LYDGATE’S *MESURE*: THE *ECHECS AMOUREUX* TRADITION AND THE
THEME OF THE *FALL OF PRINCES*

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Abstract

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This study shows the impact of the Échecks amoureux (1370) and related texts on John Lydgate’s Fall of Princes (1431-1439). Although the Fall of Princes is a translation of Boccaccio’s De casibus virorum illustrium (1363, 1370) via Laurent de Premierfait’s Des cas des nobles hommes et femmes, Lydgate is equally indebted to the Roman de la Rose tradition, and in particular to the Échecks amoureux, which he translated as Reson and Sensuallyte (c. 1410). In tracking key nouns in the text of the Fall of Princes (resoun, sensualite, suffisaunce, mesure, remedie and others), this study relates the Fall of Princes to Reson and Sensuallyte, to the Échecks amoureux, and to Evrart de Conty’s Eschez amourez moralises, re-contextualizing and re-evaluating Lydgate’s project in terms of his philosophic and literary antecedents, English and Continental.
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CHAPTER 1

REASON AND SENSUALITY: THE ECHECS AMOUREUX AND THE FALL OF PRINCES

Critics conventionally term John Lydgate’s *Fall of Princes* (1431-1439) a series of tragedies, or *de casibus* text. Indeed, Lydgate’s primary source for the *Fall*, Giovanni Boccaccio’s *De casibus virorum illustrium* (1363, 1370) together with his French intermediary, Laurent de Premierfait’s *Des cas des nobles hommes et femmes* (1409), are among the *de casibus* genre’s prototypes. Throughout the *Fall*, Lydgate himself characterizes given narratives as *tragedie*:¹ there are sixty-eight instances of the word *tragedie* in the *Fall*, and each episode thus characterized—from the Fall of Adam and Eve to the capture of the French King Jean Le Bon at Poitiers in 1356, “[o]ff Bochas book the laste tragedie,/ Compendiousli put in remembrance” (*Fall of Princes* IX.3204-3205)—


Moreover, to avoid confusion among separate groups of ideas, I am largely (1) keeping French and Latin abstract and proper nouns, particularly those associated with a personification (eg. Raison, Dyane) in their untranslated form and (2) using capitalized, modern English noun forms in discussion of abstract concepts not connected to personification allegory (eg. Reason, Sensuality).

There are two recensions each of the *De casibus* and *Des cas*. It is generally accepted that Lydgate knew the latter recension of Laurent de Premierfait’s *Des cas* (1409).
encompasses the tragic rise and fall of a protagonist or series of protagonists. In this sense, the Monk of Bury’s *summa* accords well with the purpose expressed by Chaucer’s Monk, himself a student of Boccaccio’s *De casibus*, whose cell purportedly contains a hundred such narratives:

```
I wol biwaille in manere of tragedie
The harm of hem that stode in heigh degree,
And fillen so that ther nas no remedie
To brynge hem out of hir adversitee[.]
(VII, 1991-1994)³
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The Monk’s preamble lists all the hallmarks of the *de casibus* genre, and in his own adaptation, Lydgate is “clearly following Chaucer’s lead in applying the term tragedy to Boccaccio’s falls of famous men.”⁴

Tragedie is a mode of writing (*manere*)

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² Book I, lines 5874-5878 of the *Fall of Princes* is a good example of a a series of ‘falls of great men’ characterized as a *tragedie*:

```
This tragedie remembrith thynges fyue:
Off Narcisus thexcellent beute,
And off Biblis doth also descryue
The grete luxur[y]e and dishonest[e],
Mirra diffamed, turned to a tre,

Texemplefie that lecherie and pride
Been from al vertu set ful ferr a-side.

How Orpheus endured in his lyue
Ioie entirmedlid with aduersite;
...
Marpesia, for hir list to stryue
With wilful werris tencrecen hircontre …
```

³ All citations from the works of Chaucer are from the *The Riverside Chaucer*, 3rd ed., ed. Larry D. Benson (Boston, 1987).

designed to arouse lamentation ("I wol biwaille") and pite, a recurrent expression in Chaucer. And, indeed, it is this aspect of his "maistir" Chaucer’s tragic composition that Lydgate stresses in his Prologue to Book I of the Fall: Chaucer “whilom made ful pitous tragedies/The fall of pryncis he dede also compleyne” (Fall of Princes I.248-249; my italics); Chaucer, in the words of Lydgate’s Prologue, told “how the Monk off stories newe & olde/ Pitous tragedies be the weie tolde” (I.349-350). By the same token, Lydgate imputes to the Fall of Princes’ author/protagonist, Bochas, the tragic mode assumed by Chaucer’s Monk. For instance, the singular tragedie of Jocasta

\[
gaff to Bochas ful gret occasioun,  
Whan he sauh hir pitous apparaile,  
For to make a lamentacioun  
Off vnkouth sorwe which dede hir assaile,  
\]

I am following Paul Strohm in attempting generic distinctions using terms native to Lydgate’s text, the most obvious of these in this context being tragedie. See, eg., Paul Strohm, "Storie, Spelle, Geste, Romaunce, Tragedie: Generic Distinctions in the Middle English Troy Narratives," Speculum 46 (1971), 348-59, where Strohm describes the Monk’s Tale’s definition of tragedie as “a downward turn in the fortunes of [a storie’s] protagonist” (Strohm, 348).

5 As regards Chaucer’s use of the term pite, I confine myself here to examples from the Monk’s Tale:

“...[t]hat God wolde on his peyne han som pitee, And sende him drinke, or... “  
"...Wel oghten men thy pitous deeth complayne! Out of thy... “  
“... Ther may no tonge telle for pite ...”  
“...His mooder made he in pitous array ...”  
“... And to his goddes pitously he preyde ...”  
(VII, 2041, 2377, 2408, 2483, 2539)

6 I am following Derek Pearsall’s lead in using “Bochas” as a figurative name for Lydgate’s exemplary author; Lydgate ‘translates’ Boccaccio in to his text, making him a character in a dream-vision rather than a simple narrator. See Derek Pearsall, John Lydgate (Charlottesville, University Press of Virginia, 1970).
With a tragedie to wepyn and bewaile
Hir inportable & straunge dedli striff,
Which that she hadde duryng al hir liff.
(Fall of Princes I. 3172-3178; my italics)

Thus, the Fall replicates the Monk’s stance through its emphasis on tragedy as a mode or
style conducive to emotion (“I wil biwaille … in manere”), and pite, pitous, and pitousli recur some 190 times in the text of the Fall, three times in the Prologue’s praise of
Chaucer alone. In addition to the lines cited above, Chaucer wrote “[t]he pitous story off Ceix and Alcione” (I.304) and “[o]ff Anneleyda and of fals Arcite/ He made a compleynt, doolful & pitous” (Fall of Princes I.320-321). Apart from this concern to arouse pite,
what H.A. Kelly (following D.W. Robertson) has termed “post-Chaucerian tragedy” is distinguished by its didactic depiction of the inexorable operations of Fortune and by the teaching of Fortune’s nature through organized series of exempla: 7

For certein, whan that Fortune list to flee, [the Monk continues]
Ther may no man the cours of hire wittholde;
Lat no man truste on blind prosperitee;
Be war by thise ensamples trew and olde.
(VII, 1995-1998)

This is what Kelly calls the “lesson of inconstancy”: 8 “[b]e ware by thise ensembles,” the Monk tells his fictitious audience. From its opening lines, the Fall of Princes replicates this exemplary emphasis. Bochas, Lydgate’s exemplary auctour, compiled such tragedies as would edify princes and teach them the workings of Fortune,

[i]n his labour hauyng a delit,
That the mater gretli myhte auaile,
Do plesance to the comon profit,
Off noble stories to make rehersaile,
Shewyng a merour how al the world shal faile,


8 Kelly, 177.
And how Fortune, for al ther hih renoun,
Hath vpon pryncis iurediccioun.
*(Fall of Princes I.150-161)*

The *Fall*, then, like the *Monk’s Tale*, claims to be a work on the falls of great men or princes (“hem that stod in heigh degree”), it is written to *bewaile* or to arouse *pite*, and its post-Boethian emphasis is on the cosmic workings of Fortune. Indeed, this dissertation suggests the possibility of the *Fall of Princes*’ reliance on John Walton’s (d. 1410) Middle English translation of *De consolatione philosophiae*.  

Yet, generically and thematically, the *Fall of Princes* is at least as indebted to the *Roman de la Rose* of Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun and to its philosophizing imitators, and in particular to the anonymous *Echecs amoureux* (c. 1370) as it is to the *de casibus* genre. The distinction between the genre of the *de casibus* text and the genre of the *Rose* is even somewhat artificial. The Jean de Meun portion of the *Rose* encompasses several discrete series of narrated *exempla*, thereby encompassing the *de casibus* form itself: instruction by Raison, Ami, La Vieille, and their cohorts. Derek

9 Granted, there are differences in representing the *de casibus* genre. Kelly in 1997 differentiated Lydgate and Chaucer from their Boccaccian antecedents, arguing that “Boccaccio did not consider [the histories that he was translating] to be tragedies, and neither did his translator, Premierfait, but Chaucer did, and Lydgate follows suit” (Kelly, 10). Most recently, Paul Budra has countered that the primary goal of all *de casibus* texts is history, not tragedy. But the fact remains that the *Fall* is a text “written in direct imitation of the form of Boccaccio’s text.” See Paul Budra, *A Mirror for magistrates and the De casibus Tradition* (U of Toronto P, 2000), 31.

10 All citations from Walton’s *Boethius* are from the edition by Mark Science: *Boethius: De consolatione philosophiae* (London, Pub. for the Early English Text Society by H. Milford, Oxford University Press, 1927). This formulation is not found in Chaucer’s *Bocce*.

11 The lexical relation of the *Fall of Princes* to Deguileville’s *Pelerinage de la vie humaine* also warrants more detailed study, given that Lydgate translated Deguileville’s text.
Pearsall goes so far as to state that “Chaucer was probably more influenced in the Monk’s Tale by the Roman than by Boccaccio.” 12 Sylvia Huot points out “the didactic program of the Rose as a poem aimed at members of the ruling class, reminding them of their social responsibilities.” 13

Huot has, moreover, demonstrated conclusively both the “polymorphous” or “protean” quality inherent in the Rose and the variety of its adaptation in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, including its adaptation as a handbook or ‘mirror’ for princes. Complicating the issue further is Laurent de Premierfait’s citation of Jean de Meun in his Des cas, again, a key source for Lydgate: Laurent mentions the Rose briefly in his retelling of the Narcissus myth and then appends to Dante’s appearance to Boccaccio in the ninth Book of the De casibus. 14

Thus, Lydgate operates in complex world of reception and adaptation of Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun. On a deeper level, however, the Fall translates distinct aspects of the Roman de la Rose tradition: that is, Lydgate uses specific topoi

12 Pearsall, 232. Actually, what Pearsall is doing here is stating a broad definition of the de casibus text:

The De Casibus does, systematically and comprehensively, what the Middle Ages did as a matter of habit, that is, teaches virtue by multiplying examples of the mutability of Fortune to those who put their trust in the world … The long passage in the Roman de la Rose, where Reason speaks to the Lover of the instability of Fortune … is particularly important in providing the widest possible currency for the tradition and in establishing precedent for more elaborate exempla and for ‘modern’ instances (Manfred).


14 See Badel, 485.
from post-Rose love poetry to characterize the tragedies of wayward princes and to correct the behaviour of noble ones. As Ernst Sieper demonstrated in the early years of this century, Lydgate knew and used both the *Romaunt of the Rose* attributed to Chaucer and the French text of the *Roman*. Together with Deguileville’s *Pelerinage de la vie humaine*, translated by Lydgate as the *Pilgrimage of the Life of Man*, these texts influence the *Fall of Princes* at the levels of form, iconography, and specific language.

Most pertinently of all to this present study, Lydgate translated the first 4873 lines of the anonymous *Echecs amoureux* (c. 1370), itself a complex and de-ironized reading

15 Ernst Sieper, *Les éches amoureux. Eine altfranzösische nachahmung des Rosenromans und ihre englische übertragung* (Weimar, E.Felber, 1898), 240: “Er war ihm sicher im Originale zugänglich und namentlich auch durch die Fragmente der englischen Uebersetzung geläufig.” Any student of the *Echecs amoureux*—and of Lydgate—is perforce indebted both to this study and to Sieper’s edition of *Reson and Sensuallyte* (London : Pub. for the Early English Text Society by K. Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co., 1901-1903). The edition is made from 2 extant MS Brit Lib Fairfax 16 & Add ms 29729. Sieper does note that Lydgate ultimately favours the Romaunt: “[Lydgate] der letzteren Fassung den Vorzug gab” (Sieper 1898, 240). The poetic *Echecs amoureux* is also referred to in the literature as the *Echecs d’amour* and *Eschez amoureux*. This is because the Dresden MS has no title. Pierre-Yves Badel in *Le Roman de la Rose au XIVe siècle: étude de la réception de l’oeuvre* (Genève, Droz, 1980) refers to the poem as the *Echecs d’amour* and to its extensive commentary by Evrart de Conty as the *Echecs amoureux*. Following Sylvia Huot, I find the more conventional “*Echecs amoureux*” to be the most practical title: in the Evrart’s commentary, the poem is said to be “intitulé des *Eschez amoureux* et des *Eschez d’amour*” (quoted in Sieper, *Echecs amoureux* 112). In passing, it should be noted that *Reson and Sensuallyte* itself is actually titled from Stowe rather than by Lydgate.

16 For two views on Lydgate’s authorship of the *Pilgrimage*, see Richard Firth Green, “Lydgate and Deguileville Once More,” *Notes and Queries* 25 (1978): 105-106, and Kathryn Walls, “Did Lydgate Translate the Pelerinage de vie humaine?” *Notes and Queries* 24 (1977): 103-105. There is, at the very least, a genuine thematic carry-over between the translator’s Prologue to the *Pilgrimage* and the presentation of translation in the *Fall of Princes*, again regrettably out of the scope of this present study.
of the *Roman de la Rose*. In the highly influential *Echecs* and in its Lydgatean translation, *Reson and Sensuallyte* (c. 1410), Nature appears to the narrator and counsels him to prefer the way of Reason (*resoun*) to that of Sensuality (*sensualite*). The narrator is confronted with the same choice among three goddesses that confronted Paris; William Hodapp has justifiably called this the poem’s “central allegorical scene,” and indeed, Lydgate expands the version of the Judgment of Paris in his original by some four hundred lines. The narrator of *Reson and Sensuallyte* like Paris chooses Venus,

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17 The poetic *Echecs amoureux* is a complicated text to study, as it survives in two incomplete manuscripts (Fr. App. 23 in the Biblioteca Marciana, Venice (Ms. V) and Oc. 66 in the Sächsische Landesbibliothek, Dresden (Ms. D). I am indebted to the summary in Sieper, 1898, and to the following summaries and partial translations:


Kristin Juel, *Loving the creator and his creations: ethical reflections on the nature of love in the fourteenth-century *Echecs amoureux* (PhD. diss, Indiana University, 2002), 42-45


The most well-known English-language discussion of the relation between the *Echecs amoureux* and *Roman de la rose* (using the *Echecs* to characterize the *Rose* is found in John V. Fleming, *The Roman de la Rose: a study in allegory and iconography* (Princeton UP, 1969).

18 For the influence of the *Echecs amoureux*, see Kristin Juel, *Loving the creator and his creations: ethical reflections on the nature of love in the fourteenth-century *Echecs amoureux* (PhD. diss, Indiana University, 2002). As Juel notes, that Lydgate’s own *Reason and Sensuallyte* is a translation of the *Echecs* was first established by Schick in Joseph Schick, “Kleine Lydgate-Studien. I, Reason and Sensuality,” *Beiblatt zur Anglia*, 8, 1897-1898, 134-154, and reiterated by Sieper in his edition.

embodying Sensuality, over Pallas and Juno. Through this reenactment, he is led to Deduit’s Garden, a de-ironized, almost theme-park-like, rendition of Guillaume de Lorris’ original love-allegory. The sequence in Deduit’s garden is framed by instructive discourses by Nature, Diana, and Pallas, all of whom counsel Reason at the expense of Sensuality. Lydgate, as we shall see, conforms to his French original both in terms of thematic emphasis and of narrative progression.

The *Echecs*’ formal or generic debt to the *Roman de la Rose* is readily seen; however, framed as it is by instructive discourses by Venus, Diana, and Pallas, it is more formalized allegorical treatise than ambiguous literary allegory. Whereas *Reson and Sensuallyte* is truncated, stopping just short of describing the narrator’s fourth pawn, the *Echecs amoureux*, it is worth remembering is at 30 000 lines roughly as long as the 36 500 *Fall of Princes* itself, folios 45v-144v of 144 extant folios encapsulating an entire cosmology and worldview in instruction by Pallas, a wisdom- or Reason-figure. Pallas’ speech is not, of course, translated by Lydgate in *Reson and Sensuallyte*. This may in fact be because the speech is not commentated by Evrart de Conty. However, as my argument will suggest, congruence between the *Fall of Princes* and the *Echecs*

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suggest a philosophy that integrates the *Rose* tradition and instruction in statecraft, much in the manner of Pallas’ original speech in the poetic *Echecs*.

In the *Fall of Princes*, moreover, Lydgate adapts both the *Echecs*’ allegorical mode and its primary theme of the divide between Reason and Sensuality to Boccaccio’s seemingly endless succession of tragedies. In Lydgate’s translation, in contradistinction to its Boccaccian models, unbridled *sensualité*, as represented in the *Echecs* through sustained personification allegory, is the *de facto* cause of princely falls. It is this presentation of princely tragedy as the triumph of Sensuality over Reason, rather than any more abstract or discursive meditation on Boethian Fortune, that shapes and unites the *Fall* as a text. The *Echecs* generated, further, an impressive commentary tradition. It is an overlooked, if not wholly new, claim of the present study that Lydgate was familiar with Evrart de Conty’s extensive *Livre des Eschez Amoureux Moralisés*, a work whose survival in only six manuscripts belies its influence, and that he used his reading of that commentary in his interpretation of Boccacio and Laurent de

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Sieper has even argued that Lydgate reinforces Sensuality from the *Echecs*: “*Gleich im ersten Abschnitt scheint Lydgate das Bedürfnis gefühlt zu haben, den Kampf zwischen Vernunft und Sinnlichkeit noch deutlicher und ausdrucksvoller darzustellen*” (“Right away in the first episode, Lydgate seems to have felt the need to make the strife between Reason and Sensuality more articulated and more impressive”).

Premierfait and in his consequent construction of the *Fall of Princes*. This influence may be determined from a single passage, as Lydgate’s expansion of the *Echecs*’ description of the elements of Pallas’ armor (*Reson and Sensuallyte* 1186) closely mirrors that found in Conty (103v21).

While I must in what follows assume a complex interrelation between the *Echecs amoureux*, Chaucer, the *Rose*, and the *Fall of Princes*, it is my concern in this study to reveal a direct pattern of borrowings from the *Echecs* itself, as well as from Evrart’s commentary on the *Echecs*. Accordingly, in my first two chapters, having established Lydgate’s knowledge and use of French literary forms, I shall detail five primary uses of the anonymous *Echecs amoureux* in the *Fall of Princes*. Lydgate adapts from the *Echecs* the following *topoi*: (1) abstract conflict between Reason and Sensuality, (2) instruction by female avatars of Reason and Sensuality, (3) conflation of Venus and Fortune, (4) multiple re-tellings of the Fall of Saturn and descent from the Golden Age, and, finally, (5) expression of a desire for restitution of that age, literal or figurative. While these themes recur throughout the *Fall of Princes*, in the interests of concision and of clarity, I shall confine myself to longer discussions of four passages in particular: the tragedy of Narcissus in Book I, the war between Poverty and Fortune in Book III, Fortune’s appearance to Bochas in Book VI, and finally the account of the Golden Age in Book VII of the *Fall of Princes*.

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23 See Guichard-Tesson’s preface to Evrart de Conty. The title for Evrart’s commentary is given by his editors, Françoise Guichard-Tesson and Bruno Roy. Indeed, throughout this study I am indebted to their monumental edition: Evrart de Conty, *Le livre des eschez moralisés*. ed. Françoise Guichard-Tesson and Bruno Roy (Montréal, CERES, 1993).
Patterns of Influence: Lydgate, Laurent, and the *Rose* Tradition

Because generalization about a large text such as the *Fall of Princes* proves problematic, I shall present some of my argument in table form to suggest the extent of ideas borrowed from the *Echecs amoureux* in the text of the *Fall*. The text database search is an invaluable aid for understanding Lydgate’s patterns of noun usage in a large-scale work such as the *Fall*.²⁴ A detailed analysis of Lydgate’s adaptation of the Reason-Sensuality polarity found in the *Echecs* to the *Fall of Princes* lays the groundwork for an examination, in subsequent chapters, of Lydgate’s presentation of his doctrine of *mesure*: global Temperance (*attempraunce*) and industriousness (*bisynesse*) counteracting the reign of Sensuality.

Before discussing Lydgate’s use of the *Echecs amoureux* in the *Fall of Princes*, it is necessary to consider Lydgate’s general relation to the French tradition. As William Calin remarks, the bulk of Lydgate’s major translations are from French texts.²⁵ Yet, work on Lydgate’s French sources is so varied that it is difficult to present more than a broad outline here. In the present context, we are concerned particularly with work on the *Fall of Princes* in terms of its French sources and, secondarily, with work on Lydgate’s broader relation to the French ‘courtly’ or romantic *dit*. The *Fall of Princes*’ editor, Thomas Bergen, Patricia Gathercole, Nigel Mortimer, and others have compared

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²⁴ The two databases used most frequently in this study are LION (lion.chadywck.com) and ARTFL (http://humanities.uchicago.edu/orgs/ARTFL/). This study also bases certain of its assumptions on Georg Reismüller, *Romanische Lehnwörter bei Lydgate* (Naumburg, a.S. Lippert, 1909).

Lydgate’s text to Laurent, and their findings are an implicit influence here.\textsuperscript{26} At the same time, smaller-scale studies explore the specific relations between French sources and Lydgatean texts ranging from the \textit{Temple of Glass} and “Churl and Bird” to the giant \textit{Pelerinage de la vie humaine}, based closely on Guillaume Deguileville. Lydgate in such works as the \textit{Temple of Glass} and the “Compleynt of a Lover’s Life” has been found to use the model of the French \textit{dit} closely. As Susan Bianco suggests, “[t]he direct influence of the French \textit{dit amoureux} tradition must be fully recognized before an assessment of his love poetry may even begin.”\textsuperscript{27}

I cite these studies here to show that Lydgate, like Chaucer before him, is firmly rooted in the background of French literature. Here in particular, it is necessary to characterize Lydgate’s understanding of the hyper-influential \textit{Roman de la Rose} \textit{qua} text. That Lydgate views the \textit{Rose} as a major work is without question. He lists the \textit{Romaunt of the Rose} at a high point in his Prologue to the \textit{Fall of Princes}, in a selective\textsuperscript{28} catalog of Chaucer’s works:

… [Chaucer] notabli dede his bisynesse,  
Bi gret auys his wittis to dispose,  
To translate the Romaunce off the Rose.


\textsuperscript{28} The catalog is thematically appropriate because Chaucer is depicted as surmounting idleness, in line with Lydgate’s characterization of Laurent de Premierfait and of several of the \textit{Fall}’s virtuous princes.
Thus in vertu he sette al his entent,
Idilnesse and vicis for to fle;
(*Fall of Princes* 1.306-310)

Both Sieper’s edition of *Reson and Sensuallyte* (1901-1903) and his book-length study of the *Echecs amoureux* cite multiple borrowings from the *Romaunt* integrated into Lydgate’s translation. Moreover, just as he amplifies his translations of Classical stories in the *Fall of Princes*, using material from such authorities as Ovid and Seneca, Lydgate frequently expands his translation of *Reson and Sensuallyte* to include details from the *Roman de la Rose* that the author of the *Echecs* has omitted. A noteworthy example occurs beginning at line 4937 in *Reson and Sensuallyte*. The narrator has left Diana and come to Deduit’s garden, a veritable theme park of elements derived from its original in Guillaume de Lorris:

\[
\text{And ther I saugh the Rosys soote} \\
\text{And the famous fressh Roser} \\
\text{Whilom y-kept by Daunger, … }
\]

\[
\text{And also there I dyde espye} \\
\text{The place, wher that Ialousye} \\
\text{In a myghty strong Dongon} \\
\text{Pute byalacoyl in prison …}
\]

\[
\text{I sawgh the noble, ryche welle,} \\
\text{Callyd the welle amerous,} \\
\text{And eke the welle dangerous} \\
(*Reson and Sensuallyte* 5632-5633; 5647-5650; 5668-5670)
\]

Complicating Lydgate’s use of the *Roman de la Rose* further is Laurent de Premierfait’s use of the *Roman de la Rose* in his own *Des cas*. This is explored in detail

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29 Sieper tabulates systematic borrowing from the *Rose* beginning on page 224 of his edition.
by Pierre-Yves Badel in his magisterial *Roman de la Rose au XIVe siècle*.  Laurent was a conservative humanist involved in the so-called *querelle de la rose*. As stated above, he mentions the *Rose* briefly in his retelling of the Narcissus myth and then appends to Dante’s appearance to Boccaccio in the ninth Book of the *De casibus* a biography of Jean de Meun which Badel calls “beaucoup plus remarquable.” Badel notes also that the biography of Jean de Meun is vague enough to suggest that Laurent did not in fact know the *Rose*; however, Emil Koeppel in *Laurents de Premierfait und John Lydgates bearbeitungen von Boccaccios De Casibus virorum illustrium* (1885) – sine qua non a source for this study--concludes that Laurent is deeply influenced by the earlier French text.  

I agree with this assessment, believing that further comparison of Laurent’s and Jean’s language would elicit striking results. For instance, Poverte’s characterization in Laurent’s translation of Book III of the *De Casibus* as “affublee dune coste pertuise en cent lieux” clearly mirrors Raison’s characterization of Poverty in the *Roman de la Rose*. The subject is false love, which disappears with the encroachment of Poverty:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Cete amour est d’autel nature,} \\
\text{Car or est clere, or est ocure} \\
\text{Si tost con Povretez l’afuble} \\
\text{De son hisdeus mantel obnuble} \\
\text{Qu’el ne voit mes richesces luire,} \\
\text{Occurcir la convient et fuire.} \\
\text{(Roman de la Rose 4792-4795)}
\end{align*}
\]

---


31 Badel, 487-489.

32 quoted in Bergen, volume IV, p. 182.
It might be argued that this commerce between French humanists is irrelevant to Lydgate—yet it is a trend that he adapts further. A primary instance of this is his use of the word *suffisaunce* throughout the Fall, but especially in the third Book, an underpinning of my argument concerning *suffisance*, *mesure*, and the active life in my concluding chapters. Briefly—in this context—*suffisaunce* (sufficiency, self-sufficiency, or contentment) dominates Lydgate’s adaption of the debate between Poverty and Fortune broached above:

> Gretter richesse is founde in suffisaunce  
> [the narrator says, explaining the outcome of Poverty and Fortune’s battle]  
> Than in the flodis off superfluyte.  
> And who is content in his pouerte  
> And gruchchith nat, for bittir nor for soote,  
> What-euer he be, hath Fortune vndir foote, \(^{34}\)  

(*Fall of Princes* III.556-560).

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\(^{33}\) “Such is the nature of love, which is sometimes bright and sometimes dark. As soon as Poverty wraps it in her ugly black cloak and it no longer sees the glow of wealth, it must darken and take flight[.]”


\(^{34}\) *Suffisaunce* is a frequent expression in the *Fall* with twenty-six occurrences, beginning with the *tragedie* of Adam and Eve. Christa McCay has noted Lydgate’s use of the “[stylistic] device of repetition in the *Fall of Princes*.” This study is equally indebted to Jill Mann’s “Satisfaction and Payment in Middle English Literature” for its discussion of *suffisaunce*, both implicitly in terms of Chaucer’s use of the term and explicitly in terms of its use of specific vocabulary clusters to probe broader themes in Middle English literature (Jill Mann, *Satisfaction and Payment in Middle English Literature, Studies in the Age of Chaucer* 5 (1983), 17-48). In Mann’s analysis of the *Clerk’s Tale’s* “vocabulary patterns” (Mann, 38), of course, *sad* is described as Chaucer’s equivalent term for *suffisaunce*.
Indeed, there are 51 uses of the word *suffisaunce* in the text of the *Fall*, a clear reflection of Lydgate’s use of Raison’s teachings in the *Roman de la Rose* to shape his adaptation of Boccaccio’s *De Casibus*. For Raison preached *suffisaunce* long before Lydgate’s Glad Poverte:

\[
\begin{align*}
\textit{Si ne fait pas de richece riche} \\
\textit{Celui qui en tresor la fiche,} \\
\textit{Car soufisance seulement} \\
\textit{Fait ome vivre richement.} \\
\textit{(Roman de la Rose 4976-4980)}^{35}
\end{align*}
\]

All of this demonstrates (1) Lydgate’s placement of the *Echecs* in a tradition of scholarly interpretation, translation, and transposition of the *Rose* and (2) his willingness himself to engage in such creative adaptation. Understanding this aspect of Lydgate’s adaptation of the *Echecs amoureux* not only lays the groundwork for understanding Lydgate’s further transposition of motifs from the *Echecs* and *Rose* to the *Fall* but also assists in positing a primary connection between the *Rose* and the *Fall*, two major texts of late medieval literature.

Moreover, when we take into account the sources and context of the fifteenth-century *de casibus* text, it becomes clear that Lydgate understands the *Rose* and the *Echecs amoureux* above all as texts which tranpose the language of *fin’amors* to the language of polity, of what Lydgate in a recurring expression terms *policie*.\(^{36}\) This transposition would have been familiar to Lydgate, first and foremost, from the manuscript and interpretive tradition of the *Rose* itself. Sylvia Huot has studied the

\(^{35}\) “Wealth does not enrich the man who locks it up in treasure; a simple competence allows a man to live richly[.]”

\(^{36}\) *Policie* is a recurring expression specific to the text of the *Fall* ((see I.4392, Theseus at II.221, Saul, and so on). There are twenty-seven uses of *policie* in total. The term *policie* is also a staple in the commentary of Evrart de Conty.
accretion of political thought to the Rose manuscript tradition. Her findings on University Library Add. MS. 2993, for instance, document a 376-line digression that “amplifies Reason’s discussion” of Priam, Alexander, Pompey, and Caesar, adding material from Lucan and Suetonius. These and similar examples demonstrate the amplification of the de casibus impulse within the manuscript tradition of the Roman de la rose. As Huot notes, the Echecs amoureux continue a pattern of instruction, treating the Rose as “an open and open-ended meditation on the psychological, social, natural, and cosmic contexts,” “a mirror of human life crafted for the aristocracy.”

Or, as Alastair Minnis states the case in an extended discussion of Evrart’s commentary on the Echecs and on the nature of commentary in general, following explicitly on Badel and Huot,

… different readers would focus on an array of specific things and be blind to others, skipping from one passage to another. Moral sententiae were appreciated in defiance of larger textual contexts which threatened to problematize them; au contraire, titillating passages could be enjoyed without recourse to the ethical correctives on offer elsewhere.

Secondarily to this, Lydgate would have been familiar with the intervention of policy in the Rose tradition from the dit; as Susan Bianco remarks in a study of Lygate’s knowledge and use of the dit, Lydgate’s ‘courtly’ work often mirrors that form in being written “with a view to effecting change and political action.”

Thus, Lydgate’s use of

37 Huot, 195-207

38 Huot, 331.

the *Rose* tradition, as I have called it, reveals the complexity of patterns of interpretation and reception in a mid-to-late fifteenth-century context. Both *Romaunt* and *Roman*, together with the *Echecs amoureux* and Deguileville, play in to Lydgate’s reception of the tradition and in to his adaptation of the tradition to the *Fall of Princes*, ostensibly a work on *policie* and Fortune.

**Reason and Sensuality in Conflict: the *Echecs amoureux* and the *Fall***

In general terms, then, Lydgate’s posited adaption of the *Echecs amoureux* has its basis in widespread adaptation of didactic love poetry to the instruction of princes. Having established this, we can move to discussing the specific literary and thematic implications of the *Echecs amoureux* for the *Fall of Prince*, in particular to the presentation of a cosmic divide between Reason (*resoun*) and Sensuality (*sensualite*). As stated above, Lydgate’s *Reson and Sensuallyte* is itself only a partial translation of the *Echecs amoureux*. The narrator sets out to tell “[h]ow that [he] nat yore agoon/ Was of a Fers so Fortunat/ Into a corner dryve and maat” (*Reson and Sensuallyte* 8-12).

While this opening suggests a drawn-out allegorical conflict, Lydgate’s translation stops short of narrating the *Echecs*’ climactic chess game, describing only four pawns in the narrator’s retinue (which follows the description of the lady’s). There are several possible reasons for this truncation, including manuscript availability and Lydgate’s possible lack of interest in finishing the project. Alastair Minnis provocatively suggests that “it would seem that Lydgate had drawn on the Latin explication in

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producing his version”, as Bodleian MS Fairfax 16 of Reson and Sensuallyte echoes or even reproduces the original glosses on the Echecs; however, given the incomplete state of the manuscripts of the Echecs, this seems difficult to prove.\(^{41}\)

At any rate, whether or not Lydgate intended his translation to stand as a complete entity, in the absence of the full chess game and of the culminating passages of instruction by Pallas, Lydgate’s narrative can be divided into two main sections: a visionary re-enactment of the Judgment of Paris and a description of the consequences of that re-enactment. Following on the dream-frame and on what Pearsall calls the “statutory spring description,”\(^{42}\) Nature, “thys hevenly emperesse” (242) and “quene of kynde” (254) appears to instruct the dreamer in man’s eternal nature—and in the similarly eternal divide between Reason and Sensuality. From the Echecs amoureux/Reson and Sensuallyte, Lydgate derives the idea that Reason and Sensuality are opposed concepts, forever at war: \(^{43}\)

\[
\begin{align*}
    \text{lyche as reson} \\
    \text{Vnto vertu ay accordeth,} \\
    \text{So sensualyte discordeth,} \\
    \text{And hath noon other appetit} \\
    \text{But in bodely delyt,} \\
    \text{Al set to worldly vanyte.} \\
    \text{And this a gret dyuersyte}
\end{align*}
\]

\(^{41}\) Minnis, 290

\(^{42}\) Pearsall, 115.

\(^{43}\) In the pseudo-Lydgatean Assembly of the Gods, the dreamer finds it possible to reconcile Reason and Sensuality: both are “knette in oon opynyon/ Bothe agayn Dethe held contradyccyon.” Based on my readings of the Fall of Princes and of Reson and Sensuallyte, this possibility of concord is a greater argument for Lydgate’s non-authorship than is any stylistic issue. For more information see The Assembly of the Gods; or the Accord of Reason and Sensuality in the Fear of Death, ed. O.L. Triggs (Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co., for the Early English Text Society, London 1896).
Atwene her condicion;
"For euer at contradiccion
Ben thise tweyne douteles,
Ay at discorde, and selde in pes …

(Reson and Sensuallyte 776-786)

Huot has justifiably called this an “unambiguous moral critique” of the relationship between Reason and Nature found in Jean de Meun. Here, by contrast, Nature’s status as an avatar of Reason is reiterated in an unambiguous fashion:

… Reyson, that gouerneth al,
I dar afferme hyt not in veyn
Holdeth the weye most certeyn
Tournyng towarde thorient ,
Most holsom and conenient …
Al be that sensualyte
Causeth men, who that kan se,
Of wilfulness euer amonge ,
To go the weye that is wronge …

(Reson and Sensuallyte 788-798)

Reason’s unity with Nature suggests that, despite Reson and Sensuallyte’s reliance on the Roman de la Rose, Lydgate’s Nature has more in common with Natura in De planctu nature than she does with Jean de Meun’s more ambiguous presentation of the Goddess. As George D. Economou remarks, citing Roman de la Rose IV.19055-19058, Jean de Meun dissociates Reason and Nature: 44

Senz faille, de l’entendement [Nature admits]
Quenois je bien que vraiment
Celui ne lui donai je mie;
La ne s’estent pa ma baillie.

(Roman de la Rose 19055-19058) 45


45 “Undoubtedly, as I know very well, it was not I, in truth, who gave [man] his understanding. That is outside my province …”
In Alanus, by contrast—a major source for the *Echecs* if not for *Reson and Sensuallyte* itself—Nature and Reason are closer companions.⁴⁶

Further, according to this scheme of Reason and Sensuality, man should eschew Sensuality and follow Reason:

Begynne the weye, ech seson [Nature instructs],
First at vertu and reson,
And fle ech thing that they dispreyse,
And vp to god thy herte reyse.
*(Reson and Sensuallyte 817-820).*

The polarity between Reason and Sensuality expressed in the *Echecs amoureux* has its roots in Aristotelian, then in Aquinian, thought, which latter is a primary influence on the *Echecs amoureux*.⁴⁷ Initially, together with mens, ratio (or intellectus) and sensualitas form part of the threefold Aristotelian division of the human soul (*Nicomachean Ethics*, Book II). It is Thomas Aquinas who formalizes the correct relation among mens, ratio, and sensualitas. Having distinguished Sensuality from the operation of the sensual organs themselves as the appetite belonging to the operation of the bodily senses (“*appetitus rerum ad corpus pertinentium*” (I q. 81 a. 1 s. c.)), hence as an appetite following from sensitive apprehension (“*[m]otus ... sensualis est appetitus apprehensionem sensitivam consequens*” (I q. 81 a. 1 co), he goes on to inquire whether Sensuality (in its irascible and concupiscible aspects) must obey Reason. Aquinas

⁴⁶ Economou, 89.

⁴⁷ The second half of the *Echecs amoureux*, the discourse of Pallas, is effectively a translation of *De regimine principium*, the work of Thomas Aquinas’ student, Égidio Colonna. Kristin Juel makes a clear case for the *Echecs amoureux*’ use of Aquinas throughout her study. See Juel, 41.
concludes that, because the will directs man’s lower appetites, Sensuality is ultimately subject to Reason: 48

\[\textit{... homo non statim movetur secundum appetitum irascibilis et concupiscibilis; sed expectatur imperium voluntatis, quod est appetitus superior. In omnibus enim potentissi} \textit{mis ordinatis, secundum movens non movet nisi virtute primi moventis, unde appetitus inferior non sufficit movere, nisi appetitus superior consentiat. Et hoc est quod philosophus dicit, in III de anima, quod appetitus superior movet appetitum inferiorem, sicut spheara superior inferiorem. Hoc ergo modo irascibilis et concupiscibilis rationi subduntur (I q. 81 a. 3 co.).} \]

It is this subjection of Sensuality to Reason or to the will that distinguishes man from beasts:

\[\textit{In aliis enim animalibus statim ad appetitum concupiscibilis et irascibilis sequitur motus sicut ovis, timens lupum statim fugit, quia non est in eis aliquis superior appetitus qui repugnet. (I q. 81 a. 3 co.)} \]

A more poetic rendition of this idea, no doubt familiar to Lydgate, who uses Ovid throughout the \textit{Fall of Princes}, is found in the first book of the \textit{Metamorphoses}. In the terms of a text possiby more familiar to Lydgate, "\textit{Haec (sensualitas) hominem in bestiam degenerando trasmutat, ista (ratio) hominem in Deum transfigurat}" (Alanus de

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49 “… in other animals movement follows at once the concupiscible and irascible appetites: for instance, the sheep, fearing the wolf, flees at once, because it has no superior counteracting appetite. On the contrary, man is not moved at once, according to the irascible and concupiscible appetites: but he awaits the command of the will, which is the superior appetite.”

50 “… in other animals movement follows at once the concupiscible and irascible appetites: for instance, the sheep, fearing the wolf, flees at once, because it has no superior counteracting appetite. On the contrary, man is not moved at once, according to the irascible and concupiscible appetites: but he awaits the command of the will, which is the superior appetite.”
Both Aquinas and Alanus are major sources for the *Echecs amoureux*, as Sieper and Kristin Juel have documented. Likewise, this is another case where Lydgate may be taking his cues for echoing the *Echecs* and/or the *Rose* tradition from Laurent: in Laurent’s translation of Boccaccio’s diatribe against gluttony in Book VII, “le vice de gloutonnie rent l’homme beste/ et si destruict tous les biens de l’homme/ par lesquelz il est plus excellent que les aultres bestes brutes” (quoted in Bergen IV.287). There is, however, no reason not to suppose that Lydgate would not have known this topos from Latin sources, as both theologians were available at Bury. *Reson and Sensuallyte* contains two major statements of this motif. The first occurs in the context of the narrator’s description of Nature’s garments:

Man was set in the hyest place
Towarde heven erecte hys face,
Cleymyng hys diwe herytage
Be the syght of his visage,
To make a demonstracion:
He passeth bestys of reson,
Hys eye vp-cast ryght as lyne,
Where as bestes don enclyne
Her hedes to the erthe lowe,
To shewe shortly and to knowe
By these signes, in sentence,
The grete, myghty difference
Of man, whos soule ys immortall,
And other thinges bestiall.

---

51 "This (sensuality) demotes man to a beast, whereas that (reason), turns man to a god.” Uncredited translations of Latin, French, or German are my own.

52 “The vice of gluttony makes man a beast and thus destroys all the good traits of man, by which he is more excellent than the other simple animals.”
This motif occurs next in *Reson and Sensuallyte* in the context of an authorial excursus on the “two virtues,” *resoun* and *sensualite*, given to man by Nature:

… he that is most souereyn kynge,
   And thys myghty lorde also
Hath graunted hym vertues two,
That ben in pris of gret noblesse,
Which conveye him and eke dresse
And conduyte him, out of drede,
In euery thing, whan he hath nede.
The first, without[e] werre or stryf,
Called the vertu sensytif,
By which he feleth and doth knowe
Thinges, bothen high and lowe …

(Reson and Sensuallyte 690-705)

Again, Reason is underlined as the explicitly human property, the property that distinguishes men from beasts:

The tother vertu, out of drede,
   Myn ovne frende, who taketh hede,
   Ys called, in conclusion,
   Vnderstondyng and reson,
   By whiche of ryght, with-out[e] shame,
   Of a man he bereth the name,
   And throgh clere intelligence
   Fro bestes bereth the difference,
   And of nature ys resemblable
   To goddys that be pardurable;
   Knowynge throgh hys dignite

53 Sieper notes as the source of this passage Boethius 5m5:

una gens hominum celsum leuat altius cacumen
atque leuis recto stat corpore despicitque terras.
haec, nisi terrenus male desipis, ammonet figura:
qui recto caelum uultu petis exserisque frontem,
in sublime feras animum quoque, ne grauata pessum
inferior sidat mens corpore celsius leuato.

The ultimate source, of course, is Ovid, *Metamorphoses* I.
Many thinges that ben secre.
(Reson and Sensuallyte 721-732)

Sieper cites the following parallel lines from the first Book of the Fall of Princes, in the significant context of the fall of Adam and Eve:

And off his grace heer in this mortal liff,
As we precelle in wisdom and resoun,
And off his gifte han a prerogatiff
Toforn all beestis bi discrecioun,
Therfore lat us off hool entencioun,
As we off resoun beestis ferr exceede,
Lat us forn hem be, be woord, exaumple and deede.

(Fall of Princes 1.932-938)

While Aquinas posits that Reason rules Sensuality—and while the passages from Reson and Sensuallyte presented above reflect this relation—it is clear that this is a presentation of the mind and inferior faculties in their desired, ordered state (rather than in an actual and fallen state of disorder). In fact, in an analogy borrowed from Aristotle, which must have great resonance for Lydgate as author of the Fall of Princes, the irascible and concupiscible appetites are in political subjection to Reason:

... sicut philosophus dicit in I politicorum, est quidem in animali contemplari et despoticum principatum, et politicum, anima quidem enim corpori dominatur despoticum principatu; intellectus autem appetitui, politico et regali ... Principatus ... politicus et regalis dicitur, quo aliquis principatur liberis, qui, etsi subdantur regimini praesidentis, tamen habent aliquid proprium, ex quo possunt reniti praecipientis imperio. Sic igitur anima dicitur dominari corpori despotico principatu, quia corporis membra in nullo resistere possunt imperio animae ... Intellectus autem, seu ratio, dicitur principari irascibili et concupiscibili politico principatu, quia appetitus sensibilis habet aliquid proprium, unde potest reniti imperio rationis ... Unde experimur irascibilem vel concupiscibilem rationi repugnare ...

Hence, were one to consider the Echecs as a text of moral instruction, partially influenced by Aquinas, it might be read as presenting a desirable subjection of Sensuality to Reason.
The classic desirable relation between Reason and Sensuality is hierarchized, to give a Chaucerian instance, in the *Parson’s Tale*: “God sholde have lorshipe over resoun, and resoun over sensualitee, and sensualitee over the body of man” (X, 260).

Lydgate adheres in general to this tradition; however, both *Reson and Sensuallyte* and the *Fall of Princes* privilege the polarity between Reason and Sensuality at the expense of the hierarchal relationship outlined in the Parson’s Tale. It might, indeed, be argued that this is a natural consequence of emphasizing Reason as man’s natural property. In the *Echecs/Reson and Sensuallyte*, this polarity is figured most dominantly the metaphor of two paths:

This [Nature tells the dreamer] is the wey[e] of Reson Which causeth man, thys no nay, For to goo the ryghte way Which hath his gynnyng in the Est. But the tother of the west Ys, who that kan beholde and se, The wey of sensalyte, Which set his entente in al To thinges that be temporal, Passynge and transytorie, And fulfylled of veyn glorie. (*Reson and Sensuallyte* 672-682)

Evrart de Conty’s commentary would have given Lydgate an even stronger sense of the two paths and their implication:

.. raison et sensualité voulentiers se descordent et voulentiers vont par chemins contraires quant est de leur anture, car raison tend et se encline tousdiz vers la meilleur partie a ce qui se acorde et a vertu et a bien, comme Aristote dit, et sensualité tousdiz se trait vers les deliz charneulx et le oyseuse du monde. (24v44-25r4)

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54 “Reason and Sensuality of course disagree and of course are opposite paths, inasmuch as that is their nature. For Reason always leads toward the better part, to that which accords with virtue and good, as Aristotle says, and Sensuality [tousdiz] leads to carnal
This passage also situates Reason and Sensuality explicitly within the human soul:

“[Nature fait mention] de deuz chemins ... qui sont trouvé en le homme qui est le petit monde” (24v34-24v35).  

This strong sense of polarity—replicated equally in the *Fall of Princes*—is a notable feature of vernacular interpretations of Reason and Sensuality, as contrasted with the classics and their commentary tradition. I should like to suggest as a proximate source John Walton’s (d. 1410) poetic translation of Boethius, which in the fifteenth century “far surpassed Chaucer’s prose *Boece* in popularity.” Walton adds to his translation of Book One, Prose Five, an explicit reference to the Reason/Sensuality divide. Lady Philosophy had told Boethius that “qui vallo eius ... quisquis eam inhabitare velle desierit, pariter desinit eam mereri.” In Walton, by contrast,

… in ṭat place [sc. in his true country] who so will abiden stille  
He ne may deserue none aduersite,  
Bot also sone as he forlettiþ ṭat will  
He may no lenger in ṭat paleys be;  
For he forfeteþ ṭanne his liberte  
And fleeþ his cuntre of his owne assent,  
When ṭat he scheweb sensualite  
For-letynge resoun in his iugement.  

---

This sentiments may also be in line with Nicholas Trevet’s commentary, present at Bury, and, of course, a source for Walton, Chaucer, and Lydgate.

55 “[Nature mentions] the two paths found in man, who is the little world.”


57 These sentiments may also be in line with Nicholas Trevet’s commentary, present at Bury, and, of course, a source for Walton, Chaucer, and Lydgate.
CHAPTER 2

THE AGE OF VENUS AND THE PRESENT AGE:

THE ECHECS AND THE FALL

The preceding chapter concluded by suggesting that, in addition to having been construed as a series of tragedies or *de casibus* text, the *Fall of Princes* is firmly rooted in the world of vernacular personification allegory. In particular, Lydgate presents within his text minor echoes and major allegorical set-pieces on the eternal struggle between Reason (*resoun*) and Sensuality (*sensualite*). Having discussed the role of Reason in the *Fall*’s structures of personification allegory, I shall now move to discussing the role of Venus (or Sensuality). Venus casts a long shadow over the *Fall of Princes*: indeed, it is avatars of Sensuality, with whom Reason and her allegorical allies are perpetually at war, who dominate both Lydgatean texts. In *Reson and Sensuallyte*, Venus bodies forth the path of *sensualite*. When the Dreamer meets Diana, her primary grievance is that she has been usurped by “myn enmy, Dame Venus” (*Reson and Sensuallyte* 3066):

… cause of al, as y espye,
That I am left allone thus,
Is myn enmy, Dame Venus,
That regneth with hir companye,
And pleynly hath the regalye
Throgh the worlde on euery syde …
For which with al ther hool entent
They folwen hir, and me forsake[.]  
(*Reson and Sensuallyte* 3064-3069, 3076-3077)

Venus is, indeed, the primary representative of Sensuality in the *Echecs amoureux*. Her chief supporter is Juno, whose beauty makes her one with Venus in her power to transfix men:

For the nerer that they [sc. men who looked at Juno] went
Ay the more her herte brent,
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Part</th>
<th>Title</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>III.1367-1368</td>
<td>The Compleynt of Bochas Oppon þe luxurie of Princis by examplis of diuers myschevis.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3755-3756</td>
<td>Astriages</td>
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<td>1621-1622</td>
<td>“ “</td>
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<tr>
<td>3146-3147</td>
<td>Bochas ageyn thontrowith of Iugis.</td>
</tr>
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<td>IV.2938-2939</td>
<td>Agathodes</td>
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<td>V.85-88</td>
<td>Demetrius and Arsinoe</td>
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<td>VI.1502-1505</td>
<td>Antiochus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VIII.2349-2352</td>
<td>Fals extorsioun supporteth robberie, And sensualite can haue the</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The *Fall’s* exemplary ‘princes’ sometimes master their sensuality with reason as do Diogenes or Xenocrates (I.6200). Most frequently, however, they succumb to unbridled sensuality, to what Lydgate’s Lucretia more pithily calls “luxure onbridled” (II.1243). Thus of Alexander the Great we read that

\[
\text{Thouh [he] was myhti off puissaunce,}
\text{And al the world[e] hadde in his demeyne,}
\text{Yit was his resoun vnder thobeisaunce}
\text{Off flesshli lustis fetrid in a cheyne;}
\text{For in his persone will was souereyne,}
\text{His resoun bridled be sensualite,}
\text{Troubyng the fredam off riht & equite.}
\] (I.6252-6258; my italics)

Similarly, in Book Two of the *Fall*, following directly on his Envoy to the tragedy of Saul, Lydgate alters the commendation of obedience in Boccaccio’s Latin to assert that “whan wisdom and resoun/ Been ouermaistered with sensualite/ Farweel the floures off ther felicite!” (*Fall of Princes* II.533-535). And in the Envoy following the story of Sardanapalus,

\[
\text{Whan resoun faileth, and sensualite}
\text{Holdeth the bridel off lecherous insolence,}
\text{And sobirnesse hath lost his liberte,}
\text{And to fals lust is doon the reuerence,}
\text{And vice off vertu hath an apparence,---}
\text{Misledith pryncis off wilful reklesnesse}
\text{To gret errour off froward idilnesse.}
\] (II.2535-2541; my italics)

At III.1366-1368 (the section on the Luxury of Princes), there is a direct injunction: “… lat pryncis that ha[ue] be defectiff / To folwe ther lustis off sensualite./ Shape hem be
resoun for tamende ther liff.” As a final example, in Book VII, we have John the Baptist, Seneca, and (here) Diogenes juxtaposed explicitly to tyrants, practitioners of unbridled sensuality:

His conquest was mor souerayn of degre
Than Alisaundris, for al his hih renoun;
For he conquered his sensualite,
Made hym soget & seruaunt to resoun,
Daunted of prudence ech foreyn passioun,
His clerk of kechene callid attempraunce,
Which of his diete had al þe gouernaunce.
(VII.1300-1306; my italics)

Sensuality is not romantic love, but can manifest itself as any intemperate or disordered desire. Meanwhile, Sensuality is directly related to Fortune, in that both oppose Reason. As Evrart de Conty puts it,

“[les poetes] faignoient ... que Fortune est avugle et que elle ne voit goute, pour ce que elle nous sert des choses dessusdites sans ordre et sans mesure et sans raison quelconques, maiz ainsi qu’il eschiet aventureusement.”
(7v20-7v23; emphasis added)\(^{59}\)

Despite overt textual borrowing from Walton, it should be emphasized that main source for interpreting succumbing to Sensuality as tragedy is the *Rose* itself. As Raison tells Amans, Reason is incompatible with loving *par amour*:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Saveuir deiz, et bien le recorde} \\
\text{Que quiconque a Raison s’acorde} \\
\text{Jamais par amour n’amera} \\
\text{Ne Fortune ne prisera.}
\end{align*}
\]

*(Roman de la rose 6884-6887)\(^{60}\)*

\(^{59}\) “The poets contrived that Fortune is blind and that she does not see at all because she doles out these things without order and without measure and without any kind of reason.”

\(^{60}\) “whoever is at one with Reason will never love *par amour*, nor value Fortune.”
*Reson and Sensuallyte* follows the *Rose*’s lead in stating categorically that Love brings unhappiness, intellectual disorder, and public undoing. Hence romantic love leads irrevocably to the loss of reason and to tragedy. In the *Echecs*, notably, a large part of Diana’s discourse to the narrator is devoted to enumerating lovers’ tragedies, together with the perils of Deduit’s garden. Raison had instructed Amans, (quoting Cicero, *De senectute*) that succumbing to Sensuality (that is, entering Deduit’s Garden) is an insurmountable consequence of youth:

```
Car Jennece boute ome e fame
En touz periz de cors e d’ame
E trop est fort chose a passer
Senz mort ou senz membre casser,
Ou senz faire honte ou domage
Seit a sei ou a son lignage.
(Roman de la Rose 4434-4438; emphasis added) 61
```

Similarly, in *Reson and Sensuallyte*, Diana tells the narrator that, “Geyn [Sensuality] is ther noon teschewe blame/ But oonly deth or elles shame” (3519-3520):

```
For nouther wyt, nor worthynesse,
Manhode, force, nor noblesse,
Enchauntement, nor sorcerye,
In this perilouse Iupartye
Avaylle may, me lyst nat glose,
Nat the boton of A rose;
For fro thens no man retourneth
That any while ther soiourneth.
(Reson and Sensuallyte 3588-3589)
```

Sensuality, polar opposite and enemy of Reason, possesses three overwhelming characteristics, each bound up with its effects on Reason: Sensuality is a function of the

61 “Youth brings men and women into contact with every bodily and spiritual danger; it is a hard period to pass through without dying or breaking a limb or bringing shame or harm to oneself or to one’s family.”
will, Sensuality affects discernment (in Lydgatean terms, inward siht), and, of particular note in the context of a handbook for princes such as the *Fall of Princes*, Sensuality has public as well as private ramifications. First, tragedy—succumbing to Sensuality—is wholly an act of will, both in *Reson and Sensuallyte* and in the *Fall of Princes*. In the *Fall*, this emphasis begins with the primeval tragedy of Adam and Eve, who “ageyn resoun of verry wilfulnesse/ .. banshid hemsilff out of that blisful liff …” (*Fall of Princea* I.630-631). As Diana had ultimately told the wilful dreamer, choosing between Reason and Sensuality is a function of the will:

… what so ever I devyse,  
Thow wilt folwe thyn ouvne guyse.  
Thow gest of me no more langage,  
I put al the surplusage  
In thyn ouvne eleccion  
After thy discrecioun [.]  
(*Reson and Sensuallyte* 4767-4770)

That Sensuality is inherently an act of will is made explicit in numerous passages in the *Fall of Princes*. As an example, I take a passage from the seventh Book which discusses Messalina’s wilful lechery. Because the heavens, as the alliance between Reason and Nature discussed above suggests, are inherently reasonable, to practice Sensuality is to contravene reasonable nature and is, again, consequently, wilful:

… prudent clerkis pleynli determyne  
Of the heuenly cours the disposicioun  
Is obeissaunt & soget to resoun,  
That eueri man which weel gouernid is,

---

62 I am therefore disagreeing with Kelly’s assessment that “we cannot tell whether [Lydgate] is limiting the notion of tragedy to the written account of a great man’s fall or whether he means to include the fall itself, thus applying the term in the metaphorical sense avoided by Boccaccio and Chaucer.” [page] The idea that tragedy is tantamount to succumbing to sensuality may have ramifications for the common good (in Lydgate’s terms, *comoun profit*) but is, in the final analysis, the function of individual decision.
Is nat constreyned of force to doon amys—
Nor bynt no man of necessite
Vicious lustis frowardli to sue.
A vertuous man stant at liberte.
Fals inclynacions be prudence to remewe;
Euery man be grace may eschewe
All thyng to vertu that founde is contrarie:
For _ther is no synne but it be voluntarie._
(_Fall of Princes_ VII.392-403; my italics)

This emphasis on personal choice is frequently expressed in _Reson and Sensuallyte_ and related texts through the metaphor of the path. This begins with Nature’s instruction of the narrator:

"Certys and thou wilt nat feyne,
Thow shalt mowe wel the wey atteyne,
And fynally the pathe acheve,
Of whiche no man the shal repreve;
(_Reson and Sensuallyte_ 603-606)

The narrator’s very obedience to Venus is characterized as following a ‘path’ of doctrine:

"[O] Venus, cheffe godesse,
Of love lady and maystresse,
For lyf and deth, as yt ys dywe,
I shal folwen and pursywe
Your pathis pleynly and doctryne
And from hem nothing declyne[.]
(_Reson and Sensuallyte_ 2209-2214)

In the _Fall_, similarly, “meenes” and “weies” in the _Fall_ point to various characters’ plights and moral choices. For instance, Lydgate’s Lucretia complains of Tarquin that in violating her he sought “slight weies,” “[w]ronge weies and crokid menys souht” (III.1088). Even Lydgate’s rhetorical poet-figures are not immune to this figure of finding paths. He himself stands at “feerful weies tweyne” in his attempts to finish the _Fall_, and, in the discussion on writing that opens the _Fall_’s fourth Book,

The rethoricien to make him for taccord
Must seeke weies & menys heer & yonder,
Of old rancour tappese the boistous thonderm
Be wise exampli & proverbis pertynent
Tenduce the parties to been of oon assent.
(Fall of Princes IV.542-3458)\(^{63}\)

The second dominant characteristic of Sensuality is that it affects perception or discernment: what Lydgate in a recurring phrase terms “inward siht.” This accords well with the view expressed in Jean de Meun’s Roman de la Rose, in one of the less ironic passages of Raison’s ironic definition of Love, that Love is unsteady, constantly shifting or even disordered perception:

\[
C’est li jeux qui n’est point estables
Estaz trop fers et trop muables,
Force enferme, enfermeté forz,
Qui tout esmeut par ses efforz;
Cest fos sens, c’est sage folie ...
(Roman de la Rose 4319-4323; emphasis added)\(^{64}\)
\]

\(^{63}\) The image of the path also occurs in Lydgate’s translation of the Pilgrimage of the Life of Man, where the image is circular rather than (ostensibly) linear:

My place ageyn ffor to recure.
Thogh day be day (in certeyne)
I dydë dylygence and peyne
ffor to resorte, yt wyl nat be;
The cours off sensualyte,
To my desyr ys so ffroward,
To makë me to go bakward,
That by reuolucïoun
My tyme I lese, and my sesoun;
(Pilgrimage of the Life of Man 12452-12462)


\(^{64}\) “It is an ever-shifting game, a state which is very firm but also very changeable, an infirm strength and a strong infirmity that sets everything in motion through its efforts, a foolish sense and a wise folly[.]”
*Inward siht* is invoked in the first lines of the *Fall* as a condition of poetic expression: “Thus men off crafft may off due riht,/ That been inuentiff & han experience,
/ Fantasien in ther inward siht” (*Fall of Princes* I.15-17).  

In the monumental dialog between Glad Pouerte and Fortune that opens Book III of the *Fall*, Lydgate alters his Boccaccian originals to make disordered perception a major consequence of succumbing to Fortune, by extension to Sensuality. Those who succumb to “Aventure” (as Lydgate renders it here, following Laurent) experience perceptual or spiritual blindness:

> With a dirk myst off variacioun  
> Fortune hath cloudid ther cleer natural liht,  
> And ouershadwed ther discrecioun,  
> That thei be blent in ther inward siht  
> For to considre and to beholde ariht … (*Fall of Princes* III.659-663)

This correspondence between Sensuality and disordered sight becomes more noteworthy when we realize that *inward siht* is tantamount to Reason. Nature in *Reson and Sensuallyte* dwells on this question at some length as she instructs the dreamer, first using the familiar hermeneutic analogy of husk and kernel. Sensuality is incomplete or even “for-derked” knowledge:

> Wher sensityf, this is certeyn,  
> Is in knowynge but foreyn,  
> As of the barke which is withoute  
> For-derked with a maner doute,  
> Of thinges which by accident  
> Ne ben but out-warde (but) apparent,  
> And ne kan no ferther wynne  
> To know the prevy pithe withynne;  
> (*Reson and Sensuallyte* 722-739)

By contrast, Reason gives man discernment or heavenly intelligence:

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65 *Inward siht* is, I take it, a Lydgateism. Cf. II.477 (Bochas), II.3237 (Laios), III.1583 (Jeroboam), III.3551 (Envoy to Nebuchadnezzar), and so on. Cf. also *Reson and Sensuallyte* 2339 (“inwardely in my conceyt”).
… man, in sentence,
By reson hath intelligence
To make hys wytt to enclyne,
To knowe thinges that be dyvyne,
Lastyng and perpetuel,
Hevenly and espirituel …

So that he hath of euery thing
Verray perfty knowlechyng
In his secret ynwarde syght

(Reson and Sensuallyte 747ff)

Hence tragedie involves the loss of Reason, even of heavenly intelligence. Recall that the Fall of Princes is a metaliterary text in two different senses: it considers both the act of princely reading and the act of authorial reading and writing. In both of these instances, Reason is to be sought and Sensuality, which clouds understanding in general and reading of exemplarity in particular, is to be eschewed.

Reason, Sensuality, and Common Profit

Because the Fall of Princes is a princely handbook, perhaps the most definitive characteristic of tragedie, of succumbing to Sensuality at the expense of Reason, is that it effects the common good: what Lydgate in another recurring expression terms comoun profit. Jean de Meun had already suggested that princely undoing or tragedie is a public phenomenon, in that it drastically enlarges the effect or even the viciousness of the vices in question: “… s’il ont en aus engrestiez/ Orgeuil, ou queuesque mauvaistiez/ Li

grant estat ou il s’encroent/ Plus tot les montrent e descloent/ Que petiz estaz eüssent,/ Par quei si nuire ne peüssent;/ Car, quant de leur poissances usent …” (Roman de la Rose 6260-6267). 67 This is, certainly, a familiar moral in the *Fall of Princes*, where

Hih clymyng up, off resoun who can see,  
Dulleth off braynes the memoriall,  
Blunteth the sihte, in hih & low degre,  
Which from a-loffe makith hem haue a fall.  (*Fall of Princes* III.141-144)

The *tragedie* of Sardanapalus of Assyria in Book II, “Mor bestial than lik a manli man” (II.2319) is emblematic of this central theme of the *Fall of Princes*: individual princely Sensuality affects corporate good. Sardanapalus was “Most femynyne off condicioun,/ Wherfore Fortune hath hym throwe doun” (II.2237-2238), effeminacy here being tantamount to unbridled Sensuality:

To vicious lust his liff he dede enclyne …  
Off fals vsage he was so femynyne,  
That among women vppon the rokke he span,  
In ther habite disguisid from a man.  
And off froward flesshli insolence,  
Off alle men he fledde the presence.  

(*Fall of Princes* II.2241-2247)

Sardanapalus’ unbridled hedonism leads to *misgovernaunce* on the battlefield and, ultimately, to defeat by Arbachus:

And vp he ros, & gan hymsilff auaunce,  
No stuff aboute hym but sergauntis riotous;  
Took the feeld withoute gouernaunce,  
No men off armys but folkis vicious …  

(*Fall of Princes* II.2304-2307)

67 “… if there is violence in them, or pride or any other evil, the exalted station on which they perch will show up these failings and reveal them more quickly than if they were of lowly estate, and therefore unable to do so much harm.”
Lydgate’s *tragedie* of Roboam makes the matter more explicit:

After the maneres, wher thei be good or ille,
Vsid off pryncis in dyuers regeouns,
The peele is redy to vsen and fulfille
Fulli the traces off ther condiciouns:
For lordis may in ther subiecciouns,
So as hem list, who-so can taken heede,
To vice or vertu ther subiectis leede.

*Fall of Princes* II.743-749

The effect of Sensuality on *comoun profit* takes on a particular urgency when Lydgate’s emphasis shifts to tyranny (*tirannye*) in the final three books of the *Fall*. This begins with the introduction of Herod the Great, the first tyrant, and of Nero, whose reign ushered in all manner of vice:

Thus be processe, to al vertu contrarie,
Be gret excesse he fill in glotonye,
And aftir that list no lenger tarye,---
As euery vice to othir doth applie,---
Surfet & riot brouht in lecherie .[

*Fall of Princes* VII.689-693

In Book IX of the *Fall of Princes*, Lydgates remarks that the same covetousness pilloried by Raison in the *Roman de la Rose* ushers in tyranny:

That the Grekis dide hemsilf deuide
Fro the Romeyns for ther gret[e] pride.
Thus coueitise and [fals] ambicioun
Did first gret harm among the spiritual,
Brouht in discord and dyuysioun
Among princi in ther estat royal.
Who clymbeth hiest, most pereilous is his fall.

*Fall of Princes* IX.818-823

Two points are worth noting here: (1) tyranny is here equated with unbridled Sensuality and (2) this is an abstract, corporate entry of the vices through the figure of Nero.
Tirannye is not its modern cognate, despotism, but is rather the quality or set of qualities that counters princely virtue. As Chaucer had put it in the Monk’s Tale, in the significant context of Seneca’s advice to Nero, “Sire, wolde he seyn, an emperour moot nede/ Be vertuous and hate tirannye” (Fall of Princes VII, 2507-2508). The episode carries with it, of course, deliberate echoes of Raison’s account of Nero in the Roman de la Rose (6425-6487). Furthermore, the characterization of tyranny as unbridled Sensuality is apt because policie for Lydgate is founded on resoun, as the tragedie of Theseus the lawgiver suggests:

He gaff hem lawes wherbi thei sholde hem gie,
Noble statutis foundid on resoun,
Sette among hem so prudent policie,
In ther lyuyng that no discencioun
Sholde arise bi non occasioun
(Fall of Princes I.4390-4394)

Hence unlawfulness is founded on Sensuality and counter to Reason; Sensuality destroys policie, and even “peace is damaged when reason follows sensuality.”68

Equally, as Lydgate’s Envoy to Nero puts it, “eueri tiraunt eendith with mischaunce” (Fall of Princes VII.787). Perhaps the most articulated medieval discussion of tyranny is that of John of Salisbury in the Polycraticus, whose fourth book opens with a discussion of the specific differences between tyranny and kingship proper. Pearsall and Bergen have both noted Lydgate’s use of the Polycraticus in Fall of Princes II.827.69

Lydgate’s probing of the divide between Reason and Sensuality assumes a metaliterary dimension, in line with the whole work’s meditation, following on but

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68 Lawton, 781.

69 Pearsall, 244, 249.
expanded from Boccaccio, on writing and interpretation. Ultimately, in the Testament, he asks his God to “Brydel myn outrage vnder thy disciplyne/ Fetre sensualite, enlumyne my resoun,/ To folowe the traces of spirituall doctryne” (448-451). It is, accordingly, the function of the author writing for princes, the *tragician* or tragedian, to reprove Sensuality, to rebuke princes lest they succumb to it. Lydgate’s expansion of Euripides suggests this. Euripides was

Callid in his tyme a gret tragician,  
Because he wrot many tragedies,  
And wolde off trouthe spare no manere man,  
But hem *reboken in his poetries*,  
*Touchyng the vices off flesshli fantasies*,  
Compleyne in pryncis ther deedis most horible,  
And ech thyng punshe that was to God odible  
(*Fall of Princes* III.3067-3073)

Seneca assumes a parallel function in Book VII’s *tragedie* of Nero:

He kepte hym euere, this Senec, as I reede,  
Maugre his fatal disposicioun,  
Bi a constreynt & a maner dreede  
From al outrage and dissolucioun.  
Conseyued weel his inclynacioun  
To be vicious as of his nature,  
Which to restreyne he dede his besi cure.  
(*Fall of Princes* III.621-627)

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70 All references to Lydgate’s minor poems are from John Lydgate, *The Minor Poems of John Lydgate, Edited from all Available MSS., with an Attempt to Establish the Lydgate Canon*, ed. Henry Noble MacCracken, Early English Text Society ES 107, OS 192. London: Oxford University Press, for the Early English Text Society, 1911 (for 1910), 1934 (for 1933). Poems are referenced by number and volume and by MacCracken’s manuscript citation.

71 This may arise from Lydgate’s characterization of tragedy as a public function, as in the *Troy Book*. Of course, as Kelly argues eloquently in *Chaucerian Tragedy*, “any similarities between Lydgate’s understanding of ancient drama and the practices of his own day in England are largely coincidental” (Kelly, 160).
The traditional polarity between Reason and Sensuality derived from the *Echecs amoureux* brings with it the entire iconographic tradition of the *Rose*. But because this is a strong statement that needs to be expanded and qualified through examples, it is essential to proceed by tracing specific textual echoes of the *Echecs amoureux* and/or *Reson and Sensuouslyte* in the *Fall of Princes*. I shall proceed by discussing Lydgate’s use of feminine avatars of Reason and Sensuality in the *Fall*, and his use of the traditional motifs of the descent from the Golden Age. Ultimately, this will lay the groundwork for Lydgate’s deployment of these ideas in the service of his overriding theme of *mesure*.

**Avatars of Reason: the *Echecs* and the *Fall***

Given its truncation, Lydgate’s *Reson and Sensuouslyte* should be considered a static pageant of the polarity between Reason and Sensuality rather than a progressive allegorical narrative on the lines of the *Roman de la Rose* or of Deguileville’s *Pelerinage de la vie humaine*. Hence, conforming to the *Rose*’s instructive logic rather than to its narrative progress, allegorical personages appear to instruct the narrator. These personages are avatars\(^{72}\) of Reason on the one hand and of Sensuality on the other. I shall describe each set of avatars or allegorical figures in turn before moving to discuss their transferral to the *Fall of Princes*, where they lend that text integral elements of vernacular didactic allegory. By vernacular didactic allegory, I mean, essentially, that

\(^{72}\) The first definition of “avatar” from Webster’s Dictionary is applicable here:

1. An embodiment, as of a quality or concept; an archetype: *the very avatar of cunning*.
developed in the high Middle Ages through such texts as the *Roman de la Rose* and then through the courtly works of such figures as Machaut, Deguilville, and Chaucer—to be distinguished from the proto-humanist scholarly works of Boccaccio and Petrarch (*De casibus, De remediis utriusque fortune*).

As we have seen, Nature is the foremost avatar of Reason in the *Echecs*, her characterization borrowing heavily both from Alanus ab Insulis and from Jean de Meun, both of whom to some extent stress a dichotomy between Reason and Nature. However, as Badel remarks, the French original’s version of Nature follows Alan and in conflating Nature and Philosophia. Nature in *Reson and Sensuallyte* also resembles Philosophia: “For vp to the sterres rede/ This lady raughte with hir hede” (*Reson and Sensuallyte* 147-148). Guillaume de Lorris had rendered his Raison similarly:

\begin{center}
\textit{Bien ressembloit haute persone} \\
\textit{A son semblante e a son vis} \\
\textit{Pert qu'el fu faite en parevis.} \\
\textit{(Roman de la Rose 2984-2986)}
\end{center}

Thus, there is little question in the *Echecs* and in turn in *Reson and Sensuallyte* that Reason is on the side of Nature in this text and carries her authority:

\begin{enumerate}
\item See Badel, 265.
\item “… she looked like a person of importance. It was apparent from her form and her face that she was made in paradise [.]”
\end{enumerate}

Admittedly, this passage goes on to suggest a disjunction with Nature: “\textit{Car Nature ne seüst pas/ Uevre faire de tel compas}” (“for Nature could not have fashioned anything so perfectly proportioned”; 2984-2988).
For she ys lady and maistresse
And vnder god the chefe goddesse,
The whiche of erthe, this no dout,
Hath gouernaunce rounde about,
To whom al thing must enclyne.
For, through purveance dyvyne,
No man may contrarie nor with-sye
Nor hir lawes disobeye,
Which ben so just and agreeable,
And passyngly so resonable.
(Reson and Sensuallyte 255-264; my italics)

While Reason is not specifically a character in Reson and Sensuallyte, Nature calls her “reson, the myghty quene” (769) and enjoins the dreamer to

Do, as reson techeth the,
And thy wittis hool enclyne
To rewle the by hir doctrine,
Whom that y love of hert entere
As myn ovne suster dere!
(Reson and Sensuallyte 870-874)

Reson, not to put too fine a point on it, “gouerneth al” (Reson and Sensuallyte 788) Reason is a standard personification in Lydgate’s lyrics, where she takes on properties akin to Nature’s in Reson and Sensuallyte:

Thys emperesse, verrey celestiall,
Most auengelyk of contenaunce and chere,
To rewle man he be nat bestiall,
God yaue hym reson, his owne daughter dere,
Princesse of princesses, most souereyn & entere,
To brydell in man þe froward volunte
That he not err by sensualyte.

Reason appears most notably in Reson and Sensuallyte in the re-telling of the story of Amans in the Roman de la Rose:

75 See Badel’s discussion of Reason at pages 270 and following.

76 “A Pageant of Knowledge” (MS. Trinity R. 3. 21, leaves 287, back, to 289, back). McCracken vol. II, no. 54.
These and similar passages in the *Echecs/ Reson and Sensuallyte* underline a simple moral: to abandon to Reason is to succumb to Sensuality, thereby effecting *tragedie.* Amans’ tragedy in the *Rose* was that he refused Raison’s offer to be his lady.

Of course, as William Calin has remarked, in Jean de Meun “Reason is the superego, and she is vanquished.”77 In Lydgate’s version of the *Echecs*, by contrast, Reason is the dominant voice, and the Lover loses Reason when he disobeys Nature’s counsel to follow her. This presentation means that the idealized presentation of Raison found in Frappier’s essay “*Raison, Fille de Dieu*” and, following him, in John Fleming’s *Reason and the Lover* is not out of place in our consideration of Lydgate’s presentation of Nature. C.S. Lewis in the *Allegory of Love* presents a similarly idealized portrait of Lydgate’s Nature.

As well as being an allegorized presence in the *Echecs amoureux/Reson and Sensuallyte*, Reason is represented through two other allegorical or mythical figures, the goddesses Pallas and Diana. Pallas is the first figure encountered by the narrator in the *Echecs amoureux/Reason and Sensuality* and iconographically described. The narrator has proven a slow learner. Setting off on his travels, he encounters Mercury bearing Pallas, Juno, and Venus in a cart. Mercury offers the narrator the choice among the three goddesses initially given to Paris, and his choice is identical: “ther was noon, as of beaute/ Half so fair as was Venus” (*Reson and Sensuallyte* 2080-2081). As the gloss

77 Calin, 240.
to these lines explains, this choice emblematizes the Sensuality of Youth: “Iuuenes ...
quia sunt passionum insecutores eligunt vitam vt voluptuosam et hoc est quod poete
voluerunt innuere per iudicium paridis secundum veritatem.”

Yet, the implication is that he should have chosen Pallas, described at lines 1029
and following. Pallas is clearly Reason’s avatar, being Jove’s

… ovne doghtre dere
   Called so for hyr prudence,
   As chef goddesse of sapience,
   In tokne, trewly, as yt is,
   That alle wisdam descended is
   Fro god a-bove and al prudence.
(Reson and Sensuallyte 1042-1047)

If this were not enough, the author of the Echecs associates her with Boethius’

Philosophia as explicitly as he does Nature:

   Somwhile amonge, I dar ensure,
   Comon she was of hir stature,
   And sommwhile she wex so long
   That to the hevene she raught amonge …
(Reson and Sensuallyte 1125-1128)

For Evrart de Conty, Pallas is explicitly Reason or Prudence: “cest a dire sapience ou
prudence.” William Hodapp remarks on the centrality of Pallas to Lydgate’s project in
Reson and Sensuallyte: “though verbally silent, Minerva speaks clearly through her
iconography and role in the Judgment story. Her wisdom offers potential redemption to
readers who, unlike the narrator, read the Judgement scene and chose her life of
wisdom.”

78 “Youths .. because they follow their passions choose the pleasure-seeking life, and this
is what is truly allegorized by the poet in the Judgment of Paris.”
79 Hodapp, 117.
A second avatar of Reason in the *Echecs amoureux/Reson and Sensuallyte* is Diana, whom the narrator encounters after he has chosen Venus as fairest of the three goddesses. Constrained to turn right from the scene of the Judgment (“For other geyn path was ther noon,” 2725), he finds himself in Diana’s woods and is warned by her against the implications of this fatal choice. The woods, “wonder long/Ryght as a lyne and no thing wronge” (2773-2774) form a symbolic counterpart to Deduit’s garden, thereby furnishing to the reader a symbolic reinforcement of the Reason-Sensuality polarity. Diana in *Reson and Sensuallyte* is blindingly white (2816), shapelessly garbed (2832), crowned (2844-2854) and wimpled (2844). Hence she represents continence, sensualité “maistred” by resoun (cf. *Fall of Princes* 1.6200ff, cited above). Her weaponry, white arrows and bow, makes her congruent to Reason and Pallas and opposed to Venus. But it is above all Diana’s position in the text as instructor that associates her not only with the abstract concept of Reason but with the allegorical figure of Raison in the *Roman de la Rose*. Raison’s goal as instructor had been to avert the tragedie of succumbing to Love (again, of course, Raison is not the dominant voice in Jean de Meun). Similarly, here, Diana uses exemplarity in a failed attempt to save the narrator’s from Deduit’s garden:

