) all
That longen to that lordshyp, the lesse and the more
Know him there if thou canst, & kepe thou thy tonge
And lake he(m) not, but let he(m) worch, till leuty be iustice
And haue powr to punish he(m), than put forth thi reason
For I beken the Christ (quod) she, & his cleane mother
And let no conscience acco(m)bre the, for couetise of mede.
Thus lefte me that Ladye, lyggyng a slepe
Pierce quod a priest tho, thy pardon must I reade
For I will construe ech a clause, & ken it (the) in englishe
And Pierce at his prayer, his pardon unfolded
And I behinden hem both, beheld all (the) bulle
All in two lines it laye, and not a leefe more
And was wrytten ryght thus, in witnes of Truthe,

Et qui bona egerunt ibunt in vitam eternam.
Qui vero mala in ignem eternum.
Peter quod the prieste tho, I can no pardon fynde
But do wel and have wel, & god shal haue thy soule
And do yll and haue yll, hope thou none other
But after thy deathes day, (the) deuil shal haue thy soule
And Pierce for pure tene, pulled it in twaine.
And saide. Si ambulauero in medio vmbre mortis

Non timebo malum qouniam tu mecum es.
I shal cease of my sowyng quod Pierce, & swinke not
Ne about my bealy ioy, so busy be no more (so hard
Of prayers & of penau(n)ce, my plowe shal be hereafter
And wepe whe(n) I sholde slepe, though whet bread me
The prophet his paine ate, in penau(n)ce & sorow (faile
By that the psalter sayeth, so dyd other manye
That loueth god lelly, his liuelode is full easy.

feuru(n)t mihi lachrime mee, panes die ac nocte.
And but if Luke lye, he learneth us by fowles
We shoulde not be busye, aboute the worldes blysse
Ne soliciti sitis, he sayth in the gospell
And sheweth in examples our selves to wishe
The foules in (the) field, who findeth he(r) meate in winter?
Have they no garner to go to, but god fedes hem all.
What (quod) the priest to Perkin, Peter as me thinketh
Thou art lettered a little, who learned the on boke?
Abstinence (the) Abbes (quod) Pierce, mine a.b.c me taught
And conscience came afterward, & kenned me much more
Were (the) a priest (quod) he, (the) might preach wher (the) should,
As diuinor in diuinitie, with Dicit insipiens, to thy teme
Lewd Lorel (quod) Pierce, little lokest the on the bible
On Salomons sawes, seldome thou beholdest.
Pierce quod a priest tho, thy pardon must I reade
For I wyl construe ech a clause, & ken it (the) in englishe
And Pierce at his prayer, his pardon unfolded
And I behinden hem both, beheld all the bulle
All in two lines it laye, and not a leefe more
And was wrytten ryght thus, in witnes of Truthe,
   Et qui bona egerunt ibunt in vitam eternam.
   Qui vero mala in ignem eternum.
Peter quoth the prieste tho, I can no pardon fynde
But dowel and haue wel, & god shal haue thy soule
And do Ill and haue Ill, hope thou none other
But after thy deaths day, (the) deuil shal haue thi soule
And Pierce for pure tene, pulled it in twayne.
And sayde. Si ambulauero in medio vmbre mortis
   Non timebo malum qouniam tu mecum es.
I shal cease of my sowyng quod Pierce, & swinke not
Ne about mealy joy, so busy be no more (so harde
Of prayers & of penau(n)ce, my plowe shal be hereafter
And wepe whe(n) I shold slepe, though whete bread me
The prophet his paine ate, in penau(n)ce, & sorow (faile
By that the psalter sayeth, so dyd other manye
That loueth god lelly, hi s liuelode is full easy,
   feuru(n)t mihi lachrime mee, panes die ac nocte.
And but if Luke lye, he learneth us by fowles
We shoulde not be busye, aboute the worldes blysse
Ne soliciti sitis he sayth in the gospell
And sheweth in examples our selues to wishe
The foules in (the) field, who findeth he(r) meate in winter
Have they no garner to go to, but god fedes hem all:
What (quod) the priest to Parkin, Peter as me thinketh
Thou art lettered a litle who learned the on boke?
Abstine(n)ce (the) Abbes (quod) Pierce, mine .a.b.c me taught
And co(n)scie(n)ce came afterward, & ken(n)ed me much more.
Were (the) a priest (quod) he, (the) might preach wher (the) should,
As diuinor in diuinitie w(ith) Dicit insipiens to thy teme.
Lewd Lorel (quod) Pierce, little lokest thou on the bible
On Salomons sawes, seldome thou beholdest.
Pierce quod a priest tho, thy pardon must I reade
For I wyl construe ech a clause, & ken it (the) in englyshe
And pierce at his praier, his pardon unfolded
And I behinden hem both, beheld all the bulle
all in two lines it laye, and not a leefe more
And was wrytten right thus, in witnes of Truthe,
    Et qui bona egerunt ibunt in vitam eternam.
    Qui vero mala in ignem eternam
Peter quoth the prieste tho, I can no pardon finde
But dowel and haue wel, & godshal haue thy soule
And do Ill and haue Ill, hope thou none other
But after thy deathes day, (the) deuil shall haue thi soule
And Pierce for pure tene, pulled it in twayne.
And sayde. Si ambulauero in medio vmbre mortis
    Non timebo malum qouniam tu mecum es.
I shal cease of my sowyng quod Pierce, and swynke not so harde,
Ne about my bealy ioy, so busy be no more
Of praiers & of penance, my plow shalbehere after
And wepe whe(n) I shulde slepe, though whete bred me fail
The prophet his paine ate, in penaunce, and sorowe
By that the psalter sayth, so dyd other manye,
[missing line]
    feuru(n)t mihi lachrime mee, panes die ac nocte.
and but if Luke lye, he lerneth us by foules
We shulde not be busy, aboute the worldes blisse,
Ne solici ti sitis, he sayeth in the ghospell,
and sheweth in examples our selues to wishe
The foules of (the) field, who findeth he(r) meate in winter
have thi no garner to go to, but god feedes hem all:
What (quod) the priest to perkin, peter me thinketh
Thou art lettered a little who learned the on boke?
abstine(n)ce (the) abbes (quod) pierce, mine .a.b.c me taught
And co(n)scie(n)ce came afterward, & ken(n)ed me much more.
Were thou a priest quod he, thou might preach where the shoulde.
as diuinor in diuinity w(ith) Dicit insipiens to thy teme.
Lewd Lorel (quod) Pierce, little lokest thou on the byble
On Salomons sayes, seldome thou beholdest.
Wright’s second edition of *Piers Plowman* appears in two small volumes. The GUL Special Collections copy contains a note from the printer on the first blank leaf of the book. There is no name of recipient, but there is mention of Glasgow and the note suggests the edition was sent as a gift. The letter is dated the 3rd December 1855 which suggests, perhaps, that the edition was a preview before commercial release in the following year. The edition is part of the ‘Library of Old Authors’ series which includes Wright’s edition of Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales*, James I’s *Demonology* and works by John Seldon.

(Page 145-147; Lines 4696-4768)

“Piers,” quod a preest thoo,
“Thi pardon moste I rede;
For I wol construe ech clause,
And kenne it thee on Englisshe.”

And Piers at his preiere
The pardon unfoldeth;
And I bi-hynde hem bothe
Biheld al the bulle,
And in two lynes it lay,
And noght a leef more,
And was writen right thus,
In witnesse of Truthe:
*Et qui bona egerunt, ibunt in vitam eternam*

*Qui vero mala, in ignem eternum.*

“Peter,” quod the preest thoo,
“I kan no pardon fynde,
But do wel and have wel,
And God shal have thi soule,
And do yvel and have yvel,
Hope thou noon other,
But after thi deeth-day
The devel shal have thi soule.”
And Piers for pure tene
Pulled it a-tweyne,
And saide Si ambulavero in medio

_Umbre mortis, non timebo mala,
quoniam tu mecum es._

“I shal cessen of my sowyng.”
quod Piers,

“And swynke noght so harde,
Ne aboute my bely joye
So bisy be na-moore;
Of preieres and of penaunce
My plough shal ben herafter,
And wepen whan I shold slepe,
Though whete-breed my faille.

“The prophete his payn eet
In penaunce and in sorwe,
By that the Sauter seith,
So dide othere manye;
That loveth God lelly,
His liflode is ful esy.
Fuerent mihi lacrimæ meæ panes
die ac nocte.

“And but if Luc lye,
He lerneth us by foweles,
We sholde noght be to bisy
Aboute the worldes blisse;
_Ne soliciò sitiis_,
He seith in the Gospel,
And sheweth us by ensamples
Us selve to wisse.
The folweles in the feld,
Who fynt hem mete in wynter?
Have thei no gerner to go to,
But God fynt hem alle.”