```
I shal shortly specefye
What that I am, and nat faylle,
Al be I lese my travaylle
The to enfourmen or to preche,
That thou mayst haue yt bet in mynde,
And eke of hap that thou maist fynde
The verray trouth, and taken hede
For to repent, or thow be dede.
(Reson and Sensuallyte 2954-2962)
```

80 The other implicit contrast is to Fortune’s wood in Raison’s instruction of the lover in Jean de Meun’s *Roman de la rose*, 5917.
Especially in the absence of the instruction by Pallas that concludes the original
_Echecs_, Diana’s injunctions to the Dreamer are at the heart of Lydgate’s text, occupying
almost a third of its 7042 lines.

Diana’s favourite mode of instruction, moreover, is exemplarity, the ‘default
mode’ of the _Fall of Princes_ and a favored mode of Raison in the _Rose_. She begins by
instructing the Dreamer in the fall of Saturn and nature of Venus, _topoi_, as we shall see
below, of great relevance to the _Fall of Princes_ but proceeds to enumerate the perils of
Deduit’s garden and the terrible fates of its inhabitants: Narcissus, Pygmalion, Pasiphae,
Myrrha, and so on. It is not only that she follows her allegorical forebears, chief among
them Jean de Meun’s Raison, in recounting such _exempla_ but that she recounts the perils of
love:

To my purpose I shal applye,
And in ordre specefye
By resemblaunce and figures:
The sorowes and mysaventures,
The meschef, and the violence,
And the inconvenyences,
That loves folkys ha suffred there[.]
(_Reson and Sensuallyte_ 4235-4242).

In this context, the Chaucerism (“loves folkys”) hardly seems accidental, a verbal echo
of love’s tragedy in _Troilus_ (I.34, 319) and the _House of Fame_ (II.645, 675). 81 At the
same time, Diana is making a statement not merely about the tragedy of love but about
the function of tragedy and of exemplarity itself in inculcating wisdom:

81 Indeed, as Sieper has noted, _Reson and Sensuallyte_ is a Chaucerian pastiche: “to almost
every line” in _Reson and Sensuallyte_ “may be found similar sources from Chaucer.” He
provides a detailed list of borrowings from the _Romaunt_ in the notes to his edition
beginning on page 80, and discusses borrowings from the _Romaunt_ in
_Die echecs amoureux._
He is wyse that wyl be war
And him self chastise kan
By trespace of another man [.]  
(*Reson and Sensuallyte 4244-4246*)

From its earliest lines, of course, teaching through *tragedie* is the stated intention of the *Fall of Princes*:

> Ful weel he felte the labour was notable,  
> The fall of nobles, with eueri circumstaunce,  
> From ther lordshippes, dreadful and vnstable,  
> How that thei fill to putte in remembraunce,  
> Therin to shewe Fortunys variaunce,  
> That othre myhte as in a merour see  
> In worldly worshepe may be no surete.  
> (*Fall of Princes* I.50-56)

It must above all be noted that the love against which Diana preaches is nothing other than the “onbridled luxure” (*Fall of Princes* II.1243) that causes princely falls. In other words, to love is to go against reason:

> By these exaumples thou maist se [Diana tells the Dreamer]  
> The *errour and contrariouste*  
> That ys in love, yif thou take hede,  
> Which quyteth folke with cruel mede,  
> Whos merveylous condicion  
> *Ys contrarye to reson* …  
> (*Reson and Sensuallyte* 4345-4356; my italics)

The Dreamer’s ironically deluded response⁸² to Diana’s injunctions cements this characterization of the function of exemplarity:

> Therby thogh I myght atteyne  
> "To the prowesse of Ector,  
> That was so worthy her to for,  
> Nor to the wisdam, both in oon,  
> Of Dauid and kyng Salamon,  
> Nor to wynne al the tresor  
> Of the kyng Nabugodonosor.

⁸² Cf. Hodapp, 110: The author “encourages the audience to read against the narrator’s judgment of the goddesses and their moral attributes.”
At this point in the text, Venus has already used exemplarity to ironic effect in her tale of Phoebus and Daphne (*Reson and Sensulyte* 2459-2486). Such a parodic instructor is, moreover, a feature of late vernacular literature. Exemplarity is the province of Reason, and blinded as the Dreamer is by Venus’ (or by Sensuality’s) wiles, he cannot respond to it. His benighted use of examples parallels that of La Vieille, or indeed of Amans himself.

The *Fall of Princes* is from *Reson and Sensulyte* both in its insistence that Reason is the correct path and in its teaching of reason through avatars and *exempla*. While it is inevitable that an encyclopedia of tragedy should emphasize triumphs of Venus/Sensuality, part of Lydgate’s project in expanding his Boccaccian model and Laurent de Premierfait’s intermediary text is to interpolate ‘positive’ allegorical and exemplary figures, both of which categories define and body forth Reason. Lydgate introduces the figures of Nature and Reason in the *Fall’s* third Book. Nature occurs in the context of Boccaccio’s original diatribe against covetousness, and in Lydgate, she becomes explicitly the goddess of the *Echecs amoureux*:

Nature þat is content with litil thyng,83
The wise, war, þe circumspect goddesse,
Which vnder God in heuen aboue regnyng,
This world to gouerne is callid themperesse,

83 The motif of Nature “content with litil thyng “ is borrowed from the *Roman de la Rose*. There is a similar gesture in Gower’s *Mirour* 16561-16562: “Nature aussi se tient content,/Qant om la paist petitement.”
Mooder of richessis, the first founderesse,  
Which cerchid out bi hir artificeres  
The straunge tresours hid in the myneres.\textsuperscript{84}

Similarly, in Reson and Sensuallyte, Nature is “lady most of excellence” (315ff), to whom the dreamer says,

"Ha ye, that be chefe goddesse,  
Callyd quene and eke maistresse  
Of euery thyng in this worlde here,  
Which so goodly lyst appere [.]
(491-495)

In Reson and Sensuallyte, as we have seen, Nature advises the dreamer, telling him telling him which path to follow:

And shortly thus I haue the tolde  
The wey[e] which thou shalt eschew[e],  
And whiche of ryght thou shalt pursewe,  
Lych as to forny I haue discryved,  
Til tyme that thou be arived  
Vp at the port of al solace.  
(882-887)

In the passage on covetousness in the third Book of the Fall of Princes, similarly, Nature is an instructor and guide:

This noble ladi, this princesse most famous,  
Knowyng of man thunkouth condiciouns,  
Sauh bexperience richessis wer noious,---  
In hym teclipse the disposiciouns,  
And conveie his inclynaciouns  
\textit{Bi a wrong weie} vertu to sette aside,  
How couetise was a ful pereilous guide.  
(3.4243-4249)

Lastly, in the third Book of the Fall of Princes, Reason is a guide comparable to her original, Raison in the \textit{Roman de la Rose}. For example, Lydgate writes against intercourse out of wedlock:
… she that is thoruh hir hih noblesse
Namyd off clerkis, which cleerli can concerne,
Douhter off God, ladi and pryncesse,
Resoun callid, to guye man and gouerne,
Tween good and euel iustli to discerne,---
She hath departid, pleynli to conclude,
The liff off man fro liff off beestis rude.
(*Fall of Princes* III.1345-1351)

This passage, significantly juxtaposed to the passage on Nature cited above, is an original addition to Boccaccio’s diatribe *In Portentosam Principuum Libidinem* (“The Compleynt of Bochas vppon the luxurie of Princis”). The insertion of Reason in this passage serves to re-create the Reason-Sensuality polarity derived from the *Echecs amoureux* and to show what the correct attitude of princes should be toward the Reason-Sensuality polarity:

This ladi Resoun, sithen go ful yore,
Gaff onto man witt and discrecioun,
Tauhte hym also bi hir souereyn lore
Tween vice and vertu a gret dyuysioun,
And that he sholde in his eleccioun
Onto al vertu naturali obeie,
And in contraire al vicious liff werreie …
(*Fall of Princes* III.1352-1358)

This is a restatement of *Reson and Sensuallyte*’s premise that succumbing to Sensuality describes man of his “name,” since Reason is what makes him human:

He sholde, who so kan discerne,
Oonly by reson him governe,
Lyst that he, whiche wer grete shame
Be depryved of hys name.
(*Reson and Sensuallyte* 760-764)

Highly distinct from Boccaccio’s original diatribe against princes, then, this is a passage in which Reason appears personified propounds a familiar moral:
Nature and Reason appear in the *Fall of Princes* not only as outright personifications but also bodied forth in allegorical personages comparable to the *Echecs amoureux*’ Pallas and Diana. In introducing such personages, Lydgate takes his cues from Boccaccio himself, whose two great allegorical setpieces on Fortune, the dialog between Poverty and Fortune that opens Book III and Boccaccio’s authorial confrontation with Fortune at the start of Book VI in fact become the two great allegorical set-pieces of the *Fall*. Lydgate adapts the Boccaccian originals, bringing them in line with the allegorized polarity between Reason and Sensuality present from the first lines of the *Echecs amoureux*.

Lydgate’s most notable heightening of Boccaccian personification allegory comes in the debate between Poverty and Fortune that opens the third Books both of the *De casibus virorum illustrium* and of the *Fall of Princes*. Lydgate alters substantially the form and content of his Boccaccian original, assigning the bulk of the passage’s five hundred lines to a speech that would not be out of place in the mouth of Jean de Meun’s Raison or of the *Echecs*’ Pallas or Dyane. In fact, as suggested above, Lydgate’s Glad Poverte’s moral of suffisaunce is derived from the *Roman de la Rose itself*:

```
off thi pereilous froward variaunce [Poverte tells Fortune]
I sette no stor, treuli as for me;
For al thi frenship conclueth with myschaunce,
With sodeyn myscheeff off mutabilite,
Which yeueth me herte to haue a-do with the:
```
For suffisaunce in my poore estaat
Shal to thi chaunges seyn sodenli chekmaat.

(Fall of Princes III.393-396) \(^{85}\)

Figure 1.2 shows the relative length of each of Poverty’s speeches in Boccaccio, Laurent de Premierfait, and Lydgate’s versions of the De casibus. Of particular note is Poverty’s final speech before the battle proper, containing some 86 lines.

### Figure 1.2 Lydgate’s Re-Distribution of Poverty’s Speeches in De Casibus III

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>G. Boccaccio</th>
<th>L. de Premierfait</th>
<th>J. Lydgate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>III. 225-231</td>
<td>Quid stolida rides (1 sentence)</td>
<td>Dy moy sote fortune (1 sentence)</td>
<td>'O thou Fortune, most fool off foolis all (6 lines) ...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. 267-287</td>
<td>Ecce si insipidam arbitraris .. (4 sentences)</td>
<td>Voicy Fortune qui ainsi (11 sentences)</td>
<td>'Fortune,' quod she, 'touchyng this dehot, (20 lines)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III.313-399</td>
<td>Credo magnafacies (6 sentences)</td>
<td>(15 sentences)</td>
<td>'*Fortune,' quod she, 'thou shall be a goddesse ... Shal to thi chaunges seyn sodenli chekmaat.' (86 lines)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

One aspect of Lydgate’s adaptation of Boccacio documented here is has adaptation of dialog form, related in particular to Petrarch’s proto-humanist dialogs in De remediis utriusque fortune, to the instructive personification allegory found in the Roman de la Rose and Echecs amoureux. In fact, Lydgate changes the genre of Boccaccio’s allegorical set-piece, terming it a “fable” (Fall of Princes III.158). This change is

\(^{85}\) cf Roman de la Rose 4976, quoted above)
reflected in the adaptation to the narrative that accompanies the speeches. A simple “cui fortuna mitior” to introduce Fortune’s first utterance becomes an opportunity for personification allegory:

And whan Fortune beholdeth the maneer
Off Glad Pouert in hir totorn[e] weede,
And kneuh also be contenaunce & cheer,
How she off hire took but litil heede,
Lik as she hadde to hir no maner neede,---
The which[e] thynges conceyued and Iseyn,
To Pouerte she ansuerde thus ageyn:
(Fall of Princes 232-238)

Along with the genre, another primary adaptation is to the nature of his central character, who becomes his allegorical instructor. Rather than the simple Paupertas of Boccacio or of Petrarch’s De remediis, she becomes Glad Poverte, a phrase borrowed from Chaucer’s Wife of Bath: “Glad Poverte is an honeste thyng certeyn/ This wol Senec and other clerkes seyn” (Fall of Princes III.1179-1180). This investment of Poverty with a positive, almost with a religious, value relates to the traditional division in religious literature between Glad and Wretched Poverty and paves the way for her reconstitution as a wisdom figure analogous to the Echecs’ Pallas and Dyane. In Boccaccio’s allegory, Poverty routs Fortune by shaking off her servitude to her: “sponte mea tua omnia abdicavi.” Their battle, while described with much gusto, is thus a reenactment of this allegorical fact. In Lydgate, by contrast, Glad Poverte’s raison d’être is not so much to body forth this routing of Fortune as both to body forth and to instruct suffisaunce, understanding of Fortune’s doublenesse, a desire for the mean—all concepts taught by Raison in Jean de Meun’s Rose.

A thorough-going analysis of Glad Poverte’s injunctions to Fortune bear this out. From the first, what is novel and Lydgatean about her disavowal of Fortune’s governance
(Fall of Princes III.225ff) is that she not only rejects Fortune’s servitude but also models such rejection for the princely reader:

'Fortune,' quod she, 'touchyng this debat,
Which off malice thou doost ageyn me take,
Be weel certeyn, touchyng my poore estat,
I off fre will thi fauour ha[ue] forsake.
And thouh folk seyn thou maist men riche make,
Yit I ha[ue] leuere be poore with gladnesse,
Than with trouble possede gret richesse.
(Fall of Princes III.267-273)

Glad Poverte’s emphasis on free will here is borrowed from Laurent, who uses the phrase “franche voullente”; however, the emphasis on free will evokes the relation between Sensuality and will described in foregoing paragraphs. It must be recalled that the suffisaunce preached by Lydgate’s Poverte is one with resoun in being the diametric opposite of the unbridled sensualite that evokes princely tragedie. Hence the importance of resoun and sensualite in Poverte’s speeches reflects Lydgate’s gradual transposition of Boccaccio’s dialog to a discussion of the Reason-Sensuality topos outlined above. This is not to say that Lydgate is not in a certain sense in line with Petrarch’s protohumanist dialogs; however, as we shall see in subsequent chapters, his familiarity is restricted, and he adapts them to a very different purpose.

Congruent to this preoccupation with the Reason-Sensuality topos is a preoccupation with describing Fortune’s fraudulence:

For thouh thou seeme benygne & debonaire
Bi a maner countirfet apparence,
Fat & weel fed, with rounde chekis faire,
With many colors off trouthe as in pretence,
As ther off feith wer werrai existence,---
But vnder all thi floures off fresshesse
The serpent glidith, off chaung & doubilnesse.
(Fall of Princes III.274-280).
This characterization of Fortune as double and unstable mirrors Diana’s characterization of Venus as double in Reson and Sensuallyte: “gery Venus, euer vnstable,/ Hath with hir perilouse face double/ Put the abak in ful gret trouble” (Reson and Sensuallyte 3512-3515). And indeed, it is significant that Lydgate introduces here the image of the serpent under flowers, a recurring harbinger of Venus both in Reson and Sensuallyte (see especially the description of the serpents in Deduit’s garden at 4024 and at multiple other points, and in the Fall of Princes. The more immediate analogue, however, is Raison’s instruction of Amans in the ways of Fortune in the Roman de la Rose, her description of Fortune’s haughty character and two-sided house (Roman de la Rose 5891ff). The description of Fortune’s garb in particular finds echoes in the passage:

… se vest come une reïne,
De grant robe qui li traïne,
De toutes diverses ouleurs,
De mout desguisees couleurs
....
Ainsi Fortune se desguise.
(roman de la rose 6123-6133)86

There is, I believe, a more explicit reference to lines 4844-4852, where Good Fortune (“la mole ela debonaire”) is characterized as fraudulent: “… la debonaire e la mole/ Leur ment e les boule e afole/ E les alaite come mere” (cf. Fall of Princes III: “For thouh thou seeme benygne & debonaire”). Nor does this allusion appear to come via Laurent de Premierfait, who refers to Fortune simply as having a “riche robe de pourpre et grant tropepeau de chambrieres.”87

86 “… dressing herself there like a queen, in a long robe that trails behind her and is variously scented and brightly coloured … So Fortune disguises herself.”
Lydgate’s Glad Poverte goes on to echo Raison in the *Roman de la Rose* and Nature in the *Echecs amoureux* through in her insistence on shaking servitude to Fortune. This is derived explicitly from Laurent:

\[
\text{Ie estoye seve a toy avaut que ie renoncassee aux choses de ce monde mais}
\text{apres que ie les ay renoncsee ie suis devenue franche/ ie suis hors de tes}
\text{latz pourtant que jay laissez tes dons et tes richesses.}^88
\]

Yet, presenting something of a contrast, Glad Poverte echoes norms of the love canon. First, servitude to Fortune instils *doublenesse* in lovers or in princes:

\[
\text{’Fortune,’ quod [Glad Poverte], ’thouh thou be a goddessse}
\text{Callid off foolis, yit lerne this off me,}
\text{From thi seruage I stonde at liberte.}
\]

\[
\text{But yiff I shal algatis haue a-doo}
\text{With the in armis, most cruel & vengable,}
\text{Touchyng the quarel that is atwen vs too,}
\text{Ther is o thyng to me riht confortable,}
\text{That thi corage is flekeryng & onstable;}
\text{And wher an herte is in hymsilff deuyded,}
\text{Victorie in armys for hym is nat prouyded.}
\text{(Fall of Princes III.313-322)}
\]

The second notable characteristic of Glad Poverte—self-identified, as is characteristic of personification allegory—is her abstinence from flattery:

\[
\text{Me list[e] nouther fatter the nor fage,}
\text{Nor the tenoynte be adulacioun,}
\text{Thouh flat[e]rie & feyned fals language}
\text{Appropriid be to thi condicioun;}
\text{(Fall of Princes III.323-326)}
\]

This again, is a characteristic of lovers: witness the appearance of Faux-Semblant

---

87 “I was in your service, before I renounced the things of this world, but after having renounced them, I have become enfranchised. I am free from your bonds now that I have left your gifts and your riches.”

88 This is cited from Bergen’s edition of the *Fall of Princes*, volume IV, page 184. Boccaccio has “*sponte mea omnia tua abdcavi*.”
in the *Roman de la Rose*. False feigning is a particular concern in the *Fall* and elsewhere, featuring in such *tragedies* as that of Mohamed (IX.19-21) and in such lyrics as the Defense of Holy Church, Friend at Need, and the Complaint of the Black Knight. As the next chapter suggests, this is in fact the language of Venus or Sensuality:

> For thoruh thi chaungis off fraudulent fairnesse,
> Ther is now vsid in eueri regioun
> Glad cheer out shewed with couert doublinesse,
> Vnder the courtyn off symulacioun.
> So secre now is adulacioun,
> That in this world may be no sur[e]te,
> But yiff it reste in Glad Pouert.

(*Fall of Princes* III.33-33)

Glad Poverte goes on to assert that succumbing to Fortune (by extension, to Sensuality) is the normative condition of worldly princes. The only sure freedom is to embrace *glad poverte* and *suffisaunce*:

> For thouh thou haue enbracid in thi cheyne
> Worldli pryncis & goodes transitorie,
> And riche marchantis vndir thi demeyne,
> Yeuest to knyhthod conquest and victorie,
> The fadyng palme off laude & veynglorie,---
> But whan echon thi fauour han recurid,
> Than is Glad Pouert fre fro thi lure assurid.

(*Fall of Princes* III.337-343)

To succumb to Fortune or to Sensuality is to abnegate the princely virtues: “For nouter wisdam, force nor manheede, / Fredam, bounte, loue nor ientilesse / Mai in thi fauour ha[ue] no sekirnesse” (*Fall of Princes* III.346-348). Such abnegation, as we have seen, is what induces *tragedie*. This stanza of Fortune’s speech is, in fact, a direct textual echo of *Reson and Sensuallyte*, where, just as here none of the princely virtues can help one who has succumbed to Fortune, so in succumbing to Venus the lover cannot be helped by any of the ‘courtly’ virtues:
For nouter wyt, nor worthynesse,
Manhode, force, nor noblesse,
Enchauntement, nor sorcerye,
In this perilouse Iupartye
Avaylle may, me lyst nat glose
(Reson and Sensuallyte 3588-3591)

Conclusion

In the the foregoing, we have seen how personification allegory in general and how the allegorical presentation of Reason and Sensuality derived from the Echecs Amoureux and Roman de la Rose tradition in particular are a major component of Lydgate’s argument in the Fall of Princes. Lydgate uses avatars of Reason in the Fall to present allegorical counter-examples to his tragic princes. As the dialog between Poverty and Fortune in Book III of the Fall suggests, these avatars of Reason war against allegorical embodiments of Fortune and Sensuality. This war characterizes a present age of doublenesse in which Reason is perpetually at war with Sensuality:

Al such sodeyn chaungis in comune
In this world vsid now fro day to day,
Echon thei come be fraude off fals Fortune;
Experience hath put it at assay,
Loue, trouthe & feith be gon [so] ferr away.
And yiff that trust with pryncis wil nat tarie,
Litil merueile thouh the peele varie.
(Fall of Princes III.384-385)

The next chapter will argue that, just as he has inserted figures of Reason into the Fall, Lydgate inserts figures of Sensuality to effect personification allegory and to teach the Reason-Sensuality divide. In particular, figures of Venus and of the descent from Golden Age dominate the text of the Fall.
CHAPTER 2
THE AGE OF VENUS AND THE PRESENT AGE:
THE ECHECS AND THE FALL

The preceding chapter concluded by suggesting that, in addition to having been construed as a series of tragedies or de casibus text, the *Fall of Princes* is firmly rooted in the world of vernacular personification allegory. In particular, Lydgate presents within his text minor echoes and major allegorical set-pieces on the eternal struggle between Reason (*resoun*) and Sensuality (*sensualite*). Having discussed the role of Reason in the *Fall*’s structures of personification allegory, I shall now move to discussing the role of Venus (or Sensuality). Venus casts a long shadow over the *Fall of Princes*: indeed, it is avatars of Sensuality, with whom Reason and her allegorical allies are perpetually at war, who dominate both Lydgatean texts. In *Reson and Sensuallyte*, Venus bodies forth the path of *sensualite*. When the Dreamer meets Diana, her primary grievance is that she has been usurped by “myn enmy, Dame Venus” (*Reson and Sensuallyte* 3066):

... cause of al, as y espye,
That I am left allone thus,
Is myn enmy, Dame Venus,
That regneth with hir companye,
And pleynly hath the regalye
Throgh the worlde on euery syde ... 
For which with al ther hool entent
They folwen hir, and me forsake[.]
(*Reson and Sensuallyte* 3064-3069, 3076-3077)

Venus is, indeed, the primary representative of Sensuality in the *Echecs amoureux*. Her chief supporter is Juno, whose beauty makes her one with Venus in her power to transfix men:

For the nerer that they [sc. men who looked at Juno] went
Ay the more her herte brent,
And the more gan presse and siwe,
Withoute power to remywe.
*(Reson and Sensuallyte 1384-1388)*

Yet, Venus’ presence in *Reson and Sensuallyte* is even more overwhelming than Juno’s: she is the focal point of the Judgment of Paris (1433-1600), subsequently engages the Dreamer in dialog, and finally becomes the object of Diana’s offended diatribes. Reinforcing the centrality of Venus in the poetic version of the *Echecs amoureux*, the *Echecs’* major commentator, Evrart de Conty, places Venus at the head of his commentary (93r11ff) on the various gods and goddesses in the Judgment of Paris scene and their attributes, even though she is not the first goddess to be introduced, and states categorically in his Prologue that the very subject of the narrator’s culminating chess game with his lady is Venustian: “ce jeu est de la signification de Venus, “a amours comparable” (1r14-1r17)

For the deluded narrator, moreover, Venus’ power is overwhelming:

She the proude kan enclyne
To lownesse and humilyte,
And the deynouse meke to be,
The daungerouse eke debonaire,
And do the soleyne speke faire,
The envyous to be amyable,
And the angry to be tretable [.]  
*(Reson and Sensuallyte 1500-1506)*

A possible interpretation of this passage is that Venus has has absolute dominion over the temporal sphere—or at least, that she does in the narrator’s deluded mind. In fact, this idea of Venus dominating the temporal sphere is reiterated in a major source for this passage, the *Roman de la Rose*. At the same time, Venus in the tradition is explicitly the goddess of Sensuality, of the appetite (*concupiscibilis* in Aquinas) as distinguished
from romantic love. This is suggested explicitly by the marginal gloss on Venus’ first appearance in Reson and Sensuallyte: “Venus id est carnalis concupiscencia vel planeta que inclinat ad concupiscenciam et significat vitam voluptuosam que debetur carnalibus”. As Evrart de Conty puts it, in a parallel passage in his commentary,

\[\text{Venus ... peut estre prise aussi plus especialement pour la vertu de l’ame concupiscible qui fu donee a le homme pour poursuir les choses delitables et pour les tristables aussi fuir et eslongiers; et ceste concupiscence ou concupiscible vertu qui encline a luxure peut estre ainsy appellee deesse pour ce que elle seignourist du cuer humain ... (5.2.2. ... 93v12 to 93v16)}\]

89 Concupiscientia and its derivatives are a major terms in the Thomistic corpus, occurring over 4500 times. The concupiscible appetite comes to the fore in the first Part of the second Part (Prima Secundæ Partis), where Aquinas discusses the so-called “passiones animae” (Proemium). In Summa Theologiae I-II, q. 30, Aquinas follows Aristotle in calling concupiscence simply the appetite for pleasure (appetitus delectabilis). However, concupiscence is sometimes in accordance with Reason and sometimes not. It belongs both to the soul and to the body: “concupiscientia, quae simul pertineat et ad animam et ad corpus.” Again, this is a more hierarchal model than the Reason/Sensuality dichotomy presented in Lydgate’s vernacular text; however, this tradition is inherent in Lydgate’s exposition of Reason and Sensuality.

Venus signifies either carnal concupiscence or the planet whose influence inclines one to concupiscence and disposes one to the life of pleasure, the life given over to things of the flesh.”

Note that the glosses on Reson and Sensuallyte are not identical with those on the Echecs amoureux.

Moreover, the glossator of Lydgate’s Reson and Sensuallyte is fully Thomisticin assigning Venus a role in nature, possibly a more positive construction than that found in Lydgate’s vernacular text: “Venus dicitur seruire nature quia uirtus concupiscibilis inest” (“Venus is said to serve Nature because the concupiscible virtue is in Nature.” This glosses Reson and Sensuallyte 2491: “I serve vnto nature.”

91 “Venus may be taken even more particularly to mean the power [or quality] of the concupiscible appetite [i.e., concupiscibilis], which was given to man so that he might pursue delightful things and so that he might flee and avoid ugly things. And this concupiscence or concupiscible virtue which leads to lechery [luxuria] may thus be called a goddess because it [or she] rules the human heart.” My clarifications are in brackets.
To succumb to Venus, Goddess of Sensuality, is to lose Reason, and Evrart points out that this is a major theme of the *Echecs d’amour*. In the following passage, he also equates pagan deities with natural powers or virtues (*natureles vertus*), arguably promoting the truth of the allegorical method:

... et [Venus] y a telle poissance que elle l’asservit et soubmet mout souvent, tellement qu’il en pert l’usage de raison, sy come il est contenu en la rime du livre dont nous parlons en plusieurs lieux. Et segnourrir ainsy semble chose divine et est deue a Dieu premierement; et par consequant on le peut appeller deesse aucunement, aussi que on fait mout d’autres natureles vertus. (5.2.2 ... 93v16-93v22)\(^92\)

This interpretation gives Venus a special place in a text such as the *Fall of Princes*, where what is at issue is *tragedie*: the operation of Sensuality in the temporal sphere. This chapter premises that Lydgate reworks Boccaccio’s *De casibus* to make Venus a dominant figure in his text. This reworking occurs in several distinct manners: (1) through references to stories of Venus, (2) through exploitation of a conflation of Venus and Sensuality inherent in the larger tradition, (3) through allegorical ‘slippage’ between Venus and symbolic avatars, extending both to literal characters and to such symbolic representatives as serpents and sirens, and finally (4) presentation of the Present Age, as contrasted with a mythic Golden or Former Age, as the Age of Venus. In what follows, I shall discuss the frequency and the background of Lydgate’s use of the figure of Venus in the *Fall of Princes*, before moving to discuss Lydgate’s presentation of Venus in three great set-pieces: the *tragedie* of Narcissus in Book I, Boccaccio’s

\(^{92}\)“And Venus has so much power that she subjugates a man and makes him a servant, such that he loses the use of his reason, as is remarked at several points in the poem of which we are speaking. And such subjugation would seem to be first and foremost due to God; and consequently one may, to some extent [aucunement], call Venus a goddess, just as one does for many other natural virtues.”

66
authorial confrontation with a Venusian Fortune in Book VI, and, finally, the Chapitre on the Golden World that forms the centerpiece of Lydgate’s reworking of Book VII of the *De casibus*.

**The Figure of Venus in the *Fall of Princes***

Because the *Fall of Princes* is a text about tragedy in the temporal sphere, in which princes’ tragedies equate to succumbing to Venus/Sensuality, the text’s twenty-three references to Venus work in a pattern to reinforce the trope of Sensuality and, hence, to reinforce the polarity between Sensuality and Reason. Significantly, the figure of Venus appears most often in the first and seventh Books, which contain, respectively, the pageant of Lovers discussed later in the present section and the discussion of the descent from the Golden Age to the reign of Venus found in Book VII.

**Figure 2.1 The Figure of Venus in the *Fall of Princes***

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>passage</th>
<th>rubric/ tragedie</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.4691</td>
<td>Virbius</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5530-5532</td>
<td>Theseus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5629-5631</td>
<td>Narcissus</td>
</tr>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>1.4691</th>
<th>Thus he lyued in wodis solitarie, And off Venus despised the seruyse; A-mong[es] women he wolde neuer tarie</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5530-5532</td>
<td>Thoruh fals luxurie diffacen al noblesse, As this tragedie can bere ful weel witnesse. Wher froward Venus hath dominacioun, And blynde Cupide his subiectis doth auance,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5629-5631</td>
<td>For al daunger displesth to Venus, And al disdeyn is lothsom to</td>
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<tr>
<td>Page Range</td>
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<td>5641-5642</td>
<td>“”</td>
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<td>5760-5761</td>
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<td>“”</td>
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<td>5991-5992</td>
<td>Paris and Helen (Henry V and <em>Troy Book</em>)</td>
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<tr>
<td>6580</td>
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<td>IV.841-842</td>
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<td>926-927</td>
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68
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<tr>
<th>Arsinoe IV</th>
<th>For crafft &amp; beute callid Venus the secounde</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>V</td>
<td>In wach and riot, ches Venus to his guide: Sensualite maad resoun stonde aside;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VII</td>
<td>Amyd the heuene was Venus exaltat, With Mars coniyned, þe book makth mencion; And Iubiter was also infortunat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>553-554</td>
<td>But it was Venus, to flatre thyn hihnesse, And furious Mars, bi froward cruelte</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1237-1243</td>
<td>Venus, of loueres emperesse &amp; queene, Of vicious lustis lady and maystresse, Hir metal coper, that wil teryssh grene, A chaungable color, contrarye to sadnesse, A notabil figur of worldli brotilnesse, Lik gery Venus, because attemp[e]raunce Was set aside &amp; lost hir gouernaunce.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Accordingly, Theseus’ son, Virbius, an ideal, virginal prince “off Venus despised the seruyse” (*Fall of Princes* I.4692). Arsinoe IV of Egypt is “For crafft & beute callid Venus the secounde.” The temple of Venus recurs serially as a locus of romantic entanglement and of consequent degradation. Antiochus “[i]n wach and riot, ches Venus
Women are said “In ther apport, be countirfet liknesse/ For to rassemble Venus the
goddess” (Fall of Princes I.6580-6581). In all of this, the conclusion to be drawn is that
servitude to Venus is princely tragedy. In Book VII, Venus is most appropriately
associated with that perpetrator of Sensuality, Messalina. As the Envoy to the tragedy of
Hercules makes clear, succumbing to Venus (or to Sensuality) literally undoes princes:

Wher froward Venus hath dominacioun,
And blynde Cupide his subiectis doth auaunce,
And wilful lust thoruh indiscrecioun
Is chose iuge to holden the ballaunce,
Ther chois onlefful hath thoruh onhappi chaunce
Dirked off pryncis the famous hih prowess,
As this tragedie can bere ful weel witnesse.
(Fall of Princes I.5531-5537)

It is above all Lydgate’s striking presentation of the story of Narcissus which
marks the Fall of Princes as a text as fully dependent on the tradition of the
Roman de la Rose as on de casibus narrative. We have here five separate Lydgatean
sources to contend with: Boccacio, Laurent de Premierfait, the Roman de la Rose, the
author of the Echecs amoureux, and then Evrart de Conty. The most important analog for
these passages is Guillaume de Lorris’ account of Narcissus’ self-love and death, which
has elicited an entire body of interpretive criticism. As Sylvia Huot remarks, Narcissus’
“amorous fountain with its perilous mirrors is opposed not only to the heavenly fountain

93 Lydgate’s formulation of Antiochus may be contrasted to that of Chaucer in the
Monk’s Tale: there, Antiochus is prideful rather than sensual and receives “[s]wich
guerdon as bilongeth unto pryde” (VII, 2630).

94 This is a less ambiguous presentation of Venus than the ‘courtly’ Venus found in the
Temple of Glass or, indeed, in the Knight’s Tale. This presentation is in line with
Lydgate’s desire to present a polarity between Reason and Sensuality.
of life, but also to the mirror of worldly wisdom and virtue.” In other words, Narcissus’ fall is a fall from Reason and to Sensuality.

Several critics, including Badel and Koeppel, have noted the distinctiveness of Laurent’s presentation of the story of Narcissus: a version Jean de Meun would hardly have recognized (Koeppel), in which Narcissus dies for love of Echo. In the *Fall of Princes*, in a move reliant on, but also quite distinct from, Laurent, the story of Narcissus becomes a lengthy tragedy emblematic of the first Book, if not of the work as a whole in its exploration of unbridled Sensuality. In this sense, Lydgate is more reliant on Boccacio’s original pronouncement that Narcissus and his fellows are “*eiusdem cupidinis ignes ignominiosososque suae turpitudinis exitus deplorantes.*”

Of course, Narcissus is at one level yet another “surquedous prince (*Fall of Princes* I.5575). Tiresias prophesies that Narcissus will be fairest of all but

… contrarie & daungerous,  
And off his port ful off straungenesse,  
And in his herte [riht] inli surquedous,  
Bi thoccasioun off his natif fairnesse;  
And, presumyng off his semlynesse,  
Shal thynke no woman so fresh nor fair of face,  
That able were to stonden in his grace.  

(*Fall of Princes* 5573-5579)

Narcissus is characterized by such terms as “daunger and disdeyn,” “cruelti,” and

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95 Koeppel, xx.

96 “deploring the fires of lust and the great ignominy of their deaths.” This translation is cited from the partial translation, Giovanni Boccaccio, *The Fates of Illustrious Men*, trans. Louis Brewer Hall (New York, 1965).
“onmerci”; like any tyrant, in what is a common motif in the *Fall of Princes*, he fails to practice justice tempered with mercy. And like any *surquedous* prince, he falls through Pride:

Presumptuous pride causid al to gon to wrak:  
For who to moch doth off hymsilff presume,  
His owne vsurpyng will sonest hym consume.  
(*Reson and Sensuallyte* 5668-5670)

In Lydgate’s adapted version, however, pride incurs Cupid’s wrath, so it is through servitude to the *fin’amors* that Narcissus falls in love with himself and dies. Pride and infatuation (tantamount to Sensuality) are almost identical here, as Narcissus is rapt by his own image:

And thus his beute, allass, was leid ful lowe,  
His semlynesse put ful ferre a-bak;  
Thus whan that he gan first hymsilff to knowe  
And seen his visage, in which ther was no lak,  
Presumptuous pride causid al to gon to wrak:  
For who to moch doth off hymsilff presume,  
His owne vsurpyng will sonest hym consume.  
(*Fall of Princes* I.5664-5670)

By extension, he falls by succumbing, like the dreamer in *Reason and Sensuality* to unbridled sensuality or to the will of Venus:

For al daunger displesith to Venus  
And al disdeyn is lothsum to Cupide:  
For who to loue is contrarious,  
The God of Loue will quite hym on sum side,  
His dredful arwis so mortali deuyde  
To hurte & mayme alle that be rech[e]les,  
And in his seruise founde merciles.  
(*Fall of Princes* I.5629-5635)

“Daunger” may here be taken as princely domination or arrogance but may also be a specific transferral from the realm of love to the realm of princes and to their
education, another transferral of the *fin’amors*. It might thus be objected that the foregoing examples represent direct transplantations of *fin’amors* to the *Fall*, that unbridled sensuality is nothing but a subspecies of princely hubris. Yet, the evidence speaks overwhelmingly for a source in ‘courtly love’ poetry: the motif of subjugation to love running through the tragedy of Narcissus is straight from the ‘courtly’ tradition. The seeds of this presentation of Venus and her world had admittedly lain in Jean de Meun’s Raison’s counsels to Amans, where Love subjugates all:

```
nus n’est de si haut lignage
Ne de force tant esprouvé
Ne si hardi n’a l’en trouvé
Ne qui tant ait d’autres bontez,
Qui par Amours ne soit donz.
(Roman de la Rose 4335-4339).97
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This idea is replicated in the *Echecs*, again a major source for the passages from the *Fall of Princes* cited above. In the words of Lydgate’s translation,

```
… ther is platly non that may
Dysobey[e]n hir byddyng:
Nouther emperour nor kyng,
Duk nor other creature,
But mavgre hem they must endure
Vnder hir myghty obeysaunce,
So disposyd ys hir chaunce.
(Reson and Sensuallyte 1480-1486) 98
```

Lydgate puts it more succinctly in his *tragedie* of Narcissus: “who to loue is contrarious, The God of Loue will quite hym on sum side” (I.4631-4632). Narcissus is thus presented as the archetypal victim of love. This constitutes a re-translation from Ovid and Boccaccio and a partial disavowal of Laurent’s ‘strange’ version. Again, a more

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97 Rose trans. HORGAN
98 Trans IP
proximate interpretation of the story is to be found in Evrart de Conty: “par veir et amer son ymage desordenement, il en mouru en fin” (216v2). 99

Moreover, in another striking departure from Boccaccio and Laurent, Lydgate alters the sequence of the Boccaccian pageant of which Narcissus is a part to mirror the pageant of lovers that Dyane presents as her exempla in the Echecs amoureux. Figure 2.2 shows how Lydgate’s additions to the Narcissus group in the Fall of Princes mirror Diana’s series of exempla in Reson and Sensuallyte.

The purpose of the catalog of lovers is similar in both the EA and in the Fall of Princes—to teach through examples of love gone wrong. From the story of Adam and Eve on, Sensuality dominates the early Books of the Fall and the first book in particular, reflecting the theological idea that the Fall came from Eve’s gluttony or Sensuality.

Two images—the well of Narcissus and the brand of Venus—dominate the translation of Boccaccio’s princely handbook to the realm of ‘courtly love’ poetry. The brand, as Sieper notes, is a traditional feature of Venus’ iconography, whether or not conflated with fiery arrows. It appears in the Roman de la Rose (“Ele tint un brandon flanbant/ en sa main destre, dont la flame a escaufée mainte dame” (cf. Roman de la Rose 3424-6126251-66)) and in Gower’s Confessio Amantis. The brand is a major feature of Venus’ iconography in Reson and Sensuallyte and, to the smitten narrator’s eyes, adds to her power:

Rede as a kole, A firy bronde,
Castyng sparklys fer a-broode,
Rounde al the place wher she stood,
Of whiche thing I took hede eke;

99 “in the end, he died of gazing on and loving his image inordinately.” The modifier desordenement (disordinately, or out of measure (mesure)) is to be noted.
That fire which is y-callyd greke
Ys nat so perilouse nor so rage,
Nor so dredful of damage;
For fire ys non, to rekne al,
That may of force be egal
To venus fire in persyng,
Nor of hete lyke in brennyng,
Nor so dredful harme to do.
(Reson and Sensuallyte 1577-1589)

Not surprisingly, the brand is one of the major perils listed by Diana in her
topography of Venus’ garden: “Yif Venus Marke the with hir bronde,/ Which that she
holdeth in hir honde;/ The fire of whom, who kan take hede,/ Ys of perel more to drede
… Than is the fire …/ Of smoky Ethna” (Reson and Sensuallyte 4117-4122). Venus’
brand is the instrument of Sensuality. The final shriving in Gower’s Confessio Amantis,
an important analogue, makes it explicit that, in this worldview, nothing but Reason can
counteract Venus’ brand:

And whan Resoun it herde sein
That loves rage was aweie
He cam to me the rihte weie
And hath remued the sotie
Of thilke unwise fantasie
Wherof that I was wont to pleigne
So that of thilke fyri peine
I was mad sobre and hol ynowh.
(Confessio Amantis II.2862-2868)

The Fall of Princes makes similar use of the image of Venus’ brand. In the
Envoy to Rome that ends the second Book, faith in Venus’ brand is juxtaposed with
faith in Christ:

Cast up off Venus the fals derisioun,
Hir firi brond, hir flatries renewyng,
Off Diana the transmutacioun,
Now briht, now pale, now cleer[e], now drepyng,
Off blynde Cupide the fraudulent mokkyng,
Off Iuno, Bacchus, Proserpina, Lucyne:
For non but Crist may saue the fro ruyne!
\textit{(Fall of Princes II.4552-4557)}

Allied to Venus’ brand, of course, are Cupid’s weapons: arrows and dart. These evoke immediately the \textit{Romance of the Rose}. This motif is also to be found in Walton’s \textit{Boethius}, an intermediary text between Lydgate and \textit{De casibus}. As in Lydgate’s Envoy to Book II of the \textit{Fall}, Walton’s focus is antipagan:

\begin{quote}
For certaynly it nedeþ noght at all
To whette now þe darters of cupide,
Ne for to bidde þat venus be oure gyde
So þat we may oure foule lustes wynne,
Onaunter lest þe same on us betide
As dede þe same venus for hire synne.\footnote{Unlike \textit{Reason and Sensuality}, Diana is here presented in her unstable aspect as the moon.}
\end{quote}

Narcissus’ well, equally, is transferred from the \textit{Echecs amoureux} to the \textit{Fall} as an ultimate metaphor for sensuality. This trend was begun in the \textit{Echecs amoureux} and in Evrart de Conty’s poetic commentary. Lydgate undertakes a further expansion of this episode. In \textit{Reson and Sensuallyte}, Narcissus’ well makes one effeminate:

\begin{quote}
In this Erber of Deduit [Diana says]
Ther ys a welle wonderful,
That, who drynketh hys bely ful
And ys bathed therin oonys,
Among the colde cristal stonys,
The nature shal him enclyne
To be-come Femynyne,
And ouer, yif I shal not feyne,
Departed in-to kyndes tweyne,
Double of nature and yet al oon,
Neuer a-sonder for to goon,
\end{quote}

Resemblynge, as I kan endyte,
Vnto an hermofrodyte.
*(Reson and Sensuallyte 3866-3878)*

This logic is replicated in the *Fall of Princes* in such episodes as the *tragedie* of Sardanapalus in Book I. The implication here is that effeminacy is tantamount to Sensuality and that both are ultimately figures for misrule

**Venus/Fortune**

To return to the figure of Venus, goddess of Sensuality, she does not appear in the *Fall of Princes* merely as an avatar of Sensuality or foil for Reason; rather, Lydgate systematically reiterates in his text a conventional iconographic and philosophic conflation of Venus and Fortune herself, the latter goddess being, ostensibly, the *Fall’s* major subject. While this conflation appears in Boethius, Alanus, and Jean de Meun, to name an important few, Lydgate’s highly original adaptation of Venus’ negative characterization of Venus in the *Echecs amoureux* to Boccaccio’s depiction of hundred-handed Fortune in Book Six of *De casibus virorum illustrium* betrays the integrality of Venus or Sensuality to the *Fall*. In Lydgate’s text, Venus is made a figure for temporal instability (*unstablenesse*) and fraud (*doublenesse*). To succumb to Venus is to succumb to Fortune; Sensuality is the literal and overriding impulse that princes must counteract to avoid tragedy.

Iconographic conflation of Venus and Fortune is commonplace by the fifteenth century. As Howard Patch remarks, “Fortuna actually does or undoes the work of the God of Love.”102 And as a passage cited also in the previous chapter suggests, to give oneself over to love is by definition to give oneself over to Fortune:

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102 Patch, 96.
Saveir deiz, et bien le recorde
Que quiconque a Raison s’acorde
Jamais par amour n’amera
Ne Fortune ne priser.
(Roman de la rose 6884-6887)\textsuperscript{103}

This conflation is equally common in Lydgate’s great vernacular predecessors, Chaucer and Gower. “So goth the fortune of my whiel,” Gower’s Venus tells Amans. Gower’s Canace blames her fate on a blind Cupid. Meanwhile, Hodapp “links Venus to Fortune” (113).

Fortune and Venus become associated in terms of their mutual involvement in worldly destiny, then, but also in terms of two major subsidiary characteristics: they are both fraudulent (\textit{double}) and unstable (\textit{unstable} or \textit{variable}). In the first place, Fortune and Venus are conflated in terms of their connection to temporal or worldly instability. Fortune’s or Venus’ instability has two aspects. Their instability arises first, as we have seen, from their involvement with \textit{variable} destiny. Each goddess’ personal instability is expressed through specific vocabulary: \textit{gery}, \textit{gerish}, and so on. Venus, as we have seen, is described from the beginning of the \textit{Echecs amoureux} as \textit{unstable} or \textit{variable}:

\begin{quote}
… al hir gyftes ar gynnyng
Of myschef, sorowe, and wepyng,
Of compleynt and mysaventure,
Importable to endure,
Whos lustys be so deceyvable,
So vnsure and variable,
\end{quote}

(3353-3358)

Diana tells the narrator in the former text that that “gery Venus, euer unstable,/ Hath with hir perilous face double/ Put the abak in ful gret trouble” (3512-3514). Similarly, Diana had characterized Venus as “[l]yght of corage, of wil chaungable,/ selde

\textsuperscript{103} “whoever is at one with Reason will never love \textit{par amour}, nor value Fortune.”
or never founde stable” (1549-1550). In the *Fall of Princes*, moreover, this characterization of Venus or Fortune devolves to the presentation of literal figures who succumb to Sensuality. Examples include Philippa, Messalina, Brunhilda. Brunhilda, for instance, is described in language that mirrors Fortune in Book III opening dialog. Bochas tells her,

> Nature hath tauht you al that is wrong texcuse,  
> Vndir a courtyn al thyng for to hide;  
> With litil greyn your chaff ye can abuse;  
> On your diffautis ye list nat for to bide:  
> The galle touchid, al that ye set aside;  
> Shewe rosis fresshe; weedis ye leet passe,  
> And fairest cheer[e] wher ye most trespace.

> And yiff ye shal telle your owne tale,  
> How ye be fall[e] fro Fortunis wheel,  
> Ye will vnclose but a litil male,  
> Shewe of your vices but a smal parcel:  
> Brotil glas sheweth brihter than doth steel;  
> And thouh of vertu ye shewe a fair pretence,  
> He is a fool that yiueth to you credence.

(*Fall of Princes* VI.197-210)

Meanwhile, Messalina is described as being subject to the astronomical influence of Venus (lust, *Fall of Princes* VII.383). Such figures are juxtaposed with the Lydgate’s *stable* and masculine patron, Humphrey of Gloucester, characterized as an *exemplary* prince who surmounts fortune by being *stable* in study. The motif of *stabilitas* is an important counterweight to sublunary Venus: *stabilitas* means cosmic order and is explicated as such both in Boethius and in Trevely’s glosses on *De consolatione philosophiae*.

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104 By contrast, Diana’s woods are ageless, “not chaungeable” (*Reson and Sensuallyte* 2701).
Secondarily, then, the two goddess’ conflation in terms of unstablenesse arises from their connection to temporal cycles, to the moon and the tides. The image of the moon, indeed, is used by Lydgate throughout the Fall to associate Fortune and Sensuality. This image has its origin in the Roman de la Rose (4769). In III.344, likewise, Fortune is characterized as unstable. The beginning of Reson and Sensuallyte speaks of “Fortune sone/ Which ofter changeth as the mone” (47-48). In the Fall of Princes, the moon-image is used at several key points to characterize the simultaneous doublenesse of Sensuality and Fortune. A quintessential depiction of Fortune’s instability is found in the tragedy of Charles of Calabria and Philippa of Catania: “Thus can Fortune chaungen as the moone,/ Hir brihte face dirked with a skie” (IX.2938ff).

A second major image that relates Venus and Fortune in terms of their instability is the image of the tun or tavern, present both in the Echecs amoureux and in the Fall. In fact, this is how Reson and Sensuallyte begins:

After this Fortune sone,
Which ofter changeth as the mone,
Had through hir subtil gyn begonne
To yive me drynke of her tonne.
(Reson and Sensuallyte 47-50)

Sieper noted categorically that this motif is originally from the Romance of the Rose, from Raison’s description of Jupiter’s tavern, where drink is offered both sweet and perverse.

105 This is a frequent figure in the lyrics. In the notable “Defence of Holy Church,” for instance, Lydgate warns Henry V to “beware of chaungyng of the moone.” In Caxton’s preface to the Aeneid, interestingly, England is characterized as being particularly sub-lunary and ever-changing.
In the *Fall of Princes*, however, the image of Fortune’s or Venus’ tun is conflated with Lydgate’s characteristic use of unslakeable thirst or dropsy as a figure for Sensuality. At root, the image comes from the story of the Samaritan woman in the Bible (John 4). However, in the *Roman de la Rose*, the image is made secular and metaphorical by the contrast between Reason’s draught and love’s. In the *Fall of Princes*, finally, unstaunchable thirst or appetite becomes a figure for *onbridlednesse* as we have been discussing it. Hydropsy is another related and characteristic image in the *Fall of Princes*: at 5668 in *Reson and Sensuallyte*, Lydgate conflates bestiality and what he will elsewhere refer to as “thirst of having” (*Fall of Princes* III.339).

A related transferral from the *Echecs amoureux* tradition to the text of the *Fall of Princes* is the image of snake venom, a poisonous drink. In the *Echecs amoureux*, Dyane instructs the Narrator in the etymology of the name Venus: Venus means “venom.”

Finally, Venus and Fortune are both characteristically double. Poverty in Book Three of Lydgate’s translation of *De casibus* shows up Fortune’s *doublenesse*:

> For thouh thou seems benzyn & debonaire
> Bi a manere countirfet apparence,
> Fat & weel fed, with rounde chekis faire,
> With many colors off trouthe as in pretence,
> As ther off feith wer werrai existen
> The serpent glidith, off chaung and doublinnes.
> (*Fall of Princes* II.271-280)

*Doublenesse* is, as Raison tells Amans in the *Roman de la Rose*, an inherent characteristic of false friendship, of the lying flattery incurred by rich men: In a mirror for princes such as the *Fall*, needless to say, flattery or “false feigning” is of the utmost concern. False feigning is a particular concern in the Fall: for instance, in the story of Mohamed in the
second hundred lines of Boook IX. This echoes Raison’s speeches to the Lover and Faux-Semblant’s assertion that Fraud is all-powerful.

**Iconography of Venus in Lydgate’s Fortune (Fall of Princes VI)**

Yet, nothing in the Rose tradition prepares on for Lydgate’s remarkable literal conflation of Venus in the *Echecs* and Boccaccio’s Fortune in Book VI of the *Fall* is a remarkably literal adaptation. The iconography of this remarkable sequence is derived wholly from the Dyane’s description of Venus in the *Echecs amoureux*. Boccaccio’s Fortune had been a monster, suggestive of Dante’s Geryon and concisely described:


Lydgate transmutes *varia vestis* and *brachia totidem* to reflect the variable goddesses in the *Echecs*, making a monster image from the iconography. Fortune is a *monstrum*, a “monstruous ymage” (6.18), but she is also re-related to the mythic figures of the *Echecs*.

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106 Patch’s identification of a conflation *per se* is qualified: “This identification of the two figures of Fortune and Love only means that they had very much in common, and that in one aspect Fortune was certainly regarded as concerned with the affairs of Love.” However, the *Echecs amoureux* makes this conflation specific.

107 “I was taking up my pen again after a very short rest when suddenly there appeared that horrible monster, administrator of all mortal affairs, Fortune. Oh God, how tall she was, what an extraordinary appearance! I did not say anything. I was afraid of her looks, for her eyes were burning and menacing, her aspect overpowering. Her hair twisted in front of her face, and I think she had a hundred hands and arms, a dress of many colors, a voice like rough iron.”
She is presented as a parodic version of these instructor and of Lady Philosophy. This is not least true because she pretends exemplarity (VI.134), recalling the narrator’s ironic use of exempla in Resoun and Sensualite.

In Lydgate’s translation, Reson and Sensuallyte, moreover, Diana characterizes Venus to the narrator using the mythic figure of the chimera. Both in the French text and in Reason and Sensuallyte, Diana teaches the Dreamer that Venus is like a chimera:

She may be lykned to chimere
Which is a beste monstruous,
Ryght wonderful and mervelous,
Hedyd as a stronge lyon,
And even lych a scorpion;
Her tail is werray serpentyne,
And her bely eke Capryne …
(Reson and Sensuallyte 3370-3376)

Each of the three beasts represented in this description of the mythic chimera—the scorpion, serpent, and goat—has a symbolic significance to Lydgate and to the tradition at large. Isidore classes the chimera as a fabula, whether fabula means a fable or a fabulous creature: “Ad naturam rerum fabulas fingunt ... ut illa triformis bestia, prima leo postrema draco, media ipsa chimera, id est caprea ...” Evrart de Conty, the Echecs’ major interpreter in the fourteenth and fifteenth century, interprets the passage from the Echecs as follows:

... elle [sc. Dyane] fait comparison de ly [sc. de Venus] a la Chymere estrange qui a la teste leonine, le corps caprin et queue serpentine secretement nous mostre et segnefie l'estat et la propriete de la concupiscence charnelle et du fait du luxure”
(146r42-146r45).108

108 “She compares her [Diana compares Venus] to the strange Chimera, who has a lion’s head, a goat’s body, and a serpentine tail. This shows us secretly and demonstrates the place and properties of carnal desire and of lechery.” There is a similar gloss in Reson and Sensuallyte itself
This is the familiar iconographic association of Venus and lust. Evrart goes on to anatomize the chimera in terms of *luxuria*: the lion’s head represents the lust and disorder of romantic obsession (146v14), the goat’s body (memorably enough) “*nous segnifie que le delit dessusdit de luxeure et chose abhonimable et put en l’accomplissant*” (146v8), and the “*queue serpentine*” bespeaks the end of such delights. 109 Venus—chimera—lion—sensuality is even bad rhetoric: “*Ne primo medium medio ne discrepet imum. Bonum enim inchoare et malo fine concludere est monstruosa conficere. Illa namque actio est quasi chimera quae initium habet a ratione, finem in sensualitate.*”110

Turning again to Book Six of the *Fall of Princes*, we find this figure of the chimera implicit in the multiple animal images used to describe Fortune.

Dulle as an asse whan man hadde haste to gon,
And as a swalwe gerissh of her fliht,
Tween slouh and swifft; now crokid & now vpriht,
Now as a crepil lowe coorbid doun,
Now a duery and now a champioun.

Now a coward, durst nat come in pres,
And sumwhile hardi as leoun ...
(*Fall of Princes* VI.50-58)

This rich, quasi-cinematic depiction of Fortune depicts her changeability, certainly, and it is quite arguably a re-rendering of Nature’s garment in Alanus, again a source for the *Echecs*. but Fortune’s ‘kaleidoscoping’ of a variety of animals is equally

109 “signifies to us that the aforementioned crime of lechery is an abominable thing and stinks when it is being carried out.”

110 Cf Augustine’s Sermones: “*Bonum enim inchoatum cum malo fine concludere, quid aliud set quam res monstruosas res conficere? Illa enim actio quasi chimaera est, quae initium habet a ratione, sed finem a sensualitate.*”
suggestive of *doublenesse*. Above all, Fortune is a chimera, with distinctly serpentine characteristics:

Now a mermaide angelik off face,  
A tail behynde verry serpentyne,  
Now debonaire, now froward to do grace,  
Now as a lamb tretable & benigne,  
Now lik a wolff of nature to maligne,  
Now Sirenes to synge folk a-slepe …  
*(Fall of Princes VI.64-70)*

Fortune is thus allied with Venus, a traditional alliance for Patch and others compounded in the present text. Fortune is given characteristics of changeability. In a manner parodic of Boethius’ Philosophia, Fortune appears to Boethius to instruct him.

Cause of my comyng, pleynli to declare [Fortune tells Bochas]  
Bi good auis, vnto thi presence,  
Is to shewe my manerees & nat spare,  
And my condiciouns, brefli in sentence,  
Preued of old & newe experience  
Pleynli to shewe, me ilst nat for to rowne,  
Today I flatre, to-morwe I can weel frowne.  
*(Fall of Princes VI.134-140)*

As this passage suggests, Fortune is a satiric deployer of exemplarity who stays to recount various stories before disappearing in a puff of smoke. The reference to the related image of Sirens in the description of Fortune is particularly telling as it too is a primary image for Venus/Sensuality in the *Echecs amoureux*. On the one hand, Diana cautions the Dreamer that there are literal Sirens in Deduit’s garden. There are

perilous Charybdis down to Sirens  
For ther thou shalt syrenes sen  
Crestyd as a gret Dragon,  
Feller than any scorpion,  
Of which in ysidre ye may se,  
Specialy, how ther be thre,  
Halfe brid and fissh the navele doun,  
And vpward of inspeccion,  
Who that a-ryght beholde kan,
Eche hath an hede of a woman,
And euerych hath a mayde face
Of syghte lusty to enbrace,
Her nayles kene and wonder sharpe.

*(Reson and Sensuallyte 3620-3632)*

Here (as Isidore had explained), the function of the Sirens, like that of Venus is to be fraudulent.

Moreover, in the *Fall of Princes* as in *Reson and Sensuallyte*, Venus and her avatars the Sirens and chimeras are inseparable from Lydgate’s characteristic serpent image. De trin. 12.12. The serpent is frequently shown under flowers, and the source of this motif in fop is arguably the *Echecs* itself. It will be noted that the chimera has a *serpentyne* tail and that the *Echecs*’ Venus and Lydgate’s Fortune follow suit. This is because they are fraudulent or *double*. As Diana tells the narrator in *Reson and Sensuallyte*, the very etymology of Venus is derived from venom.

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As text and gloss here suggest, the original idea is from Isidore:

*Dicit Isidorus tres fuisse sirenes ex parte virgines / et ex parte volueres et pisces / vngulas et alas habentes quarum vna voce / altera tubea / tercia lira canebat que illectos nauigantes sub specie cantus ad naufragium pertrahunt / secundum veritatem / Meretrices fuerunt que transeuntes ad egestatem ducebant etc.*

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“Isidore said that the Sirens were three in number and were part virgin, part bird, and part fish, clawed and winged. One sang, one played the *tubea*, and one sang to the lyre, which drew ignorant mariners to shipwreck.
Again, in a move straight from classical misogyny, Venus’ or Fortune’s “serpentyne” “doublenesse” devolves to literal women in the *Fall of Princes*. This relates to Eve’s perceived complicity in the Fall. Because of the connection with Venus/Fortune, it is necessary to broach this here, even though the bulk of the discussion is best reserved for the chapter on women’s role in the *Fall*. A compelling example is Delilah at I.6343,

**The Fall of Saturn and the Reign of Venus: the *Echecs* and the *Fall***

Possibly the most compelling aspect of Lydgate’s adaptation of the *Echecs amoureux* to the *Fall of Princes* is his use of a single trope: the descent from the Golden Age of Saturn to the present, debased Reign of Venus. [Midsomer Rose—ubi sunt and Venus] The seventh Book, despite Kelly’s characterization of its “failing inspiration,” is in this sense integral to Lydgate’s global project in the *Fall of Princes*. The seventh Book revises Boccaccio’s original structure to foreground an allegorization of the Christian *Fall* and a wholly novel presentation of St. John the Baptist as a ‘prince’ who redeems the Fall from the Golden Age *in time*. Again, the descent from the Golden Age is a recurring figure both in the *Echecs amoureux* and in *Reson and Sensuallyte*, where it is presented both as a literal story and as a figure for various important temporalities: for love, for chivalry, and, ultimately, for ideal princely *governaunce*.

In the *Echecs amoureux*, the *topos* of the Golden Age is borrowed from the *Roman de la Rose* to present a former age of chastity and chivalry. In the *Rose*, presentation of the Golden Age, while reliant on the Classics (*Metamorphoses* I) had
been overwhelmingly illustrative and ironic. The anonymous author of the *Echecs amoureux* introduces the motif of the Golden Age at several key points in his narrative; all of these Lydgate replicates in his translation of the *Echecs, Reson and Sensuallyte*. The initial reference to the Golden Age in the *Echecs amoureux* occurs in the context of the description of the three goddesses who appear to the narrator on Mercury’s cart. It is apt that this first reference should occur in the narrator’s description of Juno, traditionally associated with temporality and with Fortune, for the Golden Age is, in a certain sense, the beginning of temporality. Lydgate in his version moves immediately from introducing Juno to suggesting her complicity in the overthrow of Saturn and, hence, in the end of the Golden Age. Accordingly, the focus shifts quickly from Juno to Jupiter:

```
The myghty lady and maistresse,
And chefe goddesse of rychesse,
And in poetys, as yt is ryff,
Called *Iubiteris* wyff.
The whiche, throgh his gret[e] myght,
Both ageyn reson and ryght,
Caste hys olde fader doun …
(Reson and Sensuallyte 1283-1292)
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Of particular note here is the almost instantaneous association that Lydgate draws between the overthrow of Saturn and the overthrow of Reason: “Both *ageyn reson and ryght,*/ Caste hys olde fader doun .” Both in *Reson and Sensuallyte* and in Lydgate’s French original, the association between the castration of Saturn and the overthrow of Reason derives from the same motif in the *Roman de la rose*, from Raison’s speech on Love and Justice (5536). Thus—overarching statement on position in text.\(^{112}\)

The castration of Saturn was, in fact, an act of princely *tyrannie*:

\(^{112}\) Cf. *Echecs amoureux*, 128.
And [Jupiter] eke also of cruelte
Made him lese, I yow ensure,
Hys membres of engendrure.
The whiche was, so as I rede,
Passyngly a cruel dede,
With-out[e] merci outhere grace
So hys fader to enchace
Out of hys kyngdam forto duelle.
(Reson and Sensuallyte 1298-1305; my italics)

Yet tyrannie, as we remember from the early sections of this study, is unbridled sensualite. Lusty Jupiter and carnal Venus depose Saturn, ushering in the ultimate tragedie of the classical Fall.

By contrast, Saturn’s rule (tantamount in this first excerpt to the Golden Age) was an age of plenitude (habundaunce), of mythic wealth:

He [sc. Satourne] was so myghty and so ryche,
That throgh his noble high estate
The worlde was called aureate,
Ther was of golde so gret plente,
Devoyded al of skarsete,
Hyt was so haboundant at al,
But lich as I reherse shal,
Iubiter hath hyt empeyred [.] 
(Reson and Sensuallyte 1305-1317)

Literally (perhaps as a function of the naïveté of the Echecs’ narrator), Saturn’s reign was the reign of gold because gold abounded. Incipient in the digression from the passage on Juno, however, is the figurative contrast between the “aureate … worlde” and the present, debased age. The world is now “[t]ourned in-to siluer shene,/ Wel wors then hyt was founde aforn” (Reson and Sensuallyte 1320-1321). In fact, the Present Age is the age of false alloy, of no true metal whatsoever:

For in the worlde that now is founde,
Ther be but fewe that habounde
With gold, siluer, or swych metal;
For now the world, in special,
Is vnethe, who look wel,  
Nouther of Coper, nor of stel,  
Nouther of lede, Tyn, nor Bras.  
For hyt is wel wors than it was,  
Damaged by ful fals allay.  
(1318-1330)

The present age is the age of fraudulence, covetousness, and even unnaturalness:

Swich falsnesse regneth now this day,  
Thorgh covetise, that feyth ys gon;  
For now vnethe ther ys noon  
That loueth but for lucre of gode,  
So vnkynde is blood to blode;  
Who lyst assaye, he shal fynde,  
How the worlde ys wax vnkynde,  
And in falshe doth him delyte.

Such characterizations are inseparable from the notion that this is the reign of  
“gery Venus ever vnstable” (Reson and Sensuallyte 3512) or Sensuality, to which the Golden Age has devolved.

In the Fall of Princes, similarly, Lydgate transposes what in the Echecs is inherently a figure for romance or chivalry both as literal history and as a figure for the overwhelming temporal instability amidst which would-be virtuous princes must operate. This process begins early in the Fall with Lydgate’s substantial adaptations to the Fall of Adam and Eve (I.484ff) and literal account of Saturn devouring his children (I.1401ff) In both texts, the Golden Age of chivalry or “prudent policie” is juxtaposed with the debased or Venusian Present Age, in line with the allegorical portraiture discussed earlier. Use of the story or trope of the Golden Age is most prominent in the discussion of the first tyrants, proponents of debased earthly rule, in Book VII of the Fall of Princes, as well as in the discussion of earthly occupation, disposition, or “degre” that constitutes Lydgate’s major expansion of Boccaccio’s third Book. Yet, I shall show here how the
narrative or *topos* of the Golden Age permeates Lydgate’s text, being a major borrowing from the *Echecs amoureux* and Rose tradition.

It will readily be seen that this language mirrors the language of *Reson and Sensuallyte*, where Diana refers to “gery Venus, euer vnstable” (3512). In a similar vein, the fall of Saturn is invoked again not long after the description of Juno, aptly enough in the corresponding description of Venus. Venus was

Doughtre, lych as ye han herd,
To saturne with his frosty berd,
As ye shal here, serioosly,
Conceyved wonder straungely,
In the silve same wyse
As ye aforn han herd deuyse,
And eke in bokes ys remembred:
How that Saturne was dismembred,
I mene thus, by fatal ewre,
Lost hys membres of engendrure
By Iubyter, hys sone and ayre,
Which was nouther good nor faire;
(Reson and Sensuallyte 1433-1444)

The narrator of the *Echecs* explains that Venus was born from Saturn’s limbs:

For the membres that y of spake
He cast hem in the salt[e] see,
Of which the natyvite
Gan first, as bookes lyst expresse,
Of feyre venus, the goddesse.
(Reson and Sensuallyte 1452-1456)

Implicit in this account of the birth of Venus is that, at least according to our Venus-struck narrator, Venus wields power over men, having “[g]ret lordshippe and ryght gret myght, / By influence of hir werkynges, / In gouernaunce of worldly thinges” (Reson and Sensuallyte 1466-1468) , while, equally, “[t]he goddys alle, as hyt is skyl,/ Must enclyne to hir wil” (Reson and Sensuallyte 1525-1526). This “lordshippe” is *caused by* the birth of Venus, which ushers in her age of overhelming *unstablesennesse.*
Significantly, however, the major account of the Golden Age in the *Echecs* occurs in the context of Diana’s instruction of the deluded narrator, at 3023ff in Lydgate’s *Reson and Sensuallyte*. Diana complains that, prior to the reign of Venus, she herself was held in high esteem:

"I was wont whilom," quod she,  
"Yn tyme of olde antiquyte,  
In ioy and myrthe to habounde,  
Glad of hert and ful Iocunde,  
And had gret prosperyte,  
Worshipped eke of ech degre …  
(*Reson and Sensuallyte* 3023-3028)

As the gloss to *Reson and Sensuallyte* helpfully explains, “*Castitas quondam fuit magne reputacionis ab omnibus accepta et honorata*”\(^{113}\) this is the opposite of the Reign of Sensuality. Now, however, Venus has usurped Diana and altered the state of things:

And cause of al, as y espye,  
That I am left allone thus,  
Is myn enmy, Dame Venus,  
That regneth with hir companye,  
And pleynly hath the regalye.  
(*Reson and Sensuallyte* 3063-3067)

Having issued this complaint, Diana launches into yet another account of the deposition of Saturn:

And this myschef of yore agoon,  
As cause first of my mournyng,  
Be-gan, whan Iubiter was kyng  
By violent oppression,  
Whan he caste hys Fader doun,  
Satourne fro his Royal see …  
(*Reson and Sensuallyte* 3082-3086)

Again, as in the depictions of Juno and of Venus, Diana uses the motif of the descent of Saturn and end of the Golden Age as a metaphor for the current, debased age. Most

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\(^{113}\) “In former times, chastity was of high reputation, welcomed and honored by all.”
importantly for a comparison between the *Fall of Princes* and the *Echecs amoureux*,

Diana describes how a set of ideal virtues were banished with Saturn:

…. with Satourne, and that is routhe,
Ryghtwisenesse, honour, and trouthe,
Clennesse eke and chastite
Exiled wern, shortly to tell,
With vs no lenger for to duell,
As hyt had be for the nonys,
With him they fledden al attones …
(*Reson and Sensuallyte* 3107-3115)

The *Fall of Princes* replicates the *Echecs’* use of the twin motifs of the descent of Saturn and end of the Golden Age integrally. In another wholesale transposition from *Reson and Sensuallyte* to the *Fall of Princes*, this motif of the exile of the virtues becomes a centerpiece of the seventh Book of the *Fall of Princes*, where the exile of the virtues and consequent reign of the vices is caused immediately by the succumbing to the vices in general of Nero and to gluttony of Vitellius (*Fall of Princes* VII.838ff) The latter case is ironic because Vitellius “of blood was Saturnyne” (*Fall of Princes* VII.879). Indeed, his mention in Boccaccio occasions the first of several references to Saturn and the Golden Age in Lydgate’s pivotal seventh Book. Saturn in his more ‘historic’ capacity of “kyng of Crete” (*Fall of Princes* VII.881), driven out by Jupiter (*Fall of Princes* VII. 882), arrived in ancient Italy, was received by Janus, and taught the natives civilization. Effectively, he taught them to master *sensualite* with *resoun*:

Toforn the komyng of Satvrn, this no faille,
Rud & boistous, & bestial of resoun
Was al the peeple abidyng in Itaille;
Lond was non sowe nor turnid up-so-doun,
Nor marchaundise vsid in no toun
Til Saturn tauhte the maner of lyuyng,
Of tilthe & labour to Ianus that was kyng.

*(Fall of Princes VII.887-893)*

Ironically, Vitellius’ reign then becomes one of the factors in the pageant of the vices at VII.1125, in Lydgate’s adaptation of Boccaccio’s diatribe against Gluttony. The ultimate cause of the entry of the vices, however, in an original addition to the *Fall of Princes* not found in Laurent or Boccaccio, is Venus herself. In general and figurative terms, the reason for present *unstablenesse* is the deposition of Saturn and reign of Jupiter:

This goldene world long while did endure,
Was non allay in that metal seene,
Til Saturn cesid, be record of scripture;
Iubiter regned, put out his fadir cleene,
Chaunged Obrison into siluer sheene,
Al up-so-doun, because attemperaunce
Was set aside and lost hir gouernaunce.

*(Fall of Princes VII.1209-1215)*

More specifically, however—and in line with everything stated in foregoing sections about Lydgate’s view of fraudulent and unstable Venus—the cause of the debased Present Age is identical to its cause in the *Echecs amoureux*:

Venus, of loueres emperesse & queene,
Of vicious lustis lady and maystresse,
Hir metal copere, that wil ternyssh grene,
A chaungable color, contrarrye to sadnesse,
A notabil figur of wordli brotilnesse,
Lik gery Venus, because attemp[e]raunce
Was set aside & lost hir gouernaunce.

*(Fall of Princes VII.1247-1243)*

This argument in Book VII of the *Fall* is analogous to Diana’s account of the deposition of Saturn and of the present debased age:

al is turned vp so doun,
For the dominacion
Indeed, the twin motifs of the deposition of Saturn and the reign of Venus form a recurrent pattern in the text of the Fall, much as they do in Reson and Sensuallyte

(Figure 2.2): albeit with the preponderance in the seventh Book:

**Figure 2.2 the Golden Age in the Fall of Princes**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>passage</th>
<th>rubric/tragedie</th>
<th>How olde Saturne was whilom kyng of Crete, And off custum dede his besy peyne, Off his godhed list for to ordeyne That he sholde, as off his nature, Echon deoure as by his engendrure.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I.1401-1407</td>
<td>How many yeres was betwixt Adam and Nembroth and betwixt Nembroth and Cadmus and of other kynges.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II.4530-4531</td>
<td>Envoy to Book II</td>
<td>..Saturne drauh thyn affectiuoun, His goldene world[e] fulli despisyng; And fro...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III.3165</td>
<td>Untruth of Judges</td>
<td>wer maad no confessours. This goldene world[e], flouryng in vertu, Born...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI</td>
<td>Boccaccio and Fortune</td>
<td>hath auailed. Philisphres of the goldene ages And poetes that fond... variaunce. Princis remembreth upon the goldene ages, Whan Satourn reuled the</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

114 “Vp so doun” is a frequent expression in Lydgate’s works, even though the figure used for tragedie is more often unbridledness than it is inversion. The tragedie of Zedekiah in the Fall of Princes exclaims, “Loo, how Fortune can turnen vp-so-doun Off mortal men the condiциoun[!]” There is a heightened frequency of the term in the Troy Book. A possible source is the statement on Sensuality from the Parson’s Tale, discussed above :God sholde have lordship over resoun, and resoun over sensualitee … But soothly, whan man synneth, al this ordre is turned up-so-doun” (X, 263)
Most of these occurrences use the Golden Age figuratively, with the primary exception being the at any rate exceptional Lydgate Envoy to the Second Book, where Lydgate’s thrust is antipaganism: “From olde Saturne drauh thyn affeccioun, / His goldene world[e] fulli despisyng” (*Fall of Princes* II.4530-4531). Book VI, lines 537-538 suggest a metaliterary dimension to the Golden Age *topos*, with the authorial voice speaking of “Philisophres of the goldene ages / And poetes that fond out fressh ditees.” The Envoy to Mithridates in the same Book, however, suggests the practical application of the topos to the lives of Princes. Princes are to remember the Golden Age to practice wise rule and effect peace:

```
Princis remembreth vpon the goldene ages,
Whan Satourn reuled the world in rihtwisnesse;
Next Iubiter, for peeplis auauntages,
In silueren world consered in clennesse,
```
Which Mars hath now tournid to felnesse,
Made it stelene, with suerd, dagger & launce,
Throruh sodeyn chaung of worldli variaunce.
(*Fall of Princes VI.1730-1736*)

In any event, it is necessary to proceed carefully, exploring the various implications of the fall of Saturn and end of the Golden Age, literal and figurative, in both texts. At a primary level, the mythological narrative of the end of the Golden Age stands in for the more conventional cosmic or even Christian narrative of the Fall. Both the *Echecs amoureux* and the *Fall of Princes* are framed by narratives of the Fall of Man. Like Boccaccio’s *De casibus* and the *Monk’s Tale* before it, the *Fall of Princes* opens with the Fall of Adam and Eve, whose Fall, archetypally, ushered in the gamut of worldly woes and, by extension, ushered in Fortune herself:

> Thus cam in first thoruh inobedience,
> As bi a gate, pouerte and neede;
> And at ther bak folwed indigence,
> Sorwe, siknesse, maladie and dreede,
> Exil, banshyng and seruitute, in deede,
> Which causid man longe to contune
> Vndir the lordship & daunger off Fortune.
> (*Fall of Princes I.687-693*)

In the *Echecs amoureux*, meanwhile, the Judgment of Paris, whose relation to the Greek story of the Apple of Discord makes it another archetypal narrative of the Fall, serves as a framing text. Prior to the narrator’s fatal selection of Venus/Sensuality, Mercury narrates the consequences of her selection in language remarkably similar to that used to describe the Fall in the *Fall of Princes*:

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115 This is a poetic extension from Laurent: “par ce pechié l’umain lignaige devint subget a fortune et a sa mocquerie, et avec ce fut mis le terme a la vie des homme par ainsi qu’ilz morroient de mort, laquelle rameinne presques toutes les chose a neant” (“… by this sin, the human race became subject to Fortune and to her mockery, and human life was made finite so that they died of death [sic], which returns almost all things to nothingness”). My translation from Gathercole.
\textit{Al was turned vpe so doun.}
For al her ioy[e] and gladnesse
Was turned in-to hevynesse,
And the plesaunce of eche estate
Was platly tourned to debate
\textit{(Reson and Sensuallyte 1926-1930)}

Indeed, Mercury’s last words, remarking on the narrator’s choice of Venus, work to characterize the debased age: "\textit{Al this worlde gooth the same trace / And stondeth in [the] selve case}” (2107- 2108). Yet, here the figure of the Golden Age is used as a figure for the decline of courtly mores: as Raison had told Amans in the \textit{Rose}, all the world now follows and serves Venus. \textit{Reson and Sensuallyte} and the \textit{Fall of Princes} The \textit{Echecs amoureux} is a philosophizing \textit{dit}; hence, when Dyane laments the Fall of Saturn and Reign of Venus, what she is actually lamenting is the twilight of courtly ‘values’:

\begin{verbatim}
Al the worlde gooth to declyn,
And ys peruerted with Satourne.
For no man lyst now to tourne
To Vertu nor to perfytenesse,
But to delyt and ydelnesse;
Ther is no feyth, ther is no trust.
For the girdel of fals lust
\textit{(Reson and Sensuallyte 3117-3122; cf. 3107, cited above)}
\end{verbatim}

Diana goes on to use Arthur of Britain as a model of princely chivalry (3176), and, curiously, the \textit{Fall of Princes} does not replicate this use of Arthur in its translation of Boccacio’s account of Arthur in Book VIII of the \textit{De casibus}. Yet, this may be apt because, as previously stated, the \textit{Fall} transposes its \textit{fin’amors} themes to the sphere of \textit{policie}. The motif of the Fall is no exception to this rule; in fact, it is emblematic of such transposition, rendering both loss and restitution of the Golden Age explicitly temporal. An important instance of this is found in Lydgate’s adapation of the story of Appius in Book III, actually the \textit{Fall of Princes’} second reference to the story of Virginia.
Typically, Appius’ fall is caused by his unbridled sensuality (he is a “tiraunt,” III.3068, “lecherous of nature,” III.3061) is juxtaposed with the more narrow moral, addressed to princes:

Noble Pryncis, supportours off iustise,
Callid lodesterris to yeue the peeple liht,
On Appius lat iuges nat practise,
That trouthes laumpe be cler bothe dai & nyht.
Your office peised, that longeth to a knyht,
Hold up the balance off doom in your manheede,
That lawe in iuges be nat corupt with meede!
(Fall of Princes III.3109-3115)

Lydgate follows Boccaccio in introducing a diatribe against the untruth of judges (Fall of Princes III.3116ff) but proceeds to interpolate a lengthy passage on the Golden World as realm of ideal justice. In the Golden World, as should at this point be no surprise, Sensuality was bridled by Reason:

Will was that tyme vnder subieccioun
Off rihtwisnesse, be trouthe ful weel conveied,
Sensualite was servuant to resoun,
And froward lust was vnder lok weel keied;
Sentence off statutis was nat disobeied,
The riche dede riht thoruhout eueri lond,
Poore folk lyued be labour off ther hond.
(Fall of Princes III.3144.3150)

Here, effectively, the Golden Age has become a figure for mythic justice and temporal order. This emphasis on order is, primarily, what distinguishes Lydgate’s presentation of the Golden Age both from classical and Christian antecedents.116 De consolatione philosophiae 5m5 and Chaucer’s Former Age, for instance, both situate the Golden Age in a faraway time. Lydgate, by contrast, replicates time and again in the lyrics a

116 Sieper in his edition notes the following sources for the Golden Age motif: Roman de la Rose 8670-8712, 20807; Georgics 1.125, De consolatione 2m5, and Confessio amantis 2155. Again, of course, the source sine qua non for this image is Metamorphoses I.
transposition of the Golden Age as a figure for temporal prosperity—not as in Boethius and Chaucer to present myth or to reinforce *ubi sunt* but as a figure for temporal discord. The main analogues for this presentation are Gowerian. However, his is a transferral from the dominant *Rose* discourse also. Reason had explained to the lover the ill effects of covetousness: Hence the characteristics that we have associated above with Venus—unbridled sensuality and fraudulence—are the characteristics of the present age.

Turning to the seventh Book of the *Fall of Princes*, we find Lydgate re-adapting Boccaccio’s and Laurent’s structures to allegorize both debased and redeemed temporality, using the figure of the Golden Age. Presentation of tyranny as unbridled Sensuality takes on new urgency with the introduction of Herod the Great, the first *de facto* tyrant (*Fall of Princes* VII.85ff). Next, Nero, whose story echoes that of Sardanapalus in Book One among others, effects a miniature exile of the virtues and entry of the vices, congruent to those accounts of the Fall described above:

Thus be process, to al vertu contraire  
Be gret excesse he fill in glotonye,  
And aftir that list no lenger tarye—  
As euery vice to othir doth applie—  
Surfet and riot brouht in lecherie  
And ground of al, as cheefe porteresse  
Texile vertu was froward idilnesse.  
(*Fall of Princes* VII.691-697)

However, the genuine account of the exile of the Virtues and reign of the Vices comes in the context of Lydgate’s translation of Boccaccio’s diatribe against *luxuria* (“Bochas dampnyth þe Vice of Glotonye”). This occasions an original reiteration of the *tragedie* of Adam, that for which the descent of Saturn is ultimately a figure.\(^{117}\) The reiteration

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\(^{117}\) Cf. Bergen IV.287: “None of this is in Boccaccio and only the bare outline of it in Laurence.”
serves the secondary purpose of reminding princes that Sensuality leads to loss of Reason and to ruin:

His innat vertues did hym anon forsake
For his assentyng, & did in hast retourne
Ageyn to heuene, whan the infernal snake
In stede of vertu did with man soiourne.
For which we han gret mateer for to mourne,
Sith that we been difffourmyd in certeyn,
Be vicious lyuyng of vertu maad bareyn.
*(Fall of Princes VII.1118-1124)*

Lydgate goes on to re-evoke the allegorical logic of the third Book with a reminder to princes that “Nature in soth with litil is content” *(Fall of Princes VII.1146)*, which he takes (again) from Boethius rather than from Boccaccio.

By outlining Lydgate’s insertions into the seventh Book of the *Fall of Princes*, it is possible to see how he reworks Boccaccio’s text to foreground the twin *topoi* of the reign of Saturn and descent from the Golden Age *(Figure 2.3)*. Apart from this structural foregrounding, Lydgate’s presentation of the Golden Age is novel in that it associates the Golden Age motifs with the Reason/Sensuality divide outlined in my previous chapter. In the Golden Age, Lydgate avers in a passage remarkable for its list of synonyms for restraint or ‘bridledness,’

>Youthe was bridled vndir disciplyne,
Vertuous studie floured in myddil age,
Dreed heeld the yerde of norture & doctrine,
Riot restreyned from surquedous outrage,
Kouth was charite, because attemperaunce
Hadde in that world hooli the gouernaunce.
*(Fall of Princes VII.1167-1174)*

That is, the opposite of unbridled Sensuality, tantamount to princely *tragedie*, is in a sense pure restraint or ‘bridledness,’ and the “golden worlde” emblematizes such restraint.
The passage in question, a Lydgatean interpolation titled “A Chapitle descryuing the golden worlde, that is to way when attempraunce had hooly the gouernaunce,” might be called the centerpiece of the seventh Book of the Fall. To begin with, the Chapitle serves to bridge narratives of late Rome (Messalina, Nero) and narratives of the siege of Jerusalem and birth of Christ. Secondly, Lydgate heightens his rhetoric in this passage both by lengthening his originals and by altering his rhyme scheme. He uses the ‘heightened’ form of rhyme royal almost universal to his Envoys, rhyming “attempraunce” and “governaunce” to rhetorical effect (governaunce equals attempraunce); moreover, at twenty-four stanzas, the Chapitle is three and a half times as long as a conventional Envoy. Lydgate extends his rhyme scheme into his Envoy to the foregoing tragedies, so that four more stanzas have the end-rhymes “attempraunce” and “governaunce.” The overall effect of this central and compositionally distinctive Chapitle is to evoke a Golden Age of attempraunce and knythod comparable to that evoked by Diana in Reson and Sensuallyte:

Fortitudo stood tho in his myht,
Diffendid widwes & cherisshed chastite,
[Knythod in prowesse gaff out so cleer a liht,]
Girt with his suerd of trouthe & equyte,
Heeld up the cherch in spiritual dignite,
Punshed heretikes, because attemperaunce
Had in that world hooli the gouernaunce.
(*Fall of Princes* VII.1174-1180)\(^{118}\)

\(^{118}\) To this may be juxtaposed several speeches of Diana’s on King Arthur and the Golden Age of Chivalry, for instance, this one:

In tyme of the kyng Arthour,
The noble, worthy conquerour,
Whom honour lyst so magnyfye,
For of fredam and curtesye,
Of bounte, and of largesse,
Tellingly, Lydgate divides the Chapitle into three groups of eight stanzas: eight stanzas on the “olde world,” eight stanzas on the entry of the vices (echoing what we have just seen at VII.1104ff in the adapation of Boccaccio’s diatribe against Gluttony), and then eight stanzas on the figurative recurrence of the Golden Age in the figure of John the Baptist. The middle stanzas on the entry of the vices reiterate yet again the myth of Saturn’s fall and of the reign of Jupiter. Lydgate relies frequently on Ovid in his execution of the Fall, and the middle stanzas of his Chapitle echo the motif from *Metamorphoses* I of the descent from the “golden” to “leaden” world:

This goldene world long while did endure,
Was non allay in that metal seene,
Til Saturn cesid, be record of scripture;
Iubiter regned, put out his fadir cleene,
Chaunged Obrison into siluer sheene,
Al up-so-doun, because attemperaunce
Was set aside and lost hir gouernaunce.

(*Fall of Princes* VII.1188-1194)

and so on. “[U]psodoun” (cf. VII.1234) is also a recurrence from *Reson and Sensuallyte*.

As we have seen, another feature of Lydgate’s Golden Age, of particular interest in the present context, is its freedom (as it were) from the *tirannye* of Venus. A classic antifeminist passage in the initial eight stanzas on the Golden Age bears this out:

Of wast in clothyng was that tyme non excesse,
Men myhte the lord from his soget knowe,
A difference maad tween pouert & richesse,

Of manhode, and [of] high prowesse,
To remembre all[e] thinges …

(*Reson and Sensuallyte* 3141-3147)

*Reson and Sensuallyte* does, admittedly, convey a more positive view of chivalric love than does the *Fall of Princes*. Diana laments that “love was tho [sc. in the Golden Age] so pure and fre./Grounded on al honeste” (*Reson and Sensuallyte* 3167-3168).
Tween a princesse & othir statis lowe,
Of hornyd beestis no boost was than Iblowe,
Nor countirfet feynyng, because attemperaunce
Hadde in that world hooli the gouernaunce.
*(Fall of Princes VII.1202-1208)*

The “hornyd beestis” and “countirfet feynyng,” in line with Lydgate’s lyrical
pronouncements on subject, refer to feminine behaviour and deportment. They accord,
therefore, with Lydgate’s first presentations of women as ‘Venusian,’ including the
famous stanzas on the Malice of Women in the first Book of the *Fall*.

Again, the Present Age is “Lik gery Venus, because attemp[e]raunce /Was set
aside & lost hir gouernaunce” (*Fall of Princes* VII.1242-1243). The image of the moon,
epitome of temporal *unstablenesse*, re-appears to characterize the Present Age. There are
fully two references to the moon in Lydgate’s Chapitle on the Golden World. At
VII.1226, “[t]he moone is mutable of hir condicioun,” and then, eight lines down, “[t]he
moone is mutable, ful of duplicite,/Lik to this world.” This, then, is the world, the age,
or the time of the moon: figuratively, this is the reign of the *mutable* and duplicitous
Goddess Venus. In this Present Age, the virtues have been exiled—

Out of ther court ban[y]shed was prudence,
Fortitudo had non interesse
Geyn vicious lyuyng to make resistence,
Cried woluis hed was vertuous sobirnesse;
Trouthe durst nat medle, abak stood rihtwisnesse,
Put out of houshold was attemperaunce,
With these thre emperours [sc. Vitellius and his descendants] koude haue
no gouernaunce
*(Fall of Princes VII.1258-1264)*—

and Sensuality has triumphed. By contrast, “the goldene world was gouerned *be resoun*”
(VII.1223; my italics). Passages on Venus dominate the first sixteen stanzas of the
twenty-four stanza Chapitle, furnishing a poetic analogue (a passage, as it were, of lyric
stasis) to Venus’ function in the *Fall of Princes*. Venus’ presence in the seventh Book of the *Fall* warrants equation to her presence in *Reson and Sensuallyte*; indeed, as the foregoing paragraphs suggest, in his presentation of the polarity between Reason and Sensuality, avatars of Venus frequently threaten to overwhelm Lydgate’s allegorical construct.

**Conclusion**

Lydgate’s uses the motifs of Venus and of the descent from the Golden Age, derived from the *Echecs amoureux* and commentary, in the *Fall of Princes* to present the present age as debased or “Venusian.” His aim is to characterize the times but also to warn princes against *effecting* the reign of Venus through Sensuality. This suggests that Lydgate views the Golden Age as something that can be redeemed or effected in time, counteracting sensualité. The following two chapters will show how Lydgate’s emphasis on *atemprautnce and mesure* in the *Fall of Princes* at the very least posits the possibility of such interaction. Again, these concepts are to a significant extent borrowed from the *Echecs amoureux* but undergo the influence both of Walton’s Boethius and of Conty’s commentary on the *Echecs amoureux*. *Mesure* is Lydgate’s overriding message in the *Fall*; its exercise is that which tempers the Reason-Sensuality divide outlined in the foregoing two chapters.
CHAPTER 3

MESURE AS GOVERNING CONCEPT IN THE FALL OF PRINCES

This study began by laying out what I see as a central problem posed by John Lydgate in the *Fall of Princes*: the cosmic, and seemingly insurmountable, divide between Reason (*resoun*) and Sensuality (*sensualite*). As I have established, Lydgate bases his philosophic formulation of the Reason-Sensuality divide on the tradition of Boethius’ *De consolatione philosophiae*, notably on John Walton’s Middle English *Boethius*. At the same time, the *Fall of Princes* derives much of its linguistic and allegorical formulation of the Reason-Sensuality divide from the tradition of the *Echecs amoureux*, itself a major post-Boethian text, and from Evrart de Conty’s *Echecs amoureux moralisés*. Elements borrowed from the vernacular world of personification allegory, notably motifs of Venus as Sensuality and of the descent from the Golden Age, irrevocably alter the literary and philosophic fabric both of Boccaccio’s original *De casibus* and of Laurent de Premierfait’s *Des cas des nobles hommes et femmes*.

In Lydgate’s re-stated scheme, this divide between Reason and Sensuality effectively conditions *tragedie*: the prince who loses *resoun*, succumbing to
sensualité, destroys a moral balance both in his own life and in the body politic. The
*
Fall of Princes

* has, for the most part, been read as a static and linear pageant of such
tragic episodes, albeit interspersed with translations of diatribes
original to Boccaccio and with a purported Lydgatean innovation in the form of
moralizing Envoys. However, because the *Fall of Princes* is an advice-giving text, it
follows that some counteraction of the Reason-Sensuality divide might also be a
significant facet of Lydgate’s generic construction in the *Fall*. In what follows, I propose
that Lydgate is outlining a concept that he calls *mesure* as such a counteraction.

**Introduction: The *Fall of Princes*: Active or Contemplative Model?**

Before I begin discussing Lydgatean *mesure*, however, it seems necessary to
make some preliminary remarks on an important aspect of genre in the *Fall*: whether the
*Fall* is primarily a text of the active or of the contemplative life. It is important to discern
this at this particular juncture because of the active/contemplative divide’s relation to the
concept of *mesure*. While Lydgate himself desires for his readers “a maner
contemplacioun” (*Fall of Princes* I.106), the text’s primary addressees are princes,
themselves embroiled in the active life. This contradiction works itself out in the *Fall* at
the level of genre.

Whether Lydgate intends merely to illustrate the Reason-Sensuality divide for
princes’ benefit must haunt any serious student of the *Fall*. In other words, is Lydgate’s
goal in translating Boccaccio’s *De casibus* for Humphrey merely to narrate *tragedie* upon
*tragedie* in the service of furnishing princes with a *speculum* (merour) of the *resoun-
sensualite* divide and of the consequences of succumbing to *sensualite*, or does he seek,
literarily or morally, to furnish some practical scheme to *counteract* that divide? Because Lydgate’s attention to audience is a defining feature of his work in the *Fall*, this central question might also be restated as follows: what is the intended stance of Lydgate’s ideal prince *vis-à-vis* the series of tragedies which Lydgate narrates, or how should he act in response to them? Is he to contemplate *tragedie* to acquire or to maintain princely virtue, or is he to act or practice in some specified way, in response to Lydgate’s Envoys and other active exhortations throughout the *Fall*

The active-contemplative divide that this question establishes is patently reductive: after all, princes must contemplate the virtues in order to enact them—and they must contemplate *tragedie* in order to *eschew* *tragedie* through eschewing the vices. It might, indeed, be argued that princes are the ultimate practitioners of the active life. *Knyhthod* and *disciplyne*, for instance, are frequent expressions in the *Fall of Princes*. On the other hand, whereas Henry V in the Envoy to the *Troy Book* is presented as paradigmatic of chivalry, “rekned for þe best[e] knyyt, …/Stable of herte, with longe perseueraunce” (*Troy Book*, Lenvoye 12, 23), Humphrey of Gloucester in the *Fall of Princes* is (again) portrayed by Lydgate as merely “stable in study:”

> His corage neuer doth appalle  
> To studie in bookis off antiquite,  
> Therin he hath so grete felicite  
> Vertuously hymsilff to ocupie,  
> Off vicious slouthe to haue the maistrie.  
> (*Fall of Princes* II.393-399)

The contrast between Lydgate’s presentation of Henry V in the *Troy Book* and Humphrey in the *Fall* shows the devolution of chivalry in Lydgate’s thinking from a present reality to a vanished ideal.
At the level of defining Lydgate’s primary working method in the *Fall*, however, I maintain that the question of whether the *Fall* primarily models contemplation or action to princes is central. In the first place, Lydgate draws on texts with both an active and a contemplative bent, ranging from devotional lyric to handbooks of ‘courtly’ advice such as the *Roman de la rose*. *All three lives* (active, contemplative, and pleasure-seeking) are a notable aspect of authorial presentation, both in the *Echecs amoureux* and in Evrart de Conty’s *Echecs amoureux moralisés*, hence in Lydgate’s *Reson and Sensuallyte* and in the *Fall* itself; moreover, discussion of the Three Lives as they pertain both to the practice of the virtues and to the relevance of the virtues to the political estates are a feature of Gower’s *Confessio Amantis* and of his *Mirour de l’Omme* (prime sources for Lydgate’s political and moral thought), of Lydgatean lyric, and a structuring feature in the *Fall of Princes* itself.

Secondly, Lydgate uses generic paradigms that are both active and contemplative throughout the *Fall*. Through structuring devices in the *Fall*, such as numerical devices and didactic Envoys, princes are presented with models for contemplating ideal virtue and conduct. In particular, Lydgate’s lyricization of his Boccaccian model, his insertion wholesale of lyrics, moves the *de casibus* model away from the proto-humanist, encyclopedic model to the familiar sphere of didactic and moralizing lyric. This gives rise to further segmentation of Boccaccio’s text, as lyric Envoys and wholesale ‘detachable’ lyrics are appended by Lydgate to Boccaccian morals.

A third argument for the primacy of schemes of the Three Lives to interpretation of the *Fall of Princes* is that consideration of the Lives is an established feature of the proto-humanist ‘advice to princes’ ‘genre’ itself. Unusually in the semi-learned
construct that is the *Fall of Princes*, the premise for contemplating the active and contemplative lives comes directly from a proto-humanist text, Petrarch’s *Secretum*.

The *Secretum* features in the original catalog of Petrarch’s works found in the opening lines of Book Four of the *Fall of Princes*, where it is described as “And a gret conflict, which men may reede & see./ Of his querellis withynne hymsilff secre” (*Fall of Princes* 4.111-112).\(^{119}\)

Fourthly and finally, there is a defining tension between active and contemplative strands in the Lydgate’s chosen genre, or set of genres, and model, Chaucer’s *Monk’s Tale* and Boccaccio’s *De casibus*. On the one hand, both of Lydgate’s significant primary texts, Boccaccio’s *De casibus* (admittedly translated via Premierfait) and Chaucer’s *Monk’s Tale*, stress the contemplative aspects of *de casibus* narrative. In the *Monk’s Tale*, the Monk intends to lament (*biwaille*) fallen heroes; the emphasis is on their static sorrow (*harm*); hence, the genre is avowedly static lamentation (*tragedie*). This emphasis on static lamentation goes hand in glove with what by the composition of the *Canterbury Tales* must surely be a rather hackneyed claim to contemplate Fortune and her works, a claim that fits well with Chaucer’s Monk’s somewhat legalistic persona. There is no greater sorrow, the Monk avers, than to recall joy in sorrow: as the Boethian commonplace has it, “*in omni adversitate fortunae infelicissimum genus est infortunii fuisse felicem*” (*De consolatione philosophiae* 2pr4).

\(^{119}\) For Lydgate’s knowledge of Petrarch’s proto-humanist texts, see F.N.M. Diekstra, ed., *A Dialog between Reason and Adversity. A Late Middle English version of Petrarch’s De Remediis. Edited from Ms Il.VI.39 of the University Library, Cambridge with and introduction, notes and glossary and the original English text. D.Phil. Thesis. Nijmegen, 1968*. As Diekstra remarks (28), there is no reason to suppose that Lydgate read Petrarchan texts through. However, he uses *ideas suggested by* Petrarch’s titles, notably the term *remedie*. 

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The Monk’s stated intent, then, is to depict and to contemplate *tragedie* rather than to act upon it. This impulse to static depiction is replicated in the *Fall of Princes* at the level of poetic choices. For example, the Prologue to Book One of Lydgate’s *summa* describes Boccaccio’s text as a balanced tapestry of *felicitas* and *infelicitas*:

```
Among, this Bochas writith off suetnesse
And off materes that lusti been and glade,
And sumwhile he writt off wrechidnesse,
And how Fortune kan floure & afftir fade---
Ioie vndir cloude, prosperite in the shade,
Entirchaungyng off euery maner thyng,
Which that men feele, heer in this world lyvyng.
(Fall of Princes I.120-126)
```

The characteristic Lydgatean image of “ioie vndir cloude” reinforces this sense of balance. Indeed, when we encounter Boccaccio mid-dream-vision in the Prologue to the sixth Book of the *Fall*, he is engaged in contemplation much along these lines:

```
In his studie allone as Bochas stood,
His penne on honde, of sodeyn auenture
To remembre he thouhte it ded hym good,
How þat no man may hymsilff assure
In worldli thynges fulli to recure
Grace of Fortune, to make hir to be stable,
Hir dayli chaungis been so variable
(Fall of Princes VI.1-6)
```

Derived immediately from Chaucer’s *Annelida and Arcite*, the image of the *chaunteplure* suggests both stasis and contemplation. Lydgate describes how Fortune, Siren-like,