“What!” quod the preest to Perkyn
“Peter! as me thynketh, Thou art lettred a litel:-
Who lerned thee on boke?”

“Abstinence the abbesse,” quod Piers
“Myn a.b.c. me taughte;
And Conscience cam afterward,
And kenned me muche moore.”

“Were thow a preest,” quod he
“Thou myghtest preche where thou sholdest,
As divinour in divinité,
With Dixit incipiens to thi teme.”

“Lewd lorel!” quod Piers,
“Litel lokestow on the Bible;
On Salomons sawes
Selden thow biholdest:
1.2 ‘The Fall of Princes’ by John Lydgate

The following transcriptions of Lydgate’s *The Fall of Princes* begin with Richard Pynson’s print from 1494, followed by his reprint from 1527. John Wayland and Richard Tottell both produce an edition of the poem in 1554 and the last transcription is taken from Felix Kyngston’s print of *The Falles of Unfortunate Princes* (1619). In the interests of continuity and comparison, all transcriptions are taken from the King Arthur section of the text.

1.2.1 Richard Pynson First Edition

*Date:* 1494
*Place of Publication:* London
*Source:* Early English Books Online | Copy from the British Library
*Short Title Catalogue No:* 3175

From Book 8 onwards the text is quite badly damaged and many pages are missing in part or whole.

King Arthur section: Book 8

(Lines 1-42)

Of kynge arthur and his conquestys and of the commodityes of Englonde and he was destroyed by his cosyn mordrede

Was euer prince might him silf assure
Of fortune the fauoure to restreyne
Lyke his desyre his grace to recure
To abyde stable and stonde at certayne
Amonge all other rekne arthure of Breteyne
Which in his tyme was holde of euery wight
The wysest prince and the beste knight

To whom bochas gan his style dresse
In this chapter to remembre blyue
His greate conquest and his high noblesse
With singulere dedys that he wrought his lyue
And firste he gynneth breuely to descryue
The sight of Bretayne and of that cuntre
Which is enclosed with a large se

Set ferre westwarde as ye shall understonde
Hauynge in spayne set in the opposyte
Of a finall angle callvd Ingonde
Fraunce aboute him descriuynge thus his sight
With many a ryuere plesaunt and delyte
Bothe bathes and welles there be founde
Dyuerse mynes of metalles full habounde

Aboute which renneth the occian
Right plentuous of all maner of vitayle
The name of which at brutus first began
London hath shyppes by the se to sayle
Bachus at wynchestre greatly doth auayle
Worcestre [...] frutes haboundeth at the full
Herfo[...] bestys Catiswolde with wall

Bath h[...] bathes holsom for medecyne
Yorke mighty tymbre for great auauantage
Cornwall myners in to myne
Salesbury bestys full sauage
Whete mylke hony plente for euery age
Kent and canterburye hath great commodyte
Of sundry fissshes there takyn in the se

Bochas reherceth there is eke in breteyne
Founde of get a full precious stone
Blacke of coloure and vertuous in certeyne
For sekenes many more than one
Poudre of which wyll discure anone
If it be dronke though it be secre
Of maydnehede broke chastyte
Of kyng Arthur and his co(n)questes/ and of the com(m)odities of England/ & how he
was distroyed by his cosyn Mordrede. The .xxv.cha.

Was euer prince / myght hym selfe assure
Of fortune / the fauour to restrayne
Lyke his desyre his grace to recure
To abyde stable / and stande at certayne
Among all other / reken Arthur of Bretayne
Which i(n) his tyme / was hold of euery wight
The wysest prince / and the best knyght

To whom Bochas gan his style dresse
In this chaptre / to remembre blyue
His great conquest / and his highe noblesse
With syngler dedes / (that) he wrought i(n) his lyue
And fyrst he gynneth breuely to discryue
The light of Bretayne / and of that contre
Which is enclosed with a large see

Set farre westward as ye shall understa(n)de
Hauyng in Spayne sette in the opposyte
Of a small angle / called Englande
Frau(n)ce about hi(m) / discriyuig thus his fight
With many a ryuere plesaunt of delyte
Bothe bathes and welles there be founde
Dyuers mynes of metalles full habounde