```
... braideth euer on the chaunteplure:
Now song, now wepyng, now wo, now gladnesse,
Now in merthe, now peynis to eendure,
Now liht, now heuy, now bittir, now suetnesse,
Now in trouble, now free, now in distresse,
Shewyng to vs a maner resemblaunce,
How worldli welthe hath heer non assuraunce.
(Fall of Princes VI.8-14)
```
What this presentation suggests is that Lydgate conceives of \textit{tragedie} as a modal or static genre, one whose episodes are to be contemplated in an appropriate emotional state. As Maura Nolan has recently demonstrated, “[t]he critical concept [in Lydgate’s use of the term \textit{chaunteplure} is ‘mingled’ (“meynt” and “entremedlid”). Joy and sorrow are mingled together in the ceaseless turning of Fortune’s wheel.”\textsuperscript{120} I should like to relate this characterization in turn to the Middle French figure of the \textit{chantepleure}, prominent in Evrart de Conty’s commentary on the \textit{Echecs amoureux}. The dominant association in Conty is Fortune’s two tuns. Thus, the French \textit{chantepleure} image mirrors this idea of \textit{entremedlid} joy and fortune. John Lydgate may be said to view himself as presenting a balanced and observable \textit{textus} of emotions—a text designed to be the static object of princely contemplation.

Apart from the \textit{chaunteplure}, Lydgate’s defining images for this contemplative or modal aspect of \textit{tragedie} is the \textit{speculum} or \textit{merour} (mirror). From the outset of the \textit{Fall of Princes}, he argues that Boccaccio and Laurent wrote, and that he follows suit in writing, \textit{de casibus} narrative “[t]hat othre myhte as in a merour see/ In worldly worshepe may be no surete” (\textit{Fall of Princes} I.55-56). The trope of the mirror is invoked some forty times in the text of the \textit{Fall of Princes}, beginning with the Prologue.\textsuperscript{121} It is not used consistently; the word \textit{mirour} has multiple meanings in a late Middle English context. It is partially defined by the \textit{Middle English Dictionary} as “a reflection;

\textsuperscript{120} Maura Nolan, “‘Now Wo, Now Gladnesse’: Ovidianism in the \textit{Fall of Princes},” \textit{ELH} 71 (2004), 531-58.

\textsuperscript{121} In the \textit{Fall of Princes}, the term \textit{mirour} frequently means “exemplar.” See, eg., I.1806 and I.3344 (the \textit{tragedie} of Solomon).
image of God's power; a reflection of God's majesty; (b) a mental image; (c) an account of an event or action, a record.” For Lydgate, however, the mirror image is consistently associated with ‘Bochas’ literary task, itself at once a contemplative ‘mirror’ of and an attempt to counteract Fortune:

Shewyng a merour how al the world shal faile,
And how Fortune, for al ther hih renoun,
Hath vpon pryncis iureddiecioun.
(Fall of Princes VI.151, 155-161)

The mirror image comes to the fore in Book VI of the Fall of Princes.

A proximate analogue for Bochas’ or Lydgate’s stated purpose of showing “a merour how al the world shal faile” is Gower’s description of divisoun in the Confessio Amantis. “Senne of his condicioun / Is moder of divisioun / And tokne whan the world schal faile” (Confessio Amantis 1029-1031).122 The Prologue to Book II of the Fall of Princes reiterates this motive of inducing contemplation of worldly failure:

Olde exaumples off pryncis that ha[ue] fall,
Ther remembraunce off newe brouht to mynde,
May been a merour to estatis all,
How thei in vertu shal remedies fynde
Teschewe vices, off such as wer maad blynde,
Fro sodeyn fallyng hemsiluen to preserue,
Longe to contune and thank off God disserue.
(Fall of Princes II.22-28)!

At the same time, the mirror for princes or speculum sapientiae is an obvious antithesis to the “mirour perilous/ In which the proude Narcisus/ Saw al his face fair and bright” (Romaunt of the Rose 1601-1603). The image of Narcissus is discussed at some length above (at pages 13 and following) in terms of the Reason-Sensuality divide. At

122Cf. Mirour de l’Omm 18373–18420.
the same time, The obvious vernacular analogue for this characterization of falling in love in *Troilus and Criseyde*, whose protagonist “gan … make a mirour of his minde,/ In which he saugh al hoolly [Criseyde’s] figure” (*Troilus and Criseyde* I.56-57).

Significantly, the events of the *Troilus* becomes a mirror of Fortune in which the hero is obliged to contemplate his own and general *tragedie*. Arguably, the passages cited here, both from *Troilus* and from the *Fall* itself, suggest Philosophia’s accounts to the Boethius of the soul’s conversion to eternal truth, rendered here by Walton in his *Boethius*, which is another important source for the *Fall of Princes*:

when þat þou thise false goodes hast seyne
Ful pytly, þan schalt þow know and see,
Be turnyng on þat oþer side ageyne,
The verray myrour of felicite.

(Walton 3pr2)

This sume than whiche sche holdeþ here
So in here þoght remembrynge ofte ageyn,
Sche sekeþ in þat souereyn merour clere
Where euery sothe may singulerly be seyn,
Enforsyng here wiþ labour and wiþ peyn,
Forgeten þing, if þat sche may it fynde,
To put it to þe tresour of hire mynde.

(Walton 4pr3)

These passages reveal Walton’s tendency to gloss Boethius within his translation of *De consolatione philosophiae*. The word *mirour* is not native to these Boethian passages. However, the mirror *topos* demonstrates fourteenth- and fifteenth-century interpretations of the Boethian text. The respective workings of Providence and Fortune are to be contemplated as in a mirror. *This topos* is reiterated throughout the *Fall*. Lydgate’s Envoy to the *tragedie* of Priam is a characteristic example:
Ye proude folkis that sette your affiaunce
In strengthe, beute or in hih noblesse,
Yff ye considre Fortunys variaunce,
And coude a merour affor your eyen dresse
Off kyng Priam and off his gret richesse,

seen how he and [how] his children all
From ther noblesse so sodenli be fall!

(*Fall of Princes* II.6042-6043)

This use of the mirror *topos* is intimately related to Lydgate’s use, derived from devotional materials, of the phrase “inward siht,” the inner vision dulled when *resoun* is abandoned for *sensualite* (cf. my Chapter 1). Chaucer expresses a similar connection in the “Pleintif contre Fortune.” Buffeted by Fortune, the speaker asserts, “Yit is me left the light of my resoun/ To knowen frend fro fo in thy mirour.” In other words, to possess a mirror of the world, or of history, is to be left desolate to contemplate Fortune. Lydgate’s interposition of the terms *merour* and *chaunteplure* suggest two things: (1) that the text is to be contemplated ‘as in a mirror’ and (2) that the text is disposed for contemplation, the term *chaunteplure* suggesting not only *entremedlid* or interposed sorrow and joy but also interposed good fortune and bad.

There is no analogue to this use of the mirror *topos* either in Boccaccio or in Laurent de Premierfait’s *Des cas*. Accordingly, Lydgate’s use of the term *merour* comes straight from the Middle English tradition via Boethius and from Chaucer and Gower to Lydgate; Lydgate is revealed assigning *tragedie* at least partially to the contemplative sphere through his interposition of the terms *mirour* and *chaunteplure*.

This characterization of the *Fall* as a text that is at least partially contemplative should be kept in mind as I proceed to establish as Lydgate’s ultimate object of contemplation an idealized mean or principle of *mesure* with roots both in Boethian (and hence Platonic) and in Aristotelian concepts of measure (*mensura, misura*) and in devotional and biblical materials. I shall also argue that Lydgate uses measured forms and numeric devices to enhance princely contemplation—and meditates on the relation between post-Aristotelian *mesure* and literary form itself.

It might be objected at this point that the *Fall of Princes* is more rooted in a tradition of literary advice-giving, and hence in the so-called *vita activa*, than is either Boccaccio’s *Des casibus* or Laurent’s *Des cas*. In the first place, the connection that I have posited in my first two Chapters to the advice-giving *Roman de la rose*, with its roots in Andreas Capellanus and the ‘courtly love’ tradition, suggests that the *Fall* is at least partially, and possibly primarily, a treatise on the active life. Lydgate’s concern with the *vita activa* as it applies to princes mirrors Evrart de Conty’s discussion of the three estates in the *Echecs amoureux moralisés* (133v48ff). In the poetic *Echecs*’ (as distinct from Evrart’s commentary’s) re-telling of the Judgment of Paris, the three goddesses on Mercury’s cart, Pallas, Juno, and Venus, are interpreted respectively as the contemplative, the active, and the pleasure-seeking lives:

> Qui bien aviseroit la sentence qui est ou fait des troiz deesses dessusdites secretement enclose et ce que poetes veulent par leur estrif entendre, selon la verité, il trouveroit la chose plaine ... nous devons savoir que les philosophes moralx mectent troiz manieres de vies ou de vivre en nostre estat humain: la premiere est la vie contemplative, la seconde est la vie

124 This is also a feature of the poetic *Echecs*.  

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active, et la tierce est la vie delicative ou la vie voluptueuse. (Conty 133v38-44)

The pleasure-seeking life, sensualite, is associated with Venus (“la vie ou ly hons veult ensuier les deliz corporeulx et les plaisances du monde plus que raisons et vertu ne desirent” (134r5-6; emphasis added). The contemplative life is the province of prelates, whereas the active life appears to be that of princes: “La vie active est la vie ou ly hons veult vivre en compaignie et en communité, et raisonablement soy tousdiz maintenir entre les autres en enssivant les oeuvres de vertu” (134r2).

The emphasis on reason and virtue is to be noted. In the active life, resoun is to be enacted in order to avoid sensualite. While the emphasis in this passage is on contemplation rather than on enactment, the style of presentation references the handbook of ‘courtly love,’ a genre of the active life whose primary antecedent is the Roman de la Rose and, through the Rose, Andreas Capellanus and Ovid.

125 “He who is well-apprised of the hidden interpretation [secretement enclose] given here of the three goddesses mentioned above, and who understands what poets mean by depicting their quarrel—this man will find this matter transparent … moral philosophers divide our human condition into three modes of life. The first mode of life is the contemplative life, the second mode is the active life, and the third is the pleasure-seeking life [delicative ... ou ... voluptueuse].”

126 “the life where man wishes to pursue bodily delights and worldly pleasures more than reason or virtue dictate them.”

127 “The active life is the life in which man wishes to live together with others and in society, and it is a reasonable path to strike between the two others when such a man practices virtue.”
Apart from Lydgate’s reliance on Conty, a second major argument for the *Fall of Princes* being a text of the active life is the frequency with which Lydgate uses expressions of the active life not derived or translated from Boccaccio or from Laurent.

Four in particular merit attention here: *bisynesse*, and *disciplyne* (frequently billed as *vertuous discipline*), positive expressions for action or industry, *werkyng*, almost always used *malo sensu* but undeniably a word describing the active life, and *idlenesse*, *bisynesse*’s opposite. Simply in terms of numerical distribution, expressions for the active life greatly outnumber those of the contemplative life and, moreover, that virtuous adherence to the active life occupies a position of privilege in Lydgate’s handbook for princes (Figure 3.1.a).128

This figure is really no more than a list; however, I wish to show the density of these nouns’ distribution in the text of the *Fall*. *Werkyng* and *idlenesse* might have been charted in a similar manner. In terms of numeric frequency, symmetry between positive and negative expressions for the *vita activa* is noteworthy: *bisynesse* mirrors *idlenesse*, and *werkyng* mirrors *vertuous disciplyne*.129 This again suggests that the meaning-dense

128 Other texts of Lydgate’s are similarly concerned with the vocations of other professions. In the Mumming for the Goldsmiths of London, for instance, David is said to dance before the ark:

> With Ephod gyrt, lyche preestis of þe lawe,  
> To gyf ensaumple howe pryde shoulde be withdrawe  
> In yche estate, who list þe trouth serche,  
> And to exclude al veyne ambycyoun,  
> Specyally fro mynistres of þe Chirche [.]  

129 *Disciplyne* in the *Fall* is often specifically a term for *knythod*, where *knythod* means exemplary or chivalric virtue: in his verses on the Kings of England, Lydgate refers to
noun is structural underpinning in Lydgate’s text; in turn, special use of terms for the active life suggests a privileging of the active life.

**Figure 3.1.a  The Active Life in the *Fall of Princes*, Noun Frequency and Distribution**

(bono sensu or neutral : *bisynesse* and *disciplyne*)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>bisynesse</th>
<th>disciplyne</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I My maistir Chaucer dede his besynesse</td>
<td>...Lernyd off armys the famous disciplyne. Off his preceptis yiff we...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...for his labour and [his] bisynesse Was importable his wittis to...</td>
<td>...doth termyne, Hercules thoruh knyhtli disciplyne Profitid so, most manli and...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>And so entierli dede his besynesse That he was slay[e]n, in...</td>
<td>...And be contrarie to vertuous disciplyne, May yiue exaumple to folkis...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...Dede his labour and his besynesse, With many a worthi that...</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...til he fond, doon his besynesse, A bole that were excellyng...</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...And in serchyng dede his besynesse, He fond a place where-as...</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>witnesse, And Dedalus dede his besynesse [Bi sotil craft, &amp; made</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...In dyuers studies doon ther besynesse; Summe can studie to fynde...</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...to hauke he dede his besynesse; Eek onto fisshyng he gretyly...</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...hem cloos he dede his besynesse. Out off his slep whan...</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

“Fifte Herry, of knyhthod lood[e]sterr[.].” McCracken citn. Camelot is described as the seat of *disciplyne* in *Fall of Princes*, Book VIII:

Ther was the scoole of marcial doctrine
For yonge knihtes to lernen al the guise,
In tendre age to haue ful disciplyne
On hors or foote be notable excersise[.]

(*Fall of Princes* VIII.2815-2818)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Raw Text</th>
<th>Natural Text</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>...fairnesse; And secreli dede hir besynesse To folwe his steppis riht...</td>
<td>...Al that partened to vertuous disciplyne? Which I haue lost now...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II ...at the gynnyng off his besynesse, Myhti Saul to hym dede...</td>
<td>...off knyhthod lost al the disciplyne, Forsook[e] Mars and put hym...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...Amyd thy women in vertuous besynesse Occupied,---a tokne of stedfastnesse, Therby...</td>
<td>...So thou obeie his vertuous disciplyne, Truste that he shal restore...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...hir deth thei dede ther besynesse To holde and halwe a...</td>
<td>b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...To gete freendis doth your besynesse, And beth neuer withoute purueiaunce:....</td>
<td>...And treuli preise labour and besynesse; And ageynward, dispreisen folk that...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...Off whiht yuor dede his besynesse, His hand, his eye so...</td>
<td>...Off whiht yuor dede his besynesse, His hand, his eye so...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...craffit he fond off vertuous besynesse Teschewe the vice off froward...</td>
<td>...craffit he fond off vertuous besynesse Teschewe the vice off froward...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...taken heed, What auailleth vertuous besynesse, And what damage the reuers...</td>
<td>...taken heed, What auailleth vertuous besynesse, And what damage the reuers...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...And frowardli he dede his besynesse For to maligne in his...</td>
<td>...And frowardli he dede his besynesse For to maligne in his...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...it to fostre dede hir besynesse: Off othir salari, God wot,...</td>
<td>...it to fostre dede hir besynesse: Off othir salari, God wot,...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...for Nature hadde so gret besynesse To fourme a woman that...</td>
<td>...for Nature hadde so gret besynesse To fourme a woman that...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...yeue hem souke dede hir besynesse, Be God ordeyned, or be...</td>
<td>...yeue hem souke dede hir besynesse, Be God ordeyned, or be...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III ...fare I, which in my besynesse No socour fynde my rudnesse...</td>
<td>...put bak is now your disciplyne, Your kyn exiled and your...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...werkdai wer nat idill, And bisynesse off labour heeld the bridill....</td>
<td>...put bak is now your disciplyne, Your kyn exiled and your...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...his worthynesse, Lacedemonois dede ther besynesse, Such as myhte nat to...</td>
<td>...Studie in bookis of moral disciplyne, Nothyng coueite, but sette ther...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...Than dilligent labour and honest bisynesse; And so concludyng, ful pleylnli...</td>
<td>...He was commytted to the disciplyne Of a gret duk callid...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...heeld the bridel of frutles bisynesse, Condemned in helle to lyue...</td>
<td>...hostage, Gan encerce in knihtli disciplyne, Wex in vertu riht as...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...His marcia actis, his knihtli bisynesse In the</td>
<td>...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Page</td>
<td>Text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV</td>
<td>...To prouide &amp; doon his bisnesse Bi expert knowyng &amp; auysynesse...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V</td>
<td>...Bi my labour &amp; knihtli bisynesse The marcial princis, famous in... ...creede, Takyng exaumple, doth your bisynesse Ay to supporte &amp; meynteene...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI</td>
<td>...quod she, &quot;I see thi besynesse, Of mortal men, how corious... ...The rethoricien mut doon his besynesse, The ground considred &amp; felt...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VII</td>
<td>...To have obeied onto hir disciplyne. Shame for a crepil, to... ...Whil Senec hadde hym vndir disciplyne,-- - His moodir-in-lawe callid Messalyne. The... ...gouernauce. Youthe was bridled vndir disciplyne, Vertuous studie floured in myddil...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VIII</td>
<td>...tendre age to haue ful disciplyne ...tencyne Vnto fourtene to vertuous</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

121
...Techeth the weie of vertuous besynesse, Bi and bi, who list...

...Contrarye to slouthe is vertuous besynesse. Vertuous besynesse, O Bochas, tak...
...slouthe is vertuous besynesse. Vertuous besynesse, O Bochas, tak good heed,...

...auctours of hym determyne,--- His besynesse and occupacioun Set hool in...

disciplyne. Than afftirward in ther adolescence,...

[...

..Assuraunce maad to doon his besynesse; Which thing remembrid gan his...

...fauour Be the popis dilligent bisynesse, Vnto thestat lefft up of...
...founde this ordre did her besynesse. Ther begynnyng cam of deuocioun,...

Moreover, the polarity between *idleness* and *bisynesse* (there are a notable forty occurrences of “*idilnesse*” in the *Fall*) resembles a similar polarity found in

the *Romaunt of the Rose* attributed to Chaucer. In the *Romaunt*, Idleness conspires with youth and lust against Reason:

```
Whan thou hast lost [thy] tyme al [Raison admonishes the Lover]
And spent [thy youthe] in ydilnesse,
In waste, and woful lustinesse;
If thou maist live the tyme to see
```

130 Similar oppositions may be found in the *Roman de la rose* (93), *Second Nun’s Tale*, and *Knight’s Tale* (1940).
Of love for to delivered be,
Thy tyme thou shalt biwepe sore:

(Romaunt Fragment B, 5116-5121)

This again recalls the premise of my first two Chapters that the *Fall of Princes* is a text in the tradition of the *Rose*.

A third major argument for the *Fall of Princes* being a simultaneously a text of the active and of the contemplative life is the heightened importance that Lydgate’s Middle English translation of Laurent/Boccaccio ascribes to formal morals or to Envoys.¹³¹

Again, Lydgate underscores this heightening with his rhetorical introduction of his patron, Duke Humphrey of Gloucester, in Book II of the *Fall*, to mandate the addition of moral Envoys to Boccaccio’s text. I have studied the Envoys of the *Fall*, showing among other things that the bulk of their content is devoted to the active life; I take such examination to form part of a necessary study, regrettably out of the scope of the present discussion. Taken together, at any rate, the Envoys show that the *Fall* pertains as much if not more to the active life as to the contemplative sphere.

Again, the bulk of my discussion of the active life in the *Fall of Princes* is confined to my fourth and fifth Chapters, where I shall posit a textual tension between Lydgate’s privileging of the active life and the outworkings of his contemplative doctrine of *mesure*. However, I consider it a vital point of interpretation to lay out this intersection between active and contemplative impulses in the Fall at this juncture, since I

¹³¹ Cf. McCay, 254, on the importance of envoys, which she views as “some of his finest writing.”
shall proceed to argue that an emphasis on the active life, albeit couched in lyrical or contemplative terms, informs the Fall irrevocably both at the levels of intended audience and of literary genre.

3. II. Lydgatean Mesure: Backgrounds and Concept

The bulk of my present Chapter concerns Lydgate’s overriding philosophic doctrine of mesure: a doctrine with resonance both for the life of contemplation and for the life of action, the latter being more pertinent to princes. Mesure is a governing concept that remedies or counteracts the Reason-Sensuality divide presented in the two foregoing Chapters, positing a solution to excessive sensualite, effectively to tragedie itself. For John Lydgate, a prince and his realm must both operate according to mesure’s dictates to perpetuate social stability and concord.

Among other influences, the concept of mesure derives from Neoplatonic cosmology, from Aristotelian ethical theory, and commentary, commentary, from biblical wisdom literature, and from vernacular ‘courtly’ texts such as Machaut’s dits. In the remainder of this Chapter, then, I shall delineate the abstract (contemplative) doctrine of mesure and discuss outworkings for the macrocosm, or individual soul, with particular attention to FP’s target audience of princes; then, in Chapter Four, I shall explore Lydgate’s particular presentation of the macrocosmic, that is, social, outworkings of the
mesure idea with its various Classical and contemporary sources. I shall then bring this study to a conclusion by showing the particular applications of Lydgate’s conception of a measured *vita activa* to the profession of poets and to the poetic genre. *Mesure* demands response from princes and poets alike; it is, paradoxically the most ‘metaliterary’ concept to be found in Lydgate’s *Fall*.

**Lydgate’s Central Doctrine of Mesure**

In keeping with the method that I have adopted throughout my dissertation, I present my exploration of the Lydgatean doctrine of *mesure* through rigorous documentation of the word *mesure* and related terms that express the active and contemplative lives (*atempraunce*, *mene*, *suffisaunce*). As I did for the key nouns *resoun* and *sensualite* in my first Chapter, I have documented instances in the text of the word *mesure* (*mesour*), showing how they inform Lydgate’s text in a pattern. The term *mesure* occurs in the *Fall of Princes* only eighteen times (Figure 3.2), as contrasted with the analogous term *governaunce* (discussed below)—but each use of *mesure* is in itself significant. It appears that the spellings *mesour* and *mesure* (and in one instance, *meseur*) are used interchangeably both in Bergen’s edition and in the various manuscripts).

**Figure 3.3 Mesure (Mesour) in the Fall of Princes**
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>passage</th>
<th>rubric/ tragedie</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.1105-1106</td>
<td>How Nembroth bilt the toure of babilone to saue him from noyous flodis which for his pride was put fro his magnificence and his toure with sodeyne levene smyten doun.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6197-6199</td>
<td>The preis of Bochas &amp; suerte that stondith in pouert. [Xenocrates]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6987-6989</td>
<td>The lettre of compleynt of Canace to hir brothir Macharie.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3520-3521</td>
<td>Off Balthasar kyng of Babilone and how Danyel expowned, Mane, Techel, Phares</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III.1235-1239</td>
<td>The Compleynt of Bochas Oppon pe luxurie of Princis by examplis of diuers myschevis.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3170-3171</td>
<td>Bochas ageyn thontrowith of Iugis.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3186-3189</td>
<td>And eek Mercurie, born be the flood of Nyle, As writ Lactance, was off Egipt kyng, Onto marchantis dede lawes first compile Off weihte and mesour, to vs[e] in chaffaryng.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>972-973</td>
<td>Thauctour ageyn presumcious [peple and] Princis halding þem-self goddis.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV.2964-2965</td>
<td>Agathodes—Lenvoye</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Geyn God and floodis hemsiluen to assure, The heihte and largesse were off o mesure.</td>
<td>His diete was so mesurable And deuid off superfluite, That his corage he kepe ferme &amp; stable, Fro flesshli lustis he was so attempre:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He is depeynt[e] lich a blynd archer, To marke ariht failyng discrecioun, Holdyng no meseur, nouther ferr nor neer;</td>
<td>And Fido first fond out the science Off mesours and off proporciouns,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In tokne thi power &amp; kyngdam be mesure, God hath hem peised, thei shal no while endure</td>
<td>Vertu conserueth mesour and resoun, Considreth thynges aforn or thei befall, Takith non enprises but off discrccioun, And on prudence foundeth hir werkes all; Ay to hir counsail attempraunce she doth call, Warli prouydyng in hirsilff withynne The eende off thynges toforn or she begynne.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ech thyng be lawe stood vnder gouernaunce, Marchantis be mesour &amp; iust peis off balaunce</td>
<td>And eek Mercurie, born be the flood of Nyle, As writ Lactance, was off Egipt kyng, Onto marchantis dede lawes first compile Off weihte and mesour, to vs[e] in chaffaryng.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| As bothe wern recleymed to ther lure, Falsli transcendyng the boundis of mesure | Seeth how ther is no mene nor mesure, Wher a tiraunt cachcheth the souereynte!
| 3053-3056 | How Cassander slouh the wif of Alisaundre & hercules hir sone/and Antipater slouh his moder & of other moordres.] | But al for nouht; he herde hir neueradeel: He was to hire, surmountyng al mesure, Lik his fadir vengable & cruel. I trowe it was youe hym of nature; |
| 3731-3732 | [How Duk Brennyus delityng to robbe & spoile ended.] | This myhti tiraunt most surquedous of cheere, With couetise brent in his entraille, Whos gredi fret ther myht no mesure steere, Til that Fortune at myscheeff dede hym faille; |
| V.2432-2434 | How Alisaundre ballas kyng of Surre for extorcioun pride and vnkyndenesse deied atte mischeeff.] | Outraious he was aboue mesure, Riht vengable & ful of cruelte, Hatful also to eueri creature |
| VI.3369-3374 | A chapitle ageyn [langelers and] diffamers of Rethorique. | Thes said[e] thyngees be inli necessarie To eueri prudent notable oratour, Nat to hasti nor ouer long to tarie, But to conveie his processe be mesour; In cheere accordyng stant al the fauour: For in pronouncye, who lakketh cheere or face, Of Tullius scoole stant ferr out of grace. |
| VII.1195-1196 | A Chapitle descryuyng the golden worlde, that is to say whan attemperaunce had hooly the gouernaunce | The trewe marchaunt be mesour bouhte & solde |
| 1199-1200 | A Chapitle descryuyng the golden worlde, that is to say whan attemperaunce had hooly the gouernaunce | Abak stood idilnesse ferr from laboreer, Discrecioun marchall at dyneer & sopeer, Content with mesour |
| 1297-1298 | A Chapitle descryuyng the golden worlde, that is to say whan attemperaunce had hooly the gouernaunce | Weel tymed mesour was for his mouth botleer, And his tastour was attemperaunce, |
| VIII.2403-2404 | Bochas rehersith here be vhom Rome cam to nouyte. | Geyn flesshli lustis arme hym in sobirnesse, Voide al surfetis of froward glotonye, Gredi appetites be mesure to represse, |
| 3380-3381 | How Albonyus was moordred by his wif / and how she aftir most vicious was moordred also.] | For short conclusioun biddith men take heede, Thei shal rescuyue ageynward suich mesour As thei mesure vnto ther nei[e]bour. |
| IX.1506- | Andronicus--Lenvoye | Noble princis, ye that be desirous |
Figure 3.3 demonstrates sufficiently the centrality of some concept of *mesure* to Lydgate’s text; moreover, the structuring of these references is of some importance. The first references to *mesure* come in the *tragedie* of Nimrod, whose grand designs produced the fall of Babel. Lydgate’s condemnation of the mighty hunter is characteristically laconic: “Geyn God and floodis hemsiluen to assure, / The heihte and largesse were off o mesure”: the perceived irony, in other words, was that Nimrod’s desire to protect himself from strong rivers excluded God from his scheme also (Genesis 11). The Nimrod retelling is (as it were) bookended with Lydgate’s final “Comendacion of pacience” in the ninth book of the *Fall*, where the nine orders of angels “[a]ffor the Trynyte syng fresshli be mesure” (*Fall of Princes* IX.2404). Along the way, the bulk of Lydgate’s references to *mesure* are assigned to emblematic tragedies (Belshazzar, Rome) and doctrinal passages (the Golden World, the Luxury of Princes).\footnote{In the single instance of the *tragedie* of Belshazzar, the reference to *mesure* is derived from the Vulgate: “MANE: numeravit Deus regnum tuum, et complevit illud. THECEL: appensus es in statera, et inventus es minus habens. PHARES: divisum est regnum tuum, et datum est Medis, et Persis” (Daniel 5:1ff).} This structuring, which takes on a particular urgency as Lydgate moves to discuss tyranny from Book VII onward,
suggests a progression from the Fall through to Apocalyptic consummation both in terms of historical linearity and of moral teaching (*doctrine*).

But what, precisely, is *mesure*? Or how can we determine and classify its nuanced uses in the *Fall of Princes*, active and contemplative? Indeed, is *mesure* a fixed or a fluid term in the Lydgatean corpus? *Figure 3.4* gives an overall impression of Lydgate’s varied usage of the term *mesure* in the *Fall*. But the question of what *mesure means* must be answered partially with reference to the Fall itself and to Lydgate’s output and partially with references to Lydgate’s sources proper for the term *mesure*: both remote (Boethian and Aristotelian tradition, in particular via the tradition of the *Echecs amoureux*) and proximate (generic devotional sources, Gower and, to a lesser extent, John Walton in his translation of *De consolatione philosophiae*).

**Figure 3.4 Approximate Uses of the Term ‘Mesure’**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>literal meaning</th>
<th>as general virtue</th>
<th>sense <em>temperantia</em> or <em>diete</em></th>
<th>without <em>mesure</em></th>
<th>Manner: <em>in</em> or <em>be</em> <em>mesure</em></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I.1105</td>
<td>III.1235</td>
<td>I.6197</td>
<td>I.6987</td>
<td>VI.3369</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

133 The *Middle English Dictionary* lists fully ten definitions for *mesure*, ranging from “the action of measuring; calculation, reckoning” (1) to “the value of something” (definition 5) to “rhythmic pattern or mode in music” (10). The definitions of most value to understanding Lydgate’s use of the term in the *Fall of Princes* relate *mesure* to the contemplation of measure in things and to the active practice of moderation:

7. (a) Proper proportion, balance; ?harmony; after the ~, proportionately; after the ~ of, in proportion to (sth.); bi (in) ~, by due proportion, proportionately; well-proportioned; of even ~, proportional (to sth. in size); kepen ~, to maintain balance; (b)?that which is fitting or appropriate; ?a proper manner or way; a ~, fitting, suitable, appropriate; (c) a plan or design. […]

8. (a) Moderation in food, drink, spending, etc.; Temperance, abstemiousness; ~ and met; bi (in, with) ~, in moderation, temperately; in ~, moderate, mild […]

129
To revert to my first Chapter’s consideration of *resoun* and *sensualite* in light of the *Rose* tradition, Lydgate’s use of the term *mesure* comes from the *Echecs amoureux* tradition, in particular from Evrart de Conty’s commentary on the *Echecs*. Lydgate replicates this usage wholesale in *Reson and Sensualyte*. In this usage, lack of *mesure* is described pejoratively as the property of Fortune, conducive to diversity, not to say to anarchy: Fortune governs “[w]ith-out[e] ordre or mesure/ By a maner ful dyuerse” (RS 58-59). By contrast, the narrator writes of Pallas that “For, fynaly, in hir figure/ Reserved was al mesure.” *Mesure* comes to the fore also in Lydgate’s truncated description of the amorous chess game’s pawns: “The crafty cheker by mesure / Was foure square of figure (RS 6045-6046),” and so on.

On the other hand, in addition to the potential usage of *mesure* derived from the *Echecs Amoureux* tradition, *mesure* is a common Middle English expression for the cardinal virtue of *temperantia*, appearing as such in catalogs of the vices and virtues in such works as the *Spore of Love* and *the Lay Folks’ Mass Book*, cited here:

> The seuent vertu. and þe laste ys  Mesure.  
> þat kepys vs fro vtrage and holhis vs in Euynhede.  
> and lettys fowl lykyng. and lustys of þis flesch.  

> and kepeþ vs in clennesse of þe body and sowle  
> For mesure ys mede to vs in al þat we do.  
> yif we lyue skylfully as goddys lawe vs teches.\(^1\)

---

Lydgate, similarly, uses *mesure* to mean the cardinal virtue of *temperantia* throughout his secular and devotional output. In the *Fall of Princes* itself, in Lydgate’s adaptation to adaptation to Boccaccio’s encomium to Poverty (*De casibus virorum illustrium* I), Xenocrates is said to practice *mesure* (effectively, *temperantia*):

> His diete was so mesurable  
> And deuoid off superfluite,  
> That his corage he kepte ferme & stable,  
> Fro flesshli lustis he was so attempre [.]

(*Fall of Princes* I.6197-6199)

On the other hand, the central passages characterizing John the Baptist in Lydgate’s seventh Book, distinguish between *mesure* (in this context, dietary moderation) and *attempraunce* (Temperance). Each has a distinct role in John’s allegorical princely household: “Weel tymed mesour was for his mouth botleer, / And his tastour was attempraunce.” A central, non-narrative passage (III: Thauctour ageyn couetous Peple) makes this distinction more explicit:

> And thus myn auctour [sc. Bochas], shortli to deuise,  
> Seith how glad pouert stant most in sekirnesse.  
> And of al euel, he seith, how couetise  
> Is roote & ground, with fals extort richesse,  
> Riot annexid, engendryng gret siknesse,  
> Theron concludyng, how moderat diete  
> Set soule and bodi in temporat quiete.

(*Fall of Princes* III.4474-4480)

Again, a possible source for this distinction is John Gower. Lydgate is familiar with John Gower’s elaborate exfoliation of the Virtues, daughters of Reason and Conscience, in the *Mirour de l’Omme*. In the scheme of Gower’s French text (as distinct from cognate terms in the *Confessio Amantis*), Mesure is the sixth of Raison’s seven daughters and gives birth to five daughters: Dieete, Abstinence, Norreture, Sobreté, and
Moderacion. Here, however, we have simply to consider Gower’s characterization of Mesure herself as the virtue of physical moderation. Lydgate uses mesure in the same sense in his presentation of princely duty (a notable expansion of Boccaccio’s account of the Fall of Rome) in the eighth Book of the *Fall of Princes*:

Geyn flesshli lustis arme hym in sobirnesse,  
de al surfetis of froward glotonye,  
Gredi appetites be mesure to represse,  
Out of his hous auoide al ribaudie,  
Rowners, flaterers and such folk as kan lie,  
War in his doomys he be nat parciall,  
To poore doon almesse, to vertuous liberall.  
(*Fall of Princes* VIII.2402-2408; my italics)

In Gower’s *Mirour*, Mesure originates a noble line (“… bonne est Mesure,/ Du quelle naist si bonne orine“ (*Mirour de l’Omme* 16538-16541)—and the analogy between the lineage of the virtues and physical lineage is worth retaining as I shall move to examine the relevance of *mesure* to the political macrocosm in my final Chapter. For Gower in the *Mirour, mesure* is a matter of primary authority, attested to by Holy Scripture, by Nature, and by *auctoritas*:

*Trois choses nous en font doctrine [sc. de mesure]:*

*Primerement sainte escription,*  
*Et puis nature a ce s’acline,*  
*Si fait la beste salvagine*  
*Et tout mondeine creature.*

*...*  
*Qui l’escriptures voldra escrire,*  
*Que les doctours firont escrire,*  
*Notablement trover porroit,*  
*Que du manger om doit despire*  
*Oultrage, et la mesure eslire*  
*Que par resoun suffire doit.*  
(*Mirour de l’Omme* 16544-16554)
Similarly, Gower’s *Confessio amantis* reveals a variety of usages of the term *mesure*, consistent with those usages found in the *Fall*. *Confessio amantis* focuses on the romantic aspects of *mesure*. One presentation of love by Gower is that it is unresponsive to *mesure*:

> And natheles ther is noman  
> In al this world so wys, that can  
> Of love tempre the mesure,  
> Bot as it falth in aventure:  
> For wit ne strengthe may noght helpe,  
> And he which elles wolde him yelpe  
> Is rathest throwen under fote,  
> Ther can no wiht therof do bote.  

(*Confessio amantis* I.20-27)

Genius tells Amans that his failure to guard the senses, and to keep them in check (*reule*), has led to unbridled romantic chaos, that is, to lack of *mesure*:

> For if thou woldest take kepe  
> And wisly cowthest warde and kepe  
> Thin yhe and Ere, as I have spoke,  
> Than haddest thou the gates stoke  
> Fro such Sotie as comth to winne  
> Thin hertes wit, which is withinne,  
> Wheroft that now thi love excedeth  
> Mesure, and many a peine bredeth.  

(*Confessio amantis* I.535-542)

In the *exemplary* story of Theucer, similarly, the recurrent saw that even princes are susceptible to Love is described in terms of *mesure*: “… thogh he were a potestat Of worldes good, he was soubgit /To love, and put in such a plit, /That he *excedeth the Mesure/ Of reson*.”

This presentation of *mesure* is reiterated time and again in the *Confessio amantis*, where lack of *mesure* also associated programmatically with the vices
in general. Speaking of Pride, Genius says that *avantance* (self-vaunting) “is oghne pris … lasseth,/ When he such mesure overpasseth / That he his oghne Herald is.” Avarice is described similarly: “Forthi this king to Bachus preieth / To grante him gold, bot he excedeth/ Mesure more than him nedeth.” Actually, lack of *mesure* in the *Confessio* is defined in an almost absolute sense as the property of worldliness: “‘It helpeth noght the world to crave/ Which out of reule and of mesure/ Hath evere stonde in aventure.’

Gower’s use of the term *mesure* in the *Confessio amantis* derives from, but also contrasts with, Machaut’s presentation in his *dits* and with other texts of the French ‘courtly’ tradition. The key distinction to be drawn between Gower and the French texts is that, in the latter set of texts, *mesure* is an *outworking* of love; love is to be measured and chivalric. *Remede* citations: N'on doit pas si haut monter/ Qu'on ait honte dou desvaler,/ Ains doit on le moyen eslire ... and so on. As White suggests, the formulation of *misura* is not, itself, Aristotelian; rather, the concept of *misura* results from a conflation of ‘courtly’ and Aristotelian concepts of measure. Thus, Conty (and through Conty, Lydgate) are indebted to the French or ‘courtly’ tradition.

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135 One recurrent expression for lack of *mesure* in the *Confessio Amantis* is “out of reule.” There are six occurrences of this term in the text, beginning with the Prologue:

And thus for thei hemself divide
And stonden out of reule unevene,
Of Alemaine Princes sevene
Thei chose in this condicioun,
That upon here eleccioun
Thempire of Rome scholde stonde.
(*Confessio Amantis* I.1111)
Mesure and Attempraunce

Whereas attempraunce is explicitly the cardinal virtue of temperantia in Conty (Conty 104v25: “justice .. qui est aussi des vertus cardinaux”), mesure is a broad principle congruent with Gower’s mesure or Jean de Meun’s mean in the phrase “mean [mesure] eslire.” Again, as Evrart de Conty states, the cardinal virtue of Temperance enables adherence to the mean, that is to mesure, in terms of appetites and behaviours, in accordance with the dictates of Reason:

[actempraunce] nous encline a tenir le moien es corporeles delectacions sans les poursievir mains ou plus aussi que raison ne desire car desirer les delectacions et les poursievir trop plus que les raisons ne enseigne, c’est chose vicieuse et bestial; fuir aussi les delectacions et les de l’autre part du tout ou les desirer mains que raison ne voulsist, ce rest d’un autre point aussi vituperable que Aristote appelle insensibilité … il y a un moien entre ces deux vertueux et loable … a un moyen ou guist proprement la vertu de attempraunce, et c’est de desirer les delectacions amesureement selon la regle et la loy de raison. (Conty 104r17-104r29; emphasis added)136

In this Conty’s scheme, bodily pleasures are to be taken neither too meagrely nor too fully; thus, Temperantia does not mean Conty’s primary model for this is some version of Aristotle’s mean of virtue. The specific source is Book VI of Aristotle’s Ethics.137

136 “[Temperance] inclines us to keep to the mean in terms of pursuing bodily pleasures, pursuing them no more and no less than reason demands; for wanting and pursuing bodily delights more or less than reason demands is vicious and bestial; to flee bodily delights is equally reprehensible and is called by Aristotle insensibilité… there is a mean between these two which is virtuous and laudable … there is a mean where the virtue of temperance is properly situated, and that is to desire such pleasures moderately [amesureement] according to the rule and law of reason.” One might translate insensibilité as “insensibility.”
Recast in the language of the Reason-Sensuality divide, the divide explored in my previous two Chapters, to abandon the mene (practicing excess rather than practicing mesure) is to chose sensualite:

\[ Il \text{ se doit donc tenir ou moien de ces deux tres raisonablement et ly armer du heaume de attrempance sy ne pourra estre en ce deceuz come les autres sont, car celui qui est armex de inattrempance ... se rent come serf de la sensualité, en delaisant raison qui en deust estre dame et maistresse. } \] (Conty 103r45-103v4).

This becomes a particular preoccupation of Lydgate’s third and fourth Books, as tyranny comes to the fore in the stories of Alexander and others. The tragedie of Brennius demonstrates the relationship between lack of mesure and excessive sensualite:

\[
\text{This myhti tiraunt most surquedous of cheere,} \\
\text{With couetise brent in his entraille,} \\
\text{Whos gredi fret ther myht no mesure steere,} \\
\text{Til that Fortune at myscheeff dede hym faille [.]}
\]  
\[ (Fall of Princes IV.4444-4448) \]

Gower presents a similar formulation to Lydgate’s in the Mirour de l’Omme:

\[ “\text{Attemprance est la meene voie/ En jugement qui droit convoie” (Mirour de l’Omme 15312-15313).} \]

In this instance, finding the middle path (la meene voie) is associated

137 virtue, then, is a state of character concerned with choice, lying in a mean, i.e. the mean relative to us, this being determined by a rational principle, and by that principle by which the man of practical wisdom would determine it. Now it is a mean between two vices, that which depends on excess and that which depends on defect; and again it is a mean because the vices respectively fall short of or exceed what is right in both passions and actions, while virtue both finds and chooses that which is intermediate. Hence in respect of its substance and the definition which states its essence virtue is a mean, with regard to what is best and right an extreme.”

138 “With sustained use of reason [raisonablement], he should hold fast to the mean, arming himself with the helmet of temperance. Thus, he will not be deceived as others are, for [by contrast] he who is armed with intemperance … makes himself as a slave to sensuality, leaving reason, who should perforce have been his lady and mistress.”
with discernment (juggement). However, one need not look any farther than the *Fall of Princes* itself, and in particular to that work’s thematically central third Book, to find Lydgate’s implication not merely of attempraunce but of all four cardinal virtues in the preservation of mesure:

```
Vertu conserveth mesure and resoun,
Considreth thynges afofn or thei befall,
Takith non enprises but off discrecioun,
And on prudence foundeth hir werkes all;
Ay to hir counsail attempraunc she doth call,
Warli prouydyng in hirsilff withynne
The eende off thynges toforn or she begynne.  
(Fall of Princes III.1235-1239; my italics)
```

Leaving aside the somewhat vexed question of whether temperantia has in fact become the central virtue by Lydgate’s day, Lydgate’s use of the terms mesure and mene may be characterized as post-Aristotelian. Even if the bulk of Lydgate’s explicitly Aristotelian material is derived from authors such as Evrart de Conty, who makes explicit references to the Philosopher. The stated centrality of attempraunce and mesure to

\[139\] The term mene is not, however, used in this sense in Gower’s *Confessio amantis*. It seems worthwhile to emphasize that what Lydgate is doing is intelligent conflation: his readings of the terms mesure and mene are not replicated wholesale from his sources but represent his own re-formulations of these terms.

\[140\] I take this to be an important aspect of Lynn White’s argument:


\[141\] There are, in fact, hundreds of references to Aristotle in Conty, who also authored the so-called *Problèmes d’Aristote*. Moreover, Lydgate himself uses the figure of Aristotle rhetorically in the *Fall of Princes* (in the story of Callisthenes and Alexander):