About whiche ronnethe the Occyan
Right plentuous of all maner of vitayle
The name of whiche / at Brutus fyrst began
London hath shyppes by the see to sayle
Bachus at Wynchester / gretly dothe auaile
Worcestre with frutes / habou(n)deth at the full
Herforde with beests / Cotswolde with woll

Bathe hote bathes / holsome for medicyne
Yorke mighty timbre / for great auauntage
Cornwall myners in to myne
Salisbury beestes full sauage
Whete / mylke & hony / plente for euery age
Kent and Canterbury hath great com(m)odite
Of sondrie fyshes there taken in the see

Bochas reherseth / there is eke in Bretayne
Fou(n)de of Get / a full precious stone
Black of colour / and vertuous in certayne
For sickeneses many mo than one
The poudre of whiche / wyll discure anone
If it be dronke / though it be secre
Of maydenhede / broke chastyte

Ther ben of peerles fou(n)de i(n) muskyll shelles
And the best / that haue moste whitnesse
And as the boke of Brutus also telles
Howe kig Arthure to speke of worthynesse
Passed all kynges / in marciall prowesse
Touchyng his lyne / his royall kynrede
Who that lyst se / in Brutus he may rede

His father called Uter Pendragon
A manly knight / and famous of corage
Right notable / in his actes euerychon
Arthur but yonge and tendre of age
By full assent / of all his baronage
By succession / crowned anonright
Called of Europe / the most famous knight
¶ Of king Arthur & his co(n)questes, and of the commodities of England, & how he was distroied by his cosin Mordrede.

Was neuer pri(n)ce might him self assure
Of fortune the fauour to restrayne?
Like his desyre his grace to recure
To abide stable, and stand at certaine?
Among all other reken Arthur of Bretayne
Which in his time was hold of euery w[.]ght,
The wysest prince and the best knyght.

To whom Bochas gan his style dresse
In this chaptre, to remembre blieue
His great conquest and his highe noblesse,
With singlet dedes that he wrought i(n) his liue
And first he ginneth breuely to discryue
The lite of Britaine, and of that countre,
Whiche is enclosed with a large see.

Set farre westward as ye shal understand,
Hauing Spayne set in the oppostite
Of a small Angle called Englande:
Frau(n)ce about hi(s) discryuing thus his sight,
With many a riuere plesaunt of delite,
Bothe bathes and welles there be founde, 
Diuers mynes of metalles full habounde.

Aboute whiche ronneth the Occian 
Right plentuous of all maner vitalle, 
The name of which at Brutus fy rst began, 
London hath shyppes by the sea to sayle: 
Bachus at Wynchester gretyly doth auayle, 
Worcestre with frutes haboundeth at the ful, 
Herford with bestes, Cotswolde with wul.

Bathe hot bathes holsome for medicine, 
Yorke mighty timbre for great auauantage, 
Cornwall mynes wherin to myne, 
Salisbury bestes full sauye: 
Whete, mylke, & honie, plente for euery age, 
Kent and Canterbury hath great com(m)odite 
Of sondrie fyshes, there taken in the see.

Bochas reherseth there is eke in Bretayne 
Founde of Gete a full precious stone 
Blakke of colour, and vertuous in certayne 
For sickenesses many mo than one: 
The poudre of whiche wyll discure anone, 
If it be dronke (though it be secre) 
Of maydenhede broken chastite.

Ther ben of peerles founde in muskil shelles, 
And the best that haue most whitenesse: 
And as the boke of Brutus also telles, 
How king Arthure to speke of worthynesse, 
Passed all kinges in marciall prowesse: 
Touchyng his line, his royall kynrede 
Who that lyst se in Brutus he may rede.

His father called Uter Pendragon
A manly knight and famous of corage,
Right notable in his actes euerychon:
Arthur but yonge and tendre of age,
By full assent of all his baronage,
By succession crowned anonright,
Called of Europe the moste famous knight.
King Arthur section: Book 8, Folio Cxiv

(Lines 1-56)

¶ Of kynge Arthur of great Britteyn, now called Englond: and of his co(n)questes, and howe he was destroyed by his cosin Mordrede.

¶ The xxiii. Chapter.

Was euer prince might hiself assure
Of fortune (the) fauour to restreyne,
Like his desyre his grace to recure
to abyde stable and stond at certeyn?
Among al other rekon Arthur of Britteyn,
which in his tyme was hold of euery wight,
the wysest prince and the best knight.