```
Aristotiles, bi kunnyng conqueryng
The noble gemme & the most precious flour
Of philosophie, al flour[e]s surmountyng,
```
the *Fall of Princes* lends the work a primary connection, admittedly through the undeniably Aristotelian *Echecs amoureux moralisés*, to what Lynn White and others have characterized as the Aristotelian concept of *misura*. White describes this concept as follows:

The later thirteenth century was saturated with influences stemming from the Aristotelian *Ethics*; before 1267, Brunetto Latini, for example, produced a popular summary of it. By the time he wrote his *Tresor*, aimed at the lay public, the Aristotelian *aurea mediocritas* was combining with chivalric *mesure* to make Temperance the supreme Virtue: “By Temperance a man rules himself, and by Force and Justice he rules others; but it is better to govern yourself than another … The Master says that all the other Virtues are inferior to Temperance.”  

Equally, it should be emphasized that, in much of his explicitly devotional output, John Lydgate prefers the term *attempraunce* to *mesure* when describing the cardinal virtue of *temperantia*. For instance, in his “Exposition of the Pater Noster,” the speaker

… dar nat speke of foure Cardynall,  
Fortitudo nor of attemperaunce,  
Of rightwysnesse oon the pryncipall,  
Wich al policie set in good gouernaunce,  
For wich I caste my rudenesse to avaunce  
So that prudencia lyst to be present,  
And grace also, thorough Goddys purviaunce,  
List to prouyde taccomplisshe myn Entent.  

In fact, *atempraunce* (also spelled “*attempraunce*” in Bergen’s edition) is another key

---

*Wherthoruh he was chose in his lyuyng,*  
*As his maister list for hym prouide [*]  
*(Fall of Princes IV.1192-1196)*

142 White, 203.  
143 MacCracken, Vol. 1, no. 22.
term in the *Fall of Princes*, where it may said to be Lydgate’s most accurate expression for the Latin virtue of *temperantia*. Xenocrates was “[f]ro flesshli lustis … attempre.” John the Baptist is described as “This blissid Baptist, roote of attempraunce, / Set for cheeff merour of al good gouernaunce” (*Fall of Princes* VII.1277-1278). This use of *attempraunce* further problematizes our understanding of John Lydgate’s term *mesure* in the text of the *Fall of Princes*.

In the cases of the *Fall of Princes* and of *Reson and Sensuallyte*, to which the former text is indebted, however, the influence of Evrart de Conty’s commentary on the *Echecs amoureux* is as important a source as Gower for Lydgate’s translation of the term *actrampance* (actrempançe) as *atempraunce* [Conty uses the spelling actrempançe] specifically to mean *temperantia*. *Actrampance* is not a synonym for *mesure* in Conty, even though it operates in alliance with it. In *Reson and Sensuallyte*, following on Conty, Pallas is presented as the embodiment of *attempraunce*:

> First on hir hede, be gouernaunce,  
> A bryght helme of a-temperaunce,  
> Harder than Iren outh'er stel,  
> For to endure and last[e] wel,  
> Which maked was of swych temprure  
> That pollex swerde ne noon armure  
> May do therto no violence.  
> (*Reson and Sensuallyte* 4461-4467)

At the same time, it is an integral part of Pallas’ ‘temperedness’ that her self and raiment are perfectly proportionate:

> For, fynaly, in hir figure  
> Reserved was al mesure  
> That, yif she shal be comprehended,  
> Ther was no thyng to be amended.  
> (*Reson and Sensuallyte* 1100-1102)

Pallas’ demeanour contrasts to that of Venus, who is (slyly enough, since *resoun* and
mesure are presented as incompatible in the *Echecs* “[f]aire a-bove al mesure” (*Reson and Sensuallyte* 4551); Reason is associated with mesure and Sensuality with what may be referred to as lack of mesure. The *Echecs amoureux moralisés* makes this allegorized alliance between sapientia or Pallas (or in Lydgatean terms, if you will, resoun) and temperantia more explicit: “elle avoit en la teste un heaume tres bien fait et de bonne mesure” (103r32-33; emphasis added). Pallas’ helmet “segnefie actrempance, laquelle nous encline a tenir le moien es corporeles delectacions sanz les poursievir mains ou plus aussi que raison ne desire” (104r17-18). Recall that this replicates almost explicitly Evrart’s characterization of the active life. Temperance is fully a virtue of the active life. Lydgate, similarly, uses the analogy of armor (invented by Pallas, it will be recalled) in the *Fall of Princes*. Albeit in a more theological formulation, we find it in Bochas’ list of the virtues in his verbal combat with Fortune:

A man that is enarmed in vertu
Ageyn thi myht to make resistence,
And set his trust be grace in Crist Iesu,
And hath al hool his hertli aduertence
On rihtwisnesse, force & on prudence,
With ther suster callid attemperaunce,
Hath a saufconduit ageyn thi variaunce!
(*Fall of Princes* VI. 254-259)\(^{145}\)

\(^{144}\) Pallas’ helmet “symbolizes Temperance, which inclines us to hold fast to the mean in terms of bodily delight, without pursuing them either more or less than reason desires.” This accords with Lydgate’s gloss on the *Reson and Sensuallyte*: “Debet enim sapiens habere galeam temperancie” (“The wise man must wear the helmet of Temperance.”)

\(^{145}\) This is not, properly, an allegorization of the virtues. Lydgate’s Bochas goes on to enumerate the three theological virtues:

The[i] sette no stoor be thi double wheele,
With supportacioun of other ladies thre;
Indeed, it might be argued that the term *attempraunce* is a flashpoint for correlations between Conty and the *Fall*, one that shows Lydgate conflating Conty’s *attempraunce* with a definition of *mesure* derived from Gower and from elsewhere. Thus, even though it is associated with explicitly with *attempraunce* and not with *mesure*, the symbolism of Pallas’ helmet proves indispensable to defining Lydgatean *mesure* as it enables would-be readers of the *Fall of Princes* to distinguish between *mesure* and *attempraunce* and among *mesure*, *attempraunce*, and *resoun* (as embodied by Pallas in the *Echecs* tradition). Making allowances for some poetic or philosophic ‘slippage’ in Lydgate’s use of key nouns, the case may be stated as follows: *attempraunce* and *mesure* are associated with, or are attributes of, Wisdom (*sapientia*) or *resoun*, as embodied by Pallas.146

**Mesure and the Active Life**

A final and highly pertinent feature of *mesure* that Lydgate may be said to have borrowed from Conty in Conty’s capacity of post-Aristotelian commentator is his relation of the concept of *mesure* to that of the so-called Three Lives: contemplative, active, and pleasure-seeking. This was, in part, my rationale for introducing this section with an

\begin{quote}
Ther trust stant nat in mail[e], plate or stel,
But in thes vertues: feith, hope & charite,
Callid vertues theologice,
Which with foure afforn heer specefied,
hi wheel & the han vttirli defied.
(*Fall of Princes* VI.261-266)
\end{quote}

A parallel passage in Book IX details the armor of the virtues.  

146 Despite this formulation, because *mesure* is such an important concept to the *Fall of Princes*, it seems safe to assume that *attempraunce* occupies a special, if not hierarchically primary, place among the cardinal virtues. On the other hand, Aquinas names fortitude as chief virtue rather than temperance.
overview of Lydgate’s use of texts of the active and contemplative life. In addition to the passages cited above, I cite the following to show that Conty presents the active life as a ‘middle path’ between the contemplative and pleasure-seeking:

La vie active ... n’est pas a comparer a la contemplative dessusdite, ja soit ce que elle soit consonans a raison et a vertu, ainz la surmonte celle en dignité de trop come dit. Et se la vie active est trop plus que l’autre profitable pour suffisaument vivre, et plus a l’home aussi propice et convenable en tant come il est hons, sy ne s’ensuit il pas pour ce que elle soit simplement meilleur, plus noble ne plus digne; et c’est aussi que on pourroit dire que or simplement vaulex que ne fait fer, et toutesfoiz une espee de fer vaulex en bataille mieux que une espee de or.
(Conty 136r39-136r45)\textsuperscript{147}

Whereas the contemplative life is morally superior (a “golden sword”), the active life is an “iron sword” more useful in battle (vaulex en bataille mieux que une espee de or). Hence, the active life is more congruent to the state of princes. This positioning of the active life suggests, paradoxically, that it is more valuable than the.

Reinforcing this notion of tempering, Conty goes on to argue in a familiar vein that the active life best figures forth the intermediate state of man between the beasts and the angels:

... cez trois manieres de vivre vindrent d’une consideracion que les philosophes eurent, car ilz considererent que ly hons estoit aussi come d’une nature moienne entre les bestes mues et les angres du ciel ... selon qu’il estoit en soy hons, et quant a sa propre nature et vraye, selon ce ly

\textsuperscript{147} “The active life should not be compared to the contemplative, even though it is consonant with reason and virtue. But it does surpass the contemplative life in terms of usefulness. And if the active life is more profitable to live sufficiently, and also more fortunate and suitable for a man, given that he is a man, this is not because the active life is simply better, more noble, or more worthy. We should view it as we might view an iron sword as being more useful in battle than one made of gold."
That is, the active life or state of being human ‘tempers’ the other two lives
Symbolically (“nature moienne”). Hence it is a less a difference in degree from the
contemplative life than a difference in kind—more a mean or even a tertium quid than a
position in degree. Obviously, contemplation is the most prized mode of life in
traditional Christian schematics (136r45136v2: “la vie contemplative excede en dignité
de trop, come dit.”) One need only look to the Lydgate’s Rule, the Benedictine, to
encounter a worldview in which contemplation is privileged. But even so, the primary
focus in the set of texts under discussion is not the contemplative life. From its earliest
lines, this is a text addressed to princes, and mesure is the emblematic concept that best
figures the virtue that they must practice.

Mesure and Literary Form

On the literary or allegorical level, this emphasis on the Three Lives, and on the
active life in particular as ‘tempering’ the other two, is reflected in the Echecs, and
especially in the Echecs moralises by a use of tripartite schemes. One most significant
tripartite representation is that of the goddess Pallas. As we have seen, according to
Evrart de Conty, the three Goddesses drawn by Mercury, whom the narrator encounters
in his travels, body forth the Contemplative, Active, and Pleasure-Seeking Lives: the
Judgment of Paris at one level allegorizes the conflict between these modes of existence

_____________________________

148 “These three ways of life arise from a tradition of philosophic thought, for the
philosophers thought that man was also of a middle nature between the dumb beasts and
the angels of heaven … which ordained man to live in communities and reasonably, as it
is said.”
At the same time, Pallas herself represents wisdom at three Levels: she figures (1) the Contemplative Life, (2) human and Divine sapientia, or (3) the cardinal Virtue of prudentia.

Moreover, Pallas is characterized by threefold attributes. While her armor is associated with the Cardinal Virtues (cf. p. 9ff., above), she is also presented explicitly as having three parts (1) to her armor and (2) to her vesture. While Pallas’ rainbow aura, helmet, lance and shield represent respectively Prudence, Temperance, Fortitude, and Justice, it is equally true that her armor proper has three parts: helmet, shield, and lance. Moreover, Pallas’ shield is triangular. Overtly, Conty exegetes the shield’s three points as either (a) the three types of adverse fortune that one may sustain, that is, bodily, reputational, and material, or (b) the three just causes for military force or fortitudo. Finally, Pallas’ garments are tricolor, representing either the three parts of Philosophy or, in (if the pun is pardoned) a slightly stretched analogy, Philosophia’s three positions vis-à-vis Boethius: on the earth, in the heavens, and above the heavens. All of this suggests that Pallas bodies forth all Three Lives and the correct princely or amorous approach to them as much, if not more, than she does the contemplative life.

Unequivocally, Lydgate’s additions to the Fall of Princes mirror this presentation by Evrart Conty of the Aristotelian Three Lives, and of the active life as ‘tempering’ the other two: as being, properly practiced, the province of attempraunce and mesure. Again, Book Three of the Fall is a particular showcase for this idea. To begin with, Lydgate vastly expands and adapts Book Three’s opening debate between Poverty and
Fortune, in part to include references to an idealized ethos of\textit{ temperantia} and\textit{ mesure}. Poverty begins by calling her dominant trait\textit{suffisaunce}: “For suffisaunce in my poore estaat/ Shal to thi chaunges seyn sodenli chekmaat” Poverty’s \textit{measured or temperate} attitude, rather than her poverty \textit{per se}, is what wins her the battle with Fortune:

\begin{quote}
Wherfor Pouert, strong in hir entent,
Liht and delyu[e]re, auoid off al fatnesse,
Riht weel brethed, & nothyng corpulent,
Smal off dieete surfetis to represse,
Ageyn Fortune proudli gan hir dresse,
And with an ougli, sterne cruel face,
Gan in armys hir proudli to embrace.
\end{quote}

\textit{(Fall of Princes III.540-546)}

Fortune had asserted that Poverty had no law. However, Poverty is presented as a figure of right and victory. Nor is it accidental that this passage comes from Lydgate’s third Book, symbolically the book concerned with the Active Life and with the professions in the Active Life.

\textbf{The Music of the Spheres: Post-Boethian Mesure in the Fall of Princes}

Conty’s post-Aristotelian presentation of\textit{ mesure} is only one factor driving Lydgate; we have too to consider interpretations of Boethius’ concept of a measured or tempered cosmos, derived by Lydgate from Conty himself, from Gower, and either directly from Boethius or from Boethius via John Walton. First, in Evrart de Conty’s commentary on the \textit{Echecs amoureux}, the terms\textit{ mesure} and\textit{ amesuree} are key elements in a central digression on the seven Liberal Arts in general and on\textit{ musica} in particular.
Much of Conty’s material is borrowed directly or indirectly from Boethius’ *De musica*, cited as a direct source at 54r27: “sy come dit Boeces.”

While the *quadrivium* arts in the traditional sense are defunct by the twelfth century, Lydgate’s references to them via Conty are at the very least tangible and figurative. Two passages in particular from Evrart de Conty’s commentary on the *Echecs* are relevant to Lydgate’s doctrine of *mesure* in the *Fall of Princes*: the discussion of the octave (*dyapason*) at 58v22ff and the discussion of the music of the spheres at 60v32. It should be recalled that in origin the *ars liberalis* of *musica* is the post-Pythagorean science of musical ratios rather than the modern discipline of music, derived most readily from Boethius’ *De musica* and *De mathematica*; furthermore, certain ratios such as the octave and the fifth are deemed more ‘appropriate’ or ‘consonant.’ That is, they are ‘measured,’ and hence are more in line with the dictates of Nature:

... les sons qui font *dyapason* sont simplement plus *actrempeement* et plus *amesureement* distant et eslongié de celle *equalité* ou de *unison* ouquel ne se peut, come dit, faire *consonancie* que les sons de quelconques autre *consonancie* plus que nulle autre doulce et *melodieuse*, qui soit ne qui *puist* estre par *voye* de nature. (Conty 58v20-58v25; emphasis added)

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This is a partial edition of Conty’s text.

150 As compared to Boccaccio, Lydgate also demonstrates a greater preoccupation with thinkers literally engaged in measurement: for example, Nynus and Zorastre.

151 “Sounds that make *dyapason* are simply in a more measured relationship with that equality or unison more sweet and melodious than any other, which can only be true because it is so ordained by nature.”
In other words, according to Conty’s rhetoric if not according to modern acoustics, the octave (dyapason) is more perfect than other consonances because the two notes sounded in producing it exist in a more ‘perfect’ or ‘tempered’ ratios. That is, the sounded notes of the octave effect a mean, or state of temprure. Conty uses the analogy of the array or spectrum of colors. Black and white, the two ‘extremes’ of color, offend the eye; black has too much darkness (obscurité) and white ‘too much brightness’ (luminosité) to exhibit true mesure. On the other hand, “les couleurs moyennes qui plus amesurement approchent le moien dessusdit plaisent a la veue et ly sont agreeable” (58v30-58v32), with green being especially notable for its quality of mesure (58v33). In a similar manner, consonant intervals, “par especial dyapason” (58v41), are more aesthetically pleasing because more ‘temperate.’ While this is not particularly accurate as musical or mathematical theory, it accords well with Conty’s privileging of temperantia.

Moreover, Boethius’ scheme in De musica, to which Conty is substantially indebted, divides music into three types: musica mundana, musica humana (vocal music), and musica instrumentalis. The first type, musica mundana, is what concerns us here, as Boethius’ threefold division of music is reproduced almost verbatim in Evrart de Conty’s discussion of cosmic music (Conty 60v32). Musica mundana—colloquially, the ‘music of the spheres’—signifies the occurrence of musical ratios, more and less temperate, in nature itself:

les proporcions musicaux dessusdites ont lieu et sont trouvées non mie seulement es sons et es consonancies dessusdites, maiz en toutes les choses notables de nature, selon les philosophes anciens … Car il ne sembloit pas as anciens dessusdis philosophes que le monde peust estre de tel beauté qu’il est, si come dit
I shall cite Conty’s post-Boethian depiction of *musica mundana* here in full to indicate how intimately allied the concept is to Conty’s, and accordingly to Lydgate’s, use of the term *mesure*:

*... toutes les esperes du ciel et les estoilles, leurs vertus, leurs natures et tous leurs mouemens, leurs grandeurs, leurs distances et leurs eslongemens plus ou mains de la terre ... sont mesure par ceste mesure et par telx noble nombres faites et ordenees ... come dit Macrobes ... doit tout estre fait par lois divines et par raison tres bonne.*

(Conty 63v2-63v10; emphasis added)

Thus, *ratio* or Raison, one of Lydgate’s stated highest goods in the *Fall*, is implicated in *musica mundana*. In a Boethian model of the universe the universe is governed by concord or by *mesure*:

*Haec concordia temperat aequis elementa modis, ut pugnantia uicibus cedant humida siccis iungantque fidem frigora flammis, pendulus ignis surgat in altum terraeque graues pondere sidant.*

(*De consolatione philosophiae* 4m6)

That Lydgate was inclined to adapt this model from Boethius and Conty is evidenced by his probable adaptations to *Reson and Sensuallyte*, by passages in the lyrics, and, most pertinently to the present discussion, by interpolations to his translation of Boccaccio’s *De casibus*, the *Fall of Princes*. In *Reson and Sensuallyte*, in what is *
arguably a direct reflection of Lydgate’s reading of the *Echecs amoureux* through the *Echecs moralisés*, Nature is depicted as presiding over the *musica mundana*, possessing

> Power of planetes alle  
> And of the brighte sterrys clere,  
> Euyrych mevyng in his spere,  
> And tournyng of the firmament  
> From Est in-to the Occydent,  
> Gouernance eke of the hevene,  
> Of Plyades and sterres sevene,  
> That so lustely do shyne,  
> And mevyng of the speres nyne,  
> Which in ther heuenly armony  
> Make so soote a melodye,  
> By acorde celestiall,  
> In ther concourse eternall,  
> That they be both[e] crop and roote  
> Of musyk and of songis soote.  

*(Reson and Sensuallyte 263-282)*

Lydgate writes multiple dedicated lyrics on the theme of *mesure*, one of which, entitled “A Song of Just Mesure” by McCracken (MS. B.M. Harley, 2251, leaves 28, back, to 29, back) makes the association between *mesure* and the *musica mundana* explicit. In the first place, as the passages from Conty and Boethius cited above suggest, there is nothing good (*commendyd*) in human production that is not disposed in a manner consistent with *mesure*:

> By witte of man al thyng that is contryved,  
> Standith in proporcioun, plainly to conclude,  
> In old auctours lyke as it is discryved,  
> Whether it be depnesse or longitude,  
> Cast out by compas of height or latitude,  
> By peyse, by nombre, tryed out by equite,

---

154 “Measure is treasure” is a proverb and a feature of the lyric tradition; however, I have not been able to locate any lyric instances earlier than Lydgate.
To voyde al errour fro folkis that ben rude,
Nothyng commendyd but it in mesure be.

(McCracken 61; my italics)

Even more tellingly, Lydgate’s lyric then moves to describe the *musica mundana*:

Mesours of musyk bene the spieris nyne,
Mevid by mesure with hevenly armony;
Lower in erth compas, squyer, and lyne,
Voyde al errours cause of geometrye;
Sownyng of instrumentis, concorde of mynstraleye,
Sette full and hoole be perfite vnite;
Swetnesse of mesure causith al melodye,
By perfit musyk if it in mesure be.

A second characteristic of *mesure* that may be said to be derived from a Boethian model is its privileging of a model of ascent. Concurrently, Evrart de Conty and John Lydgate are indebted to Boethius’ *De musica* for the idea that the soul contemplating divine music or *mesure* ascends through the spheres. In rough terms, the soul ascends through the cosmos to contemplate the sublime or godhead. This model is also used in Augustine’s *De doctrina Christiana* (II) and *De musica*. In Lydgatean terms, this idea is (again) associated particularly with the notion of *inward siht*. Lydgate devotes expanded space to privileged seers such as John the Baptist, figures who ascend to contemplation through *attempraunce*. Note Augustine’s references to temperantia in the *De musica*. FP I.6193 on temperance.

Because the *quadrivium* disciplines are dead by the twelfth century as an area of study, and because Lydgate appears to be interested in *musica* as a figure rather than as a discipline (as to some extent does Conty), I am not suggesting that Lydgate himself made particular use of the *De musica*, even though Conty makes explicit reference to that text. The *De consolatione* is another matter. Lydgate reads this model in part through John Walton’s translation of Boethius’ *De consolatione philosophiae*. In fact, the
congruence between Lydgate’s thought and that of John Walton is attested by Walton’s adaptation of key Boethian passages to include the very term *mesure*, much in the sense that I have been describing it (Figure 3.6).

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**Figure 3.6 mesure and Latin originals in Walton, Boethius**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Walton, Boethius</th>
<th>Boethius</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1m2: noyous besynesse Wiþouten mesure begynneþ to en[c]resse … And to mesure þe mevyng of þe sonne;</td>
<td><em>terrenis quotiens flatibus aucta [sc. mens]</em> <em>crescit in immensum noxia cura</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2pr1: Prudence the ende [of] þinges doþ mesure …</td>
<td><em>Neque enim quod ante oculos situm est suffecerit intueri, rerum exitus prudentia metitur</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2pr5: Thei may not worthi been in no mesure /To be merveilled in youre excellence And litel þing hym nedeþ certanly þat can his presence mesure in þis wise</td>
<td><em>Neque enim idcirco sunt pretiosa quod in tuas uenere diuitias, sed quoniam pretiosa uidebantur tuis ea diuitiis annumerare maluisti.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2pr7: It haþ, if þat the mesure schulde be soght .. Be-twene [hym]self and heuen in lykly-hede,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This table reveals a *glossing* tendency in Walton, where the word *mesure* is inserted to characterize the Boethian model. Walton is seen here using the term *mesure* as a gloss on Boethian passages: passages that describe *musica* and the soul’s ascent to contemplation much as I have outlined them above. As we saw above (p. 4ff.), Walton is a Lydgatean source.

Lydgate’s presentation of some notion of contemplation in the text of the *Fall* comes to the fore in the ninth Book of the *Fall*. This addition to Bocaccio is not accidental, since nine is traditionally the number of the spheres and of contemplation. At the least, there is an aesthetic preoccupation with the planets in the fall—Lydgate’s use of term *speris*, model of perfection, is a nod to Boethian cosmology:

\[
\text{Vpon thastlabre in ful notable fourme,} \\
\text{Sette hem in ordre with ther dyuysiouns,} \\
\text{Mennys wittis tapplien and confourme,} \\
\text{To vndirstonde be ful expert resouns} \\
\text{Be domefieng off sundry mansiouns,} \\
\text{The roote out-souht at the ascendent,} \\
\text{Toforn or he gaff any iugement} \\
\]

(*Fall of Princes* I.295-301)

The author becomes, in some sense, an *exemplar* of the kind of contemplation being described. This outlook is particularly evident in Lydgate’s Commendation of Patience and Envoy to the whole work. In the Commendation of Patience (IX.2375-2379),

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>3pr6:</th>
<th>What schal a wys man wynne hym-self perby</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[Pat me[t]e noght [p]e mesure of his mede Be veyn rumour of folkes audience, Bot putteth all þe meryt of his dede In verrey vertu of his conscience?</td>
<td>3 Quae si etiam meritis conquisitae sint, quid tamen sapientis adiecerint conscientiae, qui bonum suum non populari rumore sed conscientiae ueritate metitur?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Bot as þe lest[e] poynt þat may be þoght … | This table reveals a glossing tendency in Walton, where the word *mesure* is inserted to characterize the Boethian model. Walton is seen here using the term *mesure* as a gloss on Boethian passages: passages that describe *musica* and the soul’s ascent to contemplation much as I have outlined them above. As we saw above (p. 4ff.), Walton is a Lydgatean source. Lydgate’s presentation of some notion of contemplation in the text of the *Fall* comes to the fore in the ninth Book of the *Fall*. This addition to Bocaccio is not accidental, since nine is traditionally the number of the spheres and of contemplation. At the least, there is an aesthetic preoccupation with the planets in the fall—Lydgate’s use of term *speris*, model of perfection, is a nod to Boethian cosmology: Vpon thastlabre in ful notable fourme, Sette hem in ordre with ther dyuysiouns, Mennys wittis tapplien and confourme, To vndirstonde be ful expert resouns Be domefieng off sundry mansiouns, The roote out-souht at the ascendent, Toforn or he gaff any iugement (*Fall of Princes* I.295-301) The author becomes, in some sense, an exemplar of the kind of contemplation being described. This outlook is particularly evident in Lydgate’s Commendation of Patience and Envoy to the whole work. In the Commendation of Patience (IX.2375-2379), |
Lydgate’s overt subject is patience, lowliness, and meekness.\textsuperscript{155}  

\begin{quote}
\textit{Pacience} is
\begin{quote}
Most rennommed be anxien remembrance;  
Of whom the myhti marcial armure  
Geyn al vices lengest may endure.  
Ground and gynnyng to stonden at diffence  
Ageyn Sathanis infernal puissaunce [.]  
\textit{(Fall of Princes IX.2375-2379)}
\end{quote}
\end{quote}

However, the overwhelming \textit{topos}, particularly in Lydgate’s additions to Boccaccio’s Envoy, is not earthly stoicism but rather Christian martyrdom:

\begin{quote}
\textit{Suffraunce of paynemys} hath but an apparence,  
\textit{Doon for veynglorie}, hangyng in ballaunce;  
\textit{But Cristis martirs}, in verray existence  
\textit{List ageyn tirauntes make repugnaunce};  
\textit{Rather deie than doon God displesaunce},  
\textit{Shewed in no merour liknesse nor picture,}  
\textit{Take full pocessioun for euere with Crist tendure.}  
\textit{(IX.2406-2412)}
\end{quote}

Obviously, the reward of Christian (as contrasted with pagan) martyrdom is life in eternity. What is less obvious is how this brand of \textit{pacience} effects contemplation and ascent. Patience is presented in terms of personification allegory as

\begin{quote}
\textit{Cheef founderesse} be souereyn excellence  
\textit{Of goostli beeldyng and spiritual substaunce,}  
\textit{Emperesse of most magnificence,}  
\textit{With heuenli spiritis} next of alliaunce,  
\textit{With lyff euerlastyng thi tryumphes to auaunce,}  
\textit{And ioie eternal thi noblesse to assure}  
\textit{In the aureat Throne perpetueli tendure [.]}
\end{quote}

What this means is that the patient soul, whose \textit{pacience} is here intimately allied with \textit{attempraunce} or with the practice of \textit{mesure}, is elevated by contemplation and by worldly suffering to contemplate the Trinity and the orders of angels

\begin{quote}
Thre iherarchies ther beyng in presence,
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{155}  \textit{Pacience} is a major idea in the \textit{Fall} (37 occurrences), but it becomes most prominent in the ninth Book’s characterization of ascent.
With whom humylite hath souereyn aqueyntaunce,
Wher osanna with deuout dilligence
Is sung of aungelis be long contynuaunce,
Tofor the Throne keepyng ther observaunce
Syng Sanctus Sanctus, record of scripture,
With vois memorial perpetueli tendure …
(IX.2392-2398)

This idea is expressed, finally, in the language of _musik_ and of _mesure_:

The brennyng loue of Cherubyn be feruence,
Parfit in charite, dilligent obeissaunce;
And Seraphyn with humble obedience,
And Ordres Nyne be heuenli concordaunce,
Domynaciones with vertuous attendaunce,
Affor the Trynyte syng fresshli be mesure,
With vois memorial perpetueli tendure.
(_Fall of Princes_ IX.2399-2405)

In a more mundane sense, apart from his reliance on the _Echecs amoureux_ tradition and on John Walton’s _Boethius_, Lydgate is again indebted to Gower for uses of the _musica mundana_ analogy. In particular, Gower uses the story of the harper Arion both in the _Mirour de l’Omme_ and in the _Confessio Amantis_ to express particular views on the nature of the measured cosmos and on the consequent desired relation of the individual to the cosmos and to the _mene_. Arion is also mentioned in Evrart de Conty, in more literal terms (77v42). But in the _Confessio_, of course, Arion is a figure for the poetic self and for one whose literal or figurative craft can achieve political concord: ¹⁵⁶

… wolde God that now were on
An other such as Arion,
Which hadde an harpe of such _temprure_,
And therto of so good _mesure_
He song, that he the bestes wilde
Made of his note tame and milde
…

Which Arion that time herde,
Als wel the lord as the schepherde,
He broghte hem alle in good acord [.]  
(Confessio Amantis Prologue 1053-1058; my italics)

Mesure here means temperance or else rhythm. The musical analogy is replicated wholesale in the Fall of Princes. Thus, music is associated with the Golden Age, with the founding of cities, and with the right practice of policie:

Philisophres of the goldene ages
   And poetes that fond out fressh ditees,
As kyng Amphioun with his fair langages
   And with his harpyng made folk of louh degrees,
As laborers, tenhabite first cites;---
   And so bi musik and philosophie
Gan first of comouns noble policie.
(VI.337-343)\textsuperscript{157}

Lydgate’s emblematic myth for political concord\textsuperscript{158} is this story of the founding of

\textsuperscript{157} In Lydgate’s own Siege of Thebes, the issue is rather eloquence than harmony:

Seith Mercurye / god of Eloquence,
   yaf, be the myght / of heueny influence,
Vnto this kyng / at His natuítè
Thorgh glade aspectês /, that he shuldè be
   Most excellent / be craft of Rethorik,
That in this world / was non to hym lik;
Which signyfieth / to hem that ben prudent[.]
(Siege of Thebes 2221-2227)

All citations from the Siege of Thebes are from the standard edition, EETS. 215-230.

\textsuperscript{158} Jubal is used in a similarly emblematic manner in, for instance, “A Pageant of Knowledge”:

Jubal was fadyr & fynder of song,
Of consonantes, and of armony,
By noyse & strooke of hamors þat were strong.
Fro jubal came furst þe melody
Of sugryd musyk, and of mynstralsy,
Thebes:

The cheeff of musik is mellodie & accord;
Welle of philosophie sprang out of prudence,
Bi which too mensys gan vnite & concord
With politik vertu to haue ther assistance:
Wise men to regne, subiectis do reuerence.
And bi this ground, in stories men may see,
Wer bilt the wallis of Thebes the cite.
(VI.344-350)

In language reminiscent of Gower’s “Praise of Peace,” Lydgate names “mellodie” and “accord” as music’s defining characteristic. Also, like Gower’s Arion, music is a powerful metaphor for political concord, deriving its authority from myth: “[a]ccord in musik causith the mellodie;/ Wher is discord, ther is dyuersite, / And wher is pes is prudent policie” (I.351-357). This metaphor is contrasted with the person of Fortune, whom Boccaccio is addressing at this point in Book VI. Fortune represents the opposite of political, figuratively of musical, concord ladi of contekis & of stryues.

Similarly, Gower in the Prologue to the Confessio Amantis contrasts Arion’s age with a potential or actualized age of lack of mesure:

I not what other thing is good.
Bot wher that wisdom waxeth wod,
And reson torneth into rage,
So that mesure upon oultrage
Hath set his world, it is to drede [
(Confessio Amantis 1078-1083)

Exploring this episode in conjunction with an analogous passage in the Mirour de l’Omme furnishes further insight into Gowerian mesure as digested and, potentially, as perpetuated in Lydgate’s Fall of Princes. While the harper in question in

So procedyng down fro man to man
Practyke of concorde, as I haue told, began.
the Mirour is not Arion but King David, “essamplour ... As autrez Rois il fuist mirour” (Mirour de l’Omm 22873, 22883). The analogies associated with harping are much more concrete in the Mirour than they are in the Confessio Amantis, in that the ideal king is described as tuning his harp:

\[
\begin{align*}
Au bon harpour falt de nature \\
Mettre en accorde et atemprure \\
Les cordes de sa harpe, ensi \\
Qe celle corde pardessure \\
Ne se descorde a la tenure. \\
Et puis qu’a l’un et l’autre auci \\
Face acorder la corde enmy \\
\end{align*}
\]

(Mirour de l’Omm 22897-22898)

The dense rhyme “nature/ atemprure” suggests, in line with Gower’s Boethian inheritance, that it is in the nature of the good harper to be temperate or to act in line with his harp’s atemprure or mesure. On the other hand, Gower is here expressing the ideal state of the political macrocosm. As in the Confessio Amantis, peace, or the counteraction of divisoun, is what as expressed as a good; however, that it is explicitly kingship that is being addressed reveals the link between mythic music, mythic kingship, and mesure—a link that Lydgate reinforces in the Fall of Princes. Gower, in a similar vein, continues,

\[
\begin{align*}
... convient a luy [sc. au roy] \\
Qu’il de Musique la droiture \\
Bien garde; et lors ad tout compli, \\
Dont cils q’aront la note oÿ \\
S’esjoueront de la mesure, \\
\end{align*}
\]

(Mirour de l’omme 3333-3333; emphasis added)

———

159 Lydgate uses the term temprure once in Reson and Sensuallyte: Pallas’ helmet “maked was of swych temprure” (Reson and Sensuallyte 1191-1192). Again, significantly, the gloss on this line reads, “Debet enim sapiens habere galeam temperantie.”
There is thus no seam in Gower’s model between the music of the spheres and political atempiture, and Lydgate often appears inclined to replicate this seamlessness at some level. [Story of Amphion in Siege of Thebes—melody/rhetoric builds Thebes.]\(^{160}\)

Sometimes, Lydgate’s formulation of this idea is negative. In the “Song of Just Mesure,” lack of mesure is explicitly invoked as the cause of the destructions of Troy and Rome:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Knyghthood in Grece and Troye the Cite} \\
\text{Took hys principlys, and next in Rome toun,} \\
\text{And in Cartage, a famous greet cuntre,} \\
\text{Recoord of Hanybal and wourthy Scipioun;} \\
\text{The greete debaatys and the divisioun} \\
\text{Among these kyngdammys by marcial labour,} \\
\text{Fynal cause of ther destruccioun,} \\
\text{Was fawte of vertu and lakkyng of mesure.}^{161}
\end{align*}
\]

Gower expresses similar ideas on the fall of Rome in the *Mirour de l’omme.*

This relates to passages on the falls of Rome and Troy in the *Fall of Princes:* the Envoy to Book Two, for example, although the emphasis there is slightly different.

John of Salisbury’s *Policraticus* presents a genuinely theoretical source for Lydgate’s (and arguably for Gower’s) politicization of the term mesure. *Mensura* (initially from the analogous term in the Vulgate) is, in fact, a recurrent term in the *Policraticus.* Bergen/Pearsall on Lydgate’s use of Policraticus.

**Biblical Mesure**

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\(^{160}\) Ebin, 45: “In the context of Book VI, Lydgate’s treatment of the Amphion legend is even more significant. The reference to Amphion at the outset marks the conclusion of the debate between Boccaccio and Fortuna and forms the main point of Boccaccio’s defense … While “fair langage” and “fresssh ditees” first brought humans into harmony, Fortuna, in contrast introduced strife and discord.”

\(^{161}\) Gower expresses similar ideas on the fall of Rome, in *Mirour.*
Lydgate tends to adapt the idea of *mesure* as political concord in texts with a religious bent. For example, in the important hymn paraphrase “*Gloriosa dicta sunt de te,*” Lydgate describes the redeemed city as inherently measured or harmonic. The celestial Jerusalem is contrasted to Troy and Rome: “al þeyre booste may nowe be layde adowne/ So gloryous thinges beo sayde and song of þee.” The redeemed Jerusalem is aesthetically perfect:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Þou art þe Cytee which in þappocolips} \\
\text{Whylome Saint Iohan saughe pauyed al with golde} \\
\text{Whos gret beaute may not beo sayde ne tolde,} \\
\text{Superlatyf bove oþer of degree,} \\
\text{Called þe qweene of þat hevenly holde,} \\
\text{How gloryous thinges beon song and sayde of þee.}^{162}