To whom Bochas gan hys style dresse,
In this Chapter to remember blyue,
His great conquest and his high noblesse,
with singuler dedes (that) he wrought his liue.
And fyrst he gynneth brieuely to descryue,
the Scite of Britteyn and of that cuntrey,
which is inclosed with a large see.

Set farre westward as ye shal understond
Hauing Spayne set in the opposite,
Of a smal angle called Englond,
Frau(n)ce about him descriuing this his seite
with many a riuere pleasant of delyte.
Whote bathes and welles, & there be found
Dyuers mynes of metalles ful habound.

About which renneth the Occian,
Right plenteous of al maner vittayle,
the name of which at Brutus fyrst began.
London hath shippes by the sea to sayle,
Bachus at Winchester greatly doth auayle
Worceter with fruites habou(n)deth at the full
Herford with bestes, Cotswolde with wull(...)

Bathe hath hote bathes holeso(m) for medicine
Yorke mighty timber for great auaun
tage
Cornwail myners in to myne:
Salesbury beates ful sauage,
Wheate meale & hony, plentie for euery age
Kent and Canterbury hath great com(m)oditie
Of sundry fishes there taken in the see.

Bochas rehearseth there is eke in Britteyn
Found of Gette a ful precious stone,
Blacke of colour, and vertuous in certeyne,
For sickenesses many moe then one.
Powder of which wil discure anone,
If it be drunke (though it be secree)
Of maydenhed the broken chastitee.

There been eke pearles founde in muskell (shelles
And they be best that haue most whitnesse,
And as the book of Brutus also telles,
Howe king Arthur to speake of worthines
Pased al kinges in marcial prowesse.
Touching his liue and hys royall kynrede,
who that list see in Brutus he may rede.

His fader called Uterpendragon,
A manly knight and famous of courage,
Of false enuie murdred by poyson,
His sonne Arthur but yong & tender of age
By ful assent of al his baronage,
by succession crowned anon right,
Called of Europe the most famous knight.
Another Argument.

Fame sounds her trumpe, King Arthur doth ascend
Tels Mordreds treason, death, and his owne end.

No age hath bin, since nature first began
To worke Loves wonders, but hath left behind
Some deeds of praise for Mirrors ynto man,
Which more then threatful lawes in men inclind,
To tread the paths of praise excites the mind,
    Mirrors tie thoughts to vertues due respects,
    Examples hasten deeds to good effects.

‘Mongst whom, that I my storie so renown’d
May for a Mirrour to the world commend,
Summon’d the first by Fames shrill trumpets sound;
Loe, I am come on earth to find a friend,
Who his assistance unto me may lend,
    And with this pen paint out my historie
    A perfect Mirrour of true maiestie.

In which the truth of my corrupted storie
Defac’d by fleeting times inconstant pen
I will declare, nor to aduance my glorie
Will I present vnto the view of men
Ought, but the scope of what the truth hath ben.
Meane time thou pen-man of Mnemosynie,
Giue heedfull care vnto my tragedie.

As from aire-threatening tops of cedars tall
The leaues, that whilome were so fresh and greene,
In healthlesse Autumnne to the ground do fall,
And others in their roomes at spring are scene:
So proudest States among’st the states of men
   Now mount the loftie top of Fortunes wheele,
   Now fall againe, now firmly stand, now reele.

Foure times the state of this same noble Ile
Hath changed been by froward fates decree,
And on foure nations Fortunes front did smile,
Gracing their high attempts with victorie
Ouer this Empire of Great Britain;
   Yet none but one the Scepter long did sway,
   Whose conquering name endures vntill this day.

First the proud Roman Caesar did oppresse
This land with tributarie seruitude:
Next those two Saxon brethren heauen did blesse,
Who in our Brittish blood their blades imbru’d,
And to their Lordly will this land subdu’d:
   Thirdly the Dane did heere long time remaine,
   And lastly Normans ouer vs did raigne.

Thus seest thou Fortunes vnimpeached force,
And what it hath been in our Britaine state:
By this thou seest her wheeles inconstant course,
And how on earth nor Prince nor Potentate
Can long withstand her ruine-thirsting hate,
   Which my true stories sad catastrophe
   Vnto the sonnes of men can testifie.

I am that Arthur, who on honors wing
Did mount Fames Palace ‘mongst the worthies nine
Fourth from false Vortigerne th’ usurping King;
Who, that he might with strong allies combine
His shaken state, which then began decline,

Wretch that he was into his land did bring

The Saxons with hight *Hengist* their false King.
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