\end{align*}
\]

Tellingly, Lydgate’s theoretical and practical *mesure* derives from Old and New Testament concepts of *mensura*. Biblical use of terms such as *pondus* and *mensura*, together with these terms’ exegesis in tradition and contemporary thought, are as relevant to any conceptualization of Lydgatean *mesure* as are the Aristotelian and Boethian models outlined above. In medieval exegesis, the Boethian concept of a musical or measured cosmos, outlined above, is offset by Old Testament presentations of God measuring or disposing the world and human life. Such passages are a feature in particular of biblical wisdom literature.

The passages of immediate relevance to Lydgate, however, are the account of Wisdom present at the creation of the world (Proverbs 8) and, most explicitly, use of the terms *pondus* and *mensura*. In Wisdom 11, “*omnia mensura et numero et pondere disposuisti*” (Wisdom 11:21). Lydgate echoes the sentiment of his passage in the lyric

\[\text{McCracken , vol. II, no. 85.}\]

162
entitled by McCracken “A Song of Just Mesure.” Because God has disposed the cosmos as measured, the work of man should ideally be measured as well:

By witte of man al thyng that is contrived
Standith in proporcioun, plainly to conclude,
In old auctours lyke as it is discryved,
Whether it be depnesse or longitude,
Cast out by compas of height or latitude
By peyse, by nombre, tryed out by equite,
To voyde al error fr o folkis that ben rude,
Nothyng commendyd but it in mesure be.
(“A Song of Just Mesure” 1-8)

Of course, the injunction here is ethical rather than spiritual; however, Lydgate goes on to say in this lyric that the *reason* for this privileging of measure in the ethical scheme is that the world itself has been disposed in measure. In this particular chain of influence, it is Conty who initially suggests that Boethian (and hence post-Platonic) *musica mundana* is one with a more biblical notion of measure, relating cosmic mesure specifically to the creation of the world and to the passage on the creation of the world in the Book of Wisdom:

… Platon [dit] que Dieu qui est tres bon fit le monde tres bon, tres bel, et tres parfaut affin que l’oeuvre fut a l’ouvrier semblable et proportionee, car de parfait ouvrier et bon vient parfaite euvre et bonne. Et ce semble estre que l’Escripture dit quant elle dit que Dieu fit toutes choses par poiz, par nombre et par mesure” (Conty 63v11-63v14).163

**Mesure and the (Princely) Microcosm**

Thus, Lydgate’s assertions that *mesure* is the center of human conduct and action arise from his model not merely of the world, but of the individual human soul, as

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163 “Plato says that God, who is very good, made the world very good, very beautiful, and very perfect, so that the work was made similar and proportionate to him who wrought it. And this seems to be what Scripture means when it says that God made all things in weight, number, and measure.”
essentially measured. Both the *Echecs amoureux* tradition and Lydgate’s translation of the *Echecs, Reson and Sensuallyte* thus argue that measure is the property of man. In Evrart de Conty’s commentary on the *Echecs,*

“*deliter … ameesurement en ensuissant les mettes de raison, c’est chose propre et naturele a home en tant come il est hons et qu’il est bien en nature ordenez, mais ly deliter trop et exceder en ce les mectes de raison, c’est aussi come oster la difference qui est entre home et beste.*

(104r30-34)\(^{164}\)

Enjoyment (*deliter*) within measure, or in moderation (*ameesurement*), is proper to man’s nature; however, to practice immoderation (*deliter trop*) or *sensualite* is to remove the distinction between man and beast. As Aquinas puts it, “Honor and beauty are especially ascribed to temperance, not on account of the excellence of the good proper to temperance but on account of the disgrace of the contrary evil from which it withdraws us, by moderating the pleasures common to us and to the lower animals.”\(^{165}\)

*Reson and Sensuallyte* makes the theistic roots of this model explicit:

God gaf to man hevenly intelligence
With heos aungelles þat beon so hye in heven,
Feoling with beestis more excellence,
Lyving with trees as clerkis cane it neven,
Knowing of ellementis þe thondres leven,
Beinge with stoones excepte he is chaungeable,
To knowe þe Kyng above þe sterres seven
Sith He to hem of nature is semblable

(*Reson and Sensuallyte* 178-184) really?

In other words, man’s “hevenly intelligence” leads him back to “þe Kyng above

\(^{164}\) “… taking one’s pleasures … in measure [*amesurement*], and following the dictates of Reason, is [right and natural to man], seeing that he is a man and behaving according to natural order—but taking such pleasure excessively and exceeding the dictates of reason is to [blur or remove] the distinction between man and beast.”

\(^{165}\) SSP q 141
the sterres seven,” where he finds perfect congruency for his nature.

Lydgate’s primary focus in the *Fall of Princes* is admittedly ethics rather than abstract contemplation. Court texts such as Machaut’s and Gower’s—of which the *Fall of Princes* is arguably an outgrowth—present *misura* as a facet of chivalry.

Cosmic outworkings notwithstanding, Lydgate’s *mesure* is formulated most often in his oeuvre at the level of practical moral instruction. Again, the lyrics are the best source we have for the theory, in particular, those that conform to the traditional “Measure is Treasure” typology. Measure is Treasure, Song of Just Measure. FP. These passages demonstrate Lydgate’s thorough-going moral pragmatism and the grounding of the *Fall of Princes* in doctrine of the active life.

**Suffisance: Mesure in Action**

In the *Fall of Princes*, the ideation of *mesure* is ballasted by the term *suffisance*, whose earliest analogue is *sufficientia*, sufficiency, humble living, or even poverty: *sufficientia* is used exclusively by Boethius in the third book of *De consolatione philosophiae* (3pr9,. 3pr18, 3pr10, 3pr11). In the Boethian tradition, it becomes more important through Reason’s speech in the *Romance of the Rose*.

*Souffisance* is also a common usage in Machaut and Christine de Pisan, among others. Most notable in this context is this passage in the *Echecs amoureux*, quoted in Galpin:

*ET comment quil voit mette paine*
*Quil ai souffissance en soy plaine*
*Car souffissance seulement*
In the Pageant of Knowledge, Lydgate counsels that men “[w]ith hoole herte, body, wyll, & mynde/ … be content with suche as þey here fynde—and this, effectively, is suffisaunce. The Middle English term suffisaunce may come from Lydgate to Chaucer, who uses it to translate souffisance in the Romaunt of the Rose (4726, 5581, 5583 [complete])/ As we saw for the term sensualite, however (p.25, above), John Walton’s influence should be considered. Walton’s use of suffisaunce is, again, a glossing accretion to his translation of De consolatione philosophiae.

Thus, Lydgatean suffisaunce has distinct sources and characteristics, especially in the Fall of Princes. In the first place, suffisaunce is natural, that is, it conforms to nature. Reason tells the Lover in the Romance of the Rose that suffisaunce is paramount (nature is content with little). This reappears in Lydgate’s post-Boccaccian characterization of Nature in Book Three of the Fall as “Nature þat is content with litil thyng/ The wise, war, þe circumspect goddesse” (Fall of Princes III.4236-4237).

Lydgate uses the same expression in the Pilgrimage of the Life of Man. Similarly, in the seventh Book of the Fall, “Nature in soth with litil is content.” John the Baptist in the same Book is Lydgate’s ultimate exemplar of traditional suffisaunce:

\[166\] Conty on ts suffisaunce.

\[167\] Cf. Mirour 16561-16562: “Nature aussi se tient content,/Qant om la paist petitement.”
Thus Baptist Iohn bi his *moderat foode*
The cheef tryumpthe of abstynence hath begunne,
This patriark[e] rekned oon the goode,
*Content with litil, al suffisaunce hath wonne,*
As Diogenes in his litil tonne
Heeld hym appaied, because attemperaunce
Hadde of his houshold al the gouernaunce.
*(Fall of Princes VII.1286-1292; my italics)*

Apart from being natural, Lydgatean *suffisaunce* is holy and eternal. It is even
Edenic as Adam and Eve: “nouther feele trouble nor siknesse,/ But in that place haue
alwey hertis ese / And suffisaunce off al that myht hym plese” (1.551-553). Holiness of
suffisaunce too—one keeps returning to the figure of JtB. Suffisaunce is eternal. Eternal
sufficiency:

I in Iesu, is ioue that neuere shall ende,
E signyfieth euerlasting suffisaunce.
*(Testament 23)*.

**The Problem of Princely Suffisaunce**

The clear objection to this paradigm that the princely lifestyle is clearly not temperate in
a traditional sense. Princes do not practice *temperantia* in the sense laid down in
Lydgate’s paradigm of John the Baptist. They cannot practice Boethian sufficiency.
However, there are various answers to this objection.

In the first place, the term *suffisaunce* in the *Fall of Princes* is presented as
working in tandem with, or as juxtaposed to, the term *poverte*. This tension is apparent,
for instance, in the dialog between Glad Poverte and Fortune in Book Three of the *Fall:*

A mene is best, with good[e] gouernaunce;
To mekil is nouht, nor ouer-gret plente:
Gretter richesse is founde in suffisaunce
Than in the flodis off superfluyte.
And who is content in his pouerte
And gruchchith nat, for bittir nor for soote,
What-euer he be, hath Fortune vndir foote,

Secondly, suffisaunce in princes means princely sufficiency—it means in effect, sovereignty. Suffisaunce also means sovereignty (a kind of pun), beginning with the tragedie of Adam and Eve, who have “suffisaunce off al that myht hym plese.”

The sort of poverty described in the Benedictine Rule and in De contemptu becomes emblematic.\(^{168}\) add.

debet fateri ab uno principio per aequalem illi ac similem speciem divitiis bonitatis eiu qua inter se unum et de uno charissima ut ita dicam charitate junguntur omnia facta esse atque condita quaecumque sunt in quantumcumque sunt. (Augustine, De musica 56b)

**Mesure and Exemplarity**

Ultimately, while it is vital to define and to apply Lydgate’s theory of cosmic mesure in the *Fall of Princes* qua theory, it is equally important to stress the function of

\(^{168}\) Perhaps the most compelling response to the objection that princes cannot, in fact, practice suffisaunce is the emergence in a late fourteenth-century context of a measured virtue set: that is, of a virtue set where every virtue is grounded in, and/or is a kind of subspecies of temperantia. Taking as an important example Evrart de Conty’s commentary on the *Echecs amoureux*: each of Pallas’ four Cardinal attributes teaches maintenance of the mean of virtue rather than its respective virtue: that is, Prudence “ensaigne en toutes oeuvres a trouver le moien ouquel la veru gist” (Conty 103v44-104r1), the wearer of the helmet of Temperance “se doit tenir ou moien” (104r25), Justice “doit … aler le droit chemin sans enclener ne a destre ne a sinistre” (104v37; emphasis added), and even Fortitude “deffent le sage et garde que riens ne ly puisst nuire ne troubler son courage, en tel maniere au moins qu’il puisst estre mis hors du chemin de raison.” Reading through this model, it becomes apparent that princes do not need to practice paupertas—or even Boethian sufficientia. By the period of the *Fall of Princes*, the notion that temperantia relates to, or even is, caritas has a mixed heritage. On the one hand, such conflation typifies medieval Aristotelian thought. According to Lynn White, William of Auxerre reaches the conclusion that caritas and temperantia are, in fact, identical.\(^{168}\) At the same time, Platonic texts such as Augustine of Hippo’s *De musica* draw similar connections.
literary exemplarity in promulgating mesure. Emblematic tragedies inform Lydgate’s central doctrine of mesure, in the Fall of Princes, in Reson and Sensuallyte, and in those of Lydgate’s lyrics which are most congruent to the Fall in terms of moral or doctrine.

In Reson and Sensuallyte, the representative tragedie is that of Phaethon, who “koude no mesure”.169 “Make eke thy merour of Pheton [Diana tells the narrator]/ And by example of him be war/ When he lad his fadres char” (Reson and Sensuallyte 4201-4202). Phaethon’s defining flaw is characterized as “presumpson” (Reson and Sensuallyte 4206). He fell

… thogh vnhappy aventure,
"Be-cause he koude no mesure“170
Nouther a-twixen hoot nor colde,
To take on him the gouernaunce,
For which, thogh hys vnhappy chaunce,
As poeys lyst to descryve,
For he ne koude hys stedys drive,
(Reson and Sensuallyte 4203-4210)

Lydgate’s habit of dense rhyming, learned possibly from French authors such as the author of the Echecs amoureux, is to be noted here in the pairs “aventure/ mesure” and “chaunce/gouernaunce” (see discussion of gouernaunce below; cf. the dense rhyming of “atempraunce” and “gouernaunce” in Lydgate’s depiction of the Golden Age in the Fall of Princes, mentioned elsewhere in this study). Obviously, this is also a common Gowerism:

169 Similarly, Chaucer’s Phaethon “koude no gouernaunce” (VII, 53).

170 Cf. Clerk’s Tale: wedde men ne knowe no mesure,/ Whan that they finde a pacient creature.
It helpeth noght the world to crave,
Which out of reule and of mesure
Hath evere stonde in aventure
Als wel in Court as elles where

(Confessio Amantis 2265-2268)

Similar pairings occur in the Fall of Princes in the last Book’s Comendacion of Pacience:

Stable of ther cheer, visage and contenaunce,
Neuer to varye for non aventure;
Lik Cristis champiouns perpetueli tendure
Affor the Trynyte syng fresshli be mesure,
With vois memorial perpetueli tendure.

(Fall of Princes IX.2401-2405)

Both pairings imply a correlation between mesure and aventure: for a prince to fail in mesure or its political subsidiary, governaunce, is for him to succumb to Fortune (aventure). The second pairing suggests, equally, that Phaethon, driving his father’s chariot, is out of his league, which gives his story particular relevance to the multiple tragedies of and exhortations against “hith clymbing” that inform the Fall of Princes.

Above all, Phaethon’s failure is a failure to keep the middle way: in Aristotelian language, to contemplate the mene or mesure. In its in original context in the Echechs amoreux/Reson and Sensuallyte, Phaethon’s plight as narrated by Diana mirrors the Narrator’s own re-enactment of the Judgment of Paris. To have chosen Pallas, with her shield of attempraunce, would have been to choose the mean: as it is, the Narrator chooses Venus or Sensuality and eschews mesure in consequence.

The story of Phaethon that Lydgate appears to translate from the
Echecs amoureux attributes the demigod’s fall to “presumpsion,/ By dispositio[n] fatal” (4216-4217) and to “lak of counseyl” (4218, cf. 4226). These traits, which may loosely be translated as ‘rashness,’ characterize Reson and Sensuallyte’s Narrator, cite. At the same time, however, hasti dome (rash judgment) is an important topos in the Fall, cite. Moreover, even in the absence of a complete version of the French original, it can be assumed that Lydgate is equally indebted to account of Phaethon in the Confessio Amantis, accounts as noteworthy here for the similarity in wording that it bears to Lydgate’s Reson and Sensuallyte as for its parallel moral against high climbing and emphasis on governaunce

… thus be Phebus ordinance
Tok Pheton into governance
The Sonnes carte, which he ladde …

171 The hard-headed narrator’s humorous reply demonstrates his servitude to Venus and ultimately tragic bent:

With y-charus ouer the se,
Nor with Pheton al my lyve
The chare of Phebus for to dryve,
Nor for to wynne the flees of golde,
Of which to forn ye han me tolde.
Of al her foly wilful dede
I wil take no maner hede;
But I desire the knowleching
Of the hevene and his mevyng [.]
(Reson and Sensuallyte 1404-1412)

172 Admittedly, the gloss on the CA is about counsel—but does not preclude a powerful political moral:

Hic contra vicium necgligencie ponit Confessor exemplum; et narrat quod cum Pheton filius Solis currum patris sui per aera regere debuerat admonitus a patre vt equos ne deuiarent equa manu diligencie refrenaret, ipse consilium patris sua negligencia preteriens, equos cum currum nimis basse errare permisit; vnde non solum incendio orbem inflammandit, set et seipsum de curru cadentem in quoddam fluuium demergi ad interitum causavit.
Gower’s account also uses the language of Reason and Sensuality: “For he no reson wolde knowe,/ This fyri carte [Pheton] he drof to lowe” (Confessio Amantis 1018-1019):

Lo now, hou it stod
With him that was so necgligent,
That fro the hyhe firmament,
For that he wolde go to lowe,
He was anon doun overthrowe.

In hih astat it is a vice
To go to lowe, and in service
It grieveth forto go to hye

Icarus, also mentioned in Reson and Sensuallyte, presents a similar model: “Ther fallen ofte times fele / For lacke of governance in wele” (1069-1070). Icarus/Daedalus in FP.

That the model presented in Reson and Sensuallyte’s account of Phaethon and Icarus carries over into the Fall of Princes is further suggested by the prevalence of references to Phaethon in the Echecs amoureux moralises of Evrart de Conty. As previously stated, the Fall’s only direct reference to the story of Phaethon draws on an interpretive passage in Conty, specifically on Conty’s allegoresis of Saturn and his reign:

Above all (as we have seen in Lydgate’s translation), Phaethon’s presumcion makes him act out of proportion, out of line with mesure:

Et sy voit on aussi assex souvent qu’il en mesvient au fol ambicieux souvent par sa presumpcion et grant oultrecuidance, come il fu dit a Pheton, car il ne scet communement tenir en son estat mesure ne moien, et par ainsy Fortune le confont et rue en la boe et ramaine au neant aucunesfoiz. Et pour ce dit Tulles qu’en desirant les dignités du monde et les prelacions, l’appetit doit estre mesurés et raisonables, car c’est tousdiz grief chose de chier de hault en bas.
Cicero is described in a similar manner in the *Fall*. But what is particularly noteworthy in this passage is the alliance that Conty posits between acting out of *mesure* and succumbing to Fortune. This is a frequent norm for *tragedie* in the *Fall of Princes*. Expression *outre mesure* in Gower.

**Conclusions on Mesure**

I hope that by showing Lydgate’s conflation of Aristotelian and Boethian notions of *mesure*, admittedly through a distinct group of vernacular intermediaries, I am showing something of his genius as a deliberate synthesiser of Latin and vernacular texts. His highly deliberate account of how a notion as ancient and abstract of *mesure* might relate to the mid-fifteenth-century active life of princes merits special consideration.

The *Fall of Princes* is a secular, man-centered (more specifically, prince-centered) text; in this instance, analogies fail even with more traditional mirrors of *policie*, such as the *Speculum Historiale* and John of Salisbury’s *Policraticus*. That said, there is very little in the *Fall* that does not derive from traditional contemplative models. One might wish to draw an analogy between the relation of the *Fall of Princes* to these ideas and to that of the relation between a work such as Boethius’ *De musica* and the late-ninth century

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173 “And thus one also sees fairly often that the madly ambitious [*fol ambicieux*] comes to some mischief, just as it is recounted of Phaethon because most commonly he does not know how to keep to the bounds of his estate. And accordingly, Fortune confounds him and wheels him into the mud—and sometimes even reduces him to nought. And this is why Cicero says that, when we desire worldly honors and positions our appetites should be measured and reasonable, for it is certainly a bad thing to fall to the bottom.”

174 Lawton 791: “in Lydgate, Hawes and Skelton the ‘poet laureate’ is generally synonymous with the ‘*orator regius,*’ with much exploitation of the two senses of oratory as both rhetoric and prayer. Cites 4.148-154): dullness is “willed, self-conscious … the social mask of a Renaissance poet.”
musica enchiriadis and schola enchiriadis treaties. Whereas Boethius (as we have seen) is concerned with the quadrivium discipline of musical ratios, and whereas later treatises might detail the practice of chant without references to its roots in the quadrivium, the ninth-century texts strike a balance between those two extremes, suggesting a synthesis of theory and practice similar to that found in the Fall of Princes.

CHAPTER 4

MESURE AND SOCIAL ORDER IN THE FALL OF PRINCES

Mesure and the Macrocosm in the Fall of Princes

Just as clemency is the characteristic virtue of princes, so each estate has emblematic virtues and/or qualities associated with it. In Lydgate, theory of the estates, including of their emblematic virtues, is often theorized in lyric (cf. passages
on lyrics and Lydgatean ideas above). In the “Pageant of Knowledge,” for instance, Lydgate presents a pageant of degrees, beginning with the seven estates and proceeding through the seven virtues, the seven founders of the “sciences artificiall” (gods and goddesses), the planets, elements, humors, and so on. Other Lydgatean lyrics, notably the “Song of Just Mesure” and “Measure is Treasure,” are modelled on similar schemes.

“Mesure is Tresour” makes its central rhetorical thrust that “[a]lle thyng is weel so it in mesure be”; however, its nineteen stanzas effectively encompasses a list of the professions and of their attendant responsibilities. In each instance, the message is mesure. In the upper echelon of society, “[t]o knyghthood longith the Chirche to suppoorte … And bryngen alle vnto correccioun,/ That be froward unto iust mesure.”

“Trew iuges” combat “lak of trouthe and lak of iust mesour.” Merchants must attend to “proporcioun of weyghte and iust mesour”—and so on, down the line. Here Lydgate presents mesure as an overriding social norm. Similar views are expressed in the Dance of Death and in several of the Mummings. Indeed, this is a normative scheme of presentation in Lydgate’s works.

Of course, given Lydgate’s preoccupation with contemporary misrule and social disorder, his message is often that the Estates are not, in fact, in balance. In “Like as a crab goeth backward,” we see that Lydgate expresses disbelief that the virtues are being practiced as such in his own time. His opening description of temporal instability is ironic:

Þis worlde is ful of stabulnesse,
Þer is þer inne no varyaunce;
But trouthe, feyth, and gentylesse,
Secrenesse, and assuraunce,
Plente, ioye, and al playsaunce
Bensaumple who cane haue rewarde,
Verrayly by ressemblaunce
So as þe crabbe goþe forward.

Again in this short poem, the model of the estates is a structuring device for Lydgate’s contemplation and depiction of what he views as a false and unstable world. He describes each estate’s embroilment in the times in descending order:

Prynces soustene Rightwysnesse,
Knighthood in Trouthe haþe whett his launce,
Lawe haþe putte Meede in gret distresse
And avoyded hir acqueyntaunce,
Pariuree in England and Fraunce
Is fledde byyonde Mount Godard,
Iuroures with Trouth haue allyaunce---
So as þe crabbe gooþe forwarde.\textsuperscript{175}

And so on. Models and characteristics of the Estates, most often formulated with seven constituting estates, are a key motif both in Lydgate’s lyrics and in the Fall itself: doctrinal schemata of the Estates show that a world in a mesure is a world where the Estates exist in measure (mesure), both in terms of observance of boundaries and of appropriate professional practice.

The culmination of Lydgate’s programmatic reflection on the professions as disposed occurs in Books Three and Seven of the Fall of Princes. 

"A Chapitle of men doing Such thing as þey be dispo[s]ed to" is, quite arguably, a meditation on poetic process that masquerades as such a lyric, but it does take the form seen above in the short poems:

Summe ha[ue] ioie be heuenli influence
To knowe the cours aboue celestiall;
And summe of knihthood do ther dilligence
To preue themsilff in actis marciall.
And summe reioisshe, in ther entent wynall,

\textsuperscript{175} MacCracken, vol. 2, 17.
In eloquence, summe in philosophie, 
Summe, aboue all, to stodie in poetrie. 
(*Fall of Princes* III. 3788-3794)

It is in Book Seven of the *Fall of Princes*, however, that Lydgate’s poetic model of the professions achieves its consummation. The professions or Estates were an explicit property of the Golden Age:

> The trewe marchaunt be mesour bouhte & solde,  
Deceit was non in the artificeer,  
Makyng no balkis, the plouh was treuli holde,  
Abak stood idilnesse ferr from laboreer,  
Discrecioun marchall at dyneer & sopeer,  
Content with mesour, because attempreance  
Hadde in that world hooli the gouernaunce.  
(*Fall of Princes* VII.1195-1201)

Returning to Book Three, we find a similar passage on the Golden World in the context of the diatribe against the untruth of judges:

> Lordshipe that tyme auoided meyntenaunce,  
Hoolichirch lyued in parfitnesse;  
Knyhthod tho daies for trouthe whet his launce,  
And fals extorsioun hadde non interesse;  
Marchantis wynnyng cam al off rihtwisnesse,  
Artificers the werkdai wer nat idill,  
And bisynesse off labour heeld the bridill.  
(*Fall of Princes* III.3151-3156)

Given Lydgate’s use of the numerological symbolism of three and nine, it is not surprising that the scheme and symbolism of the number seven dominates this portion of the *Fall of Princes*—and is, perhaps, the most important symbolic number used in the text. Most cardinal Lydgeatean lyrics are, in fact, structured on this number. In the “Song of Just Mesure” and “Mesure is Tresour,” the doctrine that measure is best is structured around the seven Estates, with a preliminary exposition of the doctrine and succeeding stanzas that move from prelates through princes to the common folk. The
“Pageant of Knowledge” makes the case—and the inseparability of any doctrine of the
estates from mesure—explicit.\(^{176}\)

Thys world ys born vp by astates seuyn,
Prynce[s] ordeynyd to susteyn [þe] ryght,
Prestes to pray, þe iustyces to deme euyn,
Marchauntes in sellyng to do trouþe in weyght,
For comon profyte fyght[ε] shal þe knyght,
Plowman in tylþe, þe laborer in trauayll.
Artyfycers diligent day and nyght.
The ryche her almes to parte with þe porayll.

These are the names of the estates (gradus magnatum). The poem goes on to categorize
each estate’s duties (officia):

Prynys. To vs longeþ prestys to gouerne,
Presthode And we be bounde to lyue in parfytnes.
Iuges. Betwene ryght & wrong our office doþ dyscerne.
Merchantes. In bying & sellyng we shall do no falsnes.
Knyghthode. We shull defende trouþe & ryghtwysnes.
Plowman. Our occupacion to tyll & sowe þe lond,
Werkemen. And by our labour we voyden idylnes.
Rycheman. We delyuer our almes with our hond.

Of course, there are different models of the Estates; not all of them subdivide the
Professions into seven groups. Gower presents notable exceptions in his work.

At any rate, however, that the sevenfold division of the Estates should be both pre-
Lapsarian and congruent to cosmic mesure is a rather powerful political message.

Patently, if the Estates are disposed and in ideal terms operate in mesure, then caste
distinctions possess the same truth and beauty as the measured cosmos:

Trewe exemplyar and orygynall,
To estaatys of hyll and lowe degree,
In ther dew ordre, for, in especiall,
Alle thyng is weel so it in mesure be.
(Mesure is Tresour 1-8)

\(^{176}\) Cf. “Dance of Death.”
The latent, not to say sinister, implication of this scheme is that to be upwardly mobile is to be vicious.\(^\text{177}\)

Another source for this sort of sustained contemplation of the Estates, however, is the *Echecs amoureux* itself (Galpin). Evrart de Conty explains that the central chess game in the *Echecs amoureux* is a figure compared by tradition to

\[
\text{nostre policie humaine et a la civile communité car tout aussi que en la cité bien ordenee a gens de plusieurs estas ensamble et tendent tous a une fin ou au moins doivent tendre, c’est a avoir suffisant vie et bonne, a vivre en paix entre eux et a fort resister contre tous ennemis qui celle paix commune vouldroient empeschier et perturber[.]}
\]

Note the special places in this model of merchants and of lawyers.

In terms of form, it is no accident that the key discussions of the professions in the *Fall* occur in Book III (the three lives) and in book VII (the Golden Age). It is also noteworthy that both the *Mirour de l’Omme* and Lydgatean lyrics juxtapose exfoliation of the seven virtues and of the seven estates, another argument for the *Mirour*’s influence on the Monk of Bury. Again, it is not particularly novel that Lydgate presents and poeticizes a scheme of the Estates. What is novel is his enshrinement of secular devotional lyric on the Estates at the heart of his influential book of advice to princes.

This is a conservative model, reinforced by Lydgate’s concepts, greatly adapted and expanded from Boccacio/Laurent.\(^\text{178}\)

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\(^{177}\) Badel, 484.

\(^{178}\) Another key term, *tarage* (meaning stock, a Lydgateism) reflects Lydgate’s position on unnatural or unkyndely kingship and is an integral part of this equation.
**Obedience and Governaunce**

Adherence to one’s estate or profession has ramifications both for the individual and for his *caste*. An individual must practice *disciplyne*, a term that relates distinctly to the term *knythod* but that also means adherence to the mean of virtue, and (accordingly for Lydgate) to the state of the measured world (26 occurrences in the *Fall*.) While it is obviously difficult to separate microcosmic from macrocosmic reflection in the *Fall of Princes*, terms that apply to corporate adherence to the mean/ to mesure/ to the Estates are *governaunce* and *obedience*. I shall treat each in turn in this section.

*Obedience* is a key term in the *Fall*, used most notably in the context of social obedience. It is particularly prominent in the second and ninth Books. Boccaccio’s commendation of obedience in Book II is greatly altered and expanded by Lydgate:

*Vertu* off vertues, most off excellence,
Which that hath most souereyn suffisaunce,
Is the vertu off trewe obedience,
Which set all thynge in rihtful gouernaunce:
For ne wer nat this prudent ordenaunce,
Summe tobeie and summe aboue to guie,
Destroied were al worldli policie.
(*Fall of Princes* II.543-549)

As this first passage and others show, *attempraunce* and *obedience* are inseparable each from the other:

Obedience eek, as men may see,
Falsnesse exilith and al rebellious;
For bi atempraunce, riht and equite
Stant the weelfare off euersi regoun:
For the meeknesse and low subieccioun
Off comountes halt up the regalies
Off lordshepes & off all monarchies.
(*Fall of Princes* II.554-560)

Obedience is related to temperance and has an almost mystical quality.
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Off comountes halt up the regalies  
Off lordshepes & off all monarchies.  
*(Fall of Princes II.554-560)*

This passage is from the key *locus* for Lydgate’s consideration of obedience in the *Fall of Princes*: his vastly-expanded translation of Boccaccio’s commendation of obedience (comendacion of Bochas oppon the vertu of obedience). In this passage, obedience is explicitly fundamental to social stability:

Vertu off vertues, most off excellence,  
Which that hath most souereyn suffisaunce,  
Is the vertu off trewe obedience,  
Which set all thynge in rihtful gouernaunce:  
For ne wer nat this prudent ordenaunce,  
Summe tobeie and summe aboue to guie,  
Destroied were al worldli policie.  
*(Fall of Princes II.125-130)*

Note especially that obedience “hath most souereyn suffisaunce”: that is, it is sufficient to effect “rihtful gouernaunce.” In more blunt, more political terms:

For obeisaunce, iff it be discernyd  
With Argus eyen, who that taketh heed,  
As riht requereth is nat weel gouernyd,  
Whan the membris presume ageyn the hed,  
Off gouernaunce ther is no parfit speed;  
From vnyte thei gon a froward weie,  
Whan subiectis ther pryncis disobeie.  
*(Fall of Princes II.617-623)*
Argus (albeit as prudence) features also in Reson and Sensuallyte. Subjects, however, are to obey their princes for governaunce to function (to have “perfect speed”).

Because I wish to privilege Lydgate’s spirituality in interpreting the Fall of Princes, I note here also that obedience & Temperance (along with humility, diligence, silence, reverence, hospitality, mercy, poverty) are the quintessential Benedictine virtues.

**Obedience and Kynde**

In times of peace, which according to John Lydgate most resemble the mythic Golden Age, the estates demonstrate their congruency to kynde, or nature, of which mesure might be said to be an aspect. Kynde is an incontrovertible reality, as like draws to what is naturally like. In the Prologue to Lydgate’s life of St Alban (written around same time as the Fall of Princes):

> Every thynge draweth to his nature  
> Like as kynde gyveth hevenly influence  
> For to dispoisen every creature,  
> Some to profit, some to offence,  
> Some to encrease ..

For Lydgate, the estates mirror kynde, or natural order. Meditation on kynde is a heavy feature of Lydgate’s work in general and is used some sixty-one times in the Fall of Princes. As we have seen before, to go against kynde is to go against mesure. Failure of social estates, at any rate, to stay within their bounds emblematizes social destruction.

**Governaunce**

An analogous term to obedience, governaunce expresses the maintenance of
correct social function and order. Indeed, given that the expression
governaunce occurs some 158 times in the text of the Fall, it might be argued that it is a
more important term than is mesure. However, it is more accurate to say that
governaunce is to the temporal sphere what mesure is to the eternal. Gouernaunce is best
translated as temporal dominion: for example, “off alle chaungis, that chaung is most to
dreede,/ most feerful is that variaunce, /Whan that pryncis, which may the peeple leede, /
Be founde vnstable in ther gouernaunce.” (Fall of Princes I.4565-4568). (IX). This is a
characteristic commonly extolled in Lydgate’s lyrics (eg, “A Song of Just Mesure,” ll. 17-24).

The term governaunce should be considered in terms of a worldview that
privileges temperance. The initial message of Philosophia to Boethius—that bad fortune
is instructive and salutary—has been converted to the pragmatism of choosing a position
in the Middle class, in the middle of Fortune’s wheel. Galpin 298: 89v: the city is most
virtuous that has in it the most people of the Middle class (peupple de lestat moyen). In
such a city, there is no strife between rich and poor, and the advisable course is to choose
a position near the middle of fortune’s wheel:

\[
\begin{align*}
Et soy de tout vice eslongier \\
Il se doit ou mi lieu plongier \\
Le plus pres quil puet de sa roe \\
Affin quil ne verse en boe \\
Par les extremitez muables.
\end{align*}
\]

Special Cases of Lydgate’s Estates Theory: Lawyers and Merchants

Law has a special place in Lydgate’s schematic depiction of the Estates; in the
Fall of Princes, it is presented as a privileged estate that ‘tempers’ the relationship between the princely class and the comouns (in a roughly threefold division of the Estates, if the symbolic importance of the number three in the Fall is recalled. Law has a more general function in the third Book of FP, eg., Tantalus at 3.704.). The description of the Golden Age at III.3128 presents this interpretation of the legal class:

Thei ouhte off resoun themseluen to habile,
To haue science off philosophie,
And knowe ther textis off canoun & cyuyle,
And therupon her wittis hool applie;
For cunnyng iuges be prudent policie
Cause ordenaunces, in lawe comprehendid,
Thoruh rihtful doom gretili to be comendid.

As is usual in the Fall of Princes, however, this positive, theoretical assertion comes in the context of authorial pessimism regarding the current state of the professions, in this case of the legal profession. Lydgate complains that judges lack discipline (3.416ff). The story of Appius is expanded and centralized in Lydgate’s translation of Boccaccio’s third Book. Appius’ overt problem is, of course, vice: “inli couetous, rauyne, fraud and lechery.” Non-overtly, however, his life and fate betray the shame and ruin that occur when the special standing of the law is violated. Again, some of Lydgate’s construction of the legal profession here, and of the figure of Appius in particular, may derive from Gower’s Mirour, where the special place of the law is made quite explicit:

Parentre justice et reddour;
C’est la vertu que ne forsvoie
Ou par priere or par monioie,
Ou par hatie ou par amour;
Ainz tient justice en sa vigour,
There is a highly similar moment in Lydgate’s diatribe against the untruth of judges:

\[
\begin{align*}
&\text{Iustise off lawe doth rewmys enlumyne,} \\
&\text{Susteneth trouthe, supporteth innocence,} \\
&\text{Off rauelynour[e]s boweth doun the chyne,} \\
&\text{Punsheth robbours for ther gret offence,} \\
&\text{Sluggi truantis for ther necligence,} \\
&\text{And feyned beggeris, that gretli disauaile,} \\
&\text{Constreyneth them to labour & travaile.}
\end{align*}
\]

\textit{(Fall of Princes III.3131-3136)}

In this theorization of the estates, the merchant class operates in a similar—but not in an identical—manner. In Book VII of the \textit{Fall of Princes},

Lydgate recasts the Golden Age in terms of the mercantile estate and of the language of Commerce: “The trewe marchaunt be mesour bouhte and sold.” The lyrics contain similar passages. The mercantile metaphor is also noteworthy for its conflation of the cosmic with the pragmatic—a feature, as we have seen, of Lydgate’s work throughout the Fall. This special treatment of lawyers and merchants is also found in Conty.

\textit{Mesure and the Golden Rule}

Unlike the legal class, the merchant class is enshrined in Book Three of the \textit{Fall} for its symbolic, rather than for its literal, value as a ‘mediating’ or ‘tempering’ class. [Book III examples]. It is tempting to see this as the language of emerging commerce; however, Lydgate is never very far from his monastic roots. Numeric or mercantile mesure is a key Old Testament and New Testament trope, in the story of Belshazzar (1.3520), for instance, whose kingdom is weighed in the balance and found wanting. And again, the cosmos is disposed by Wisdom in Measure (Proverbs 8) Hence, rather
than the mercantile class being especially measured, it is the merchant’s trade that
purveys a metaphor for spiritual measure. In particular, a major concept informing
Lydgate’s version of mesure is Christ’s injunction to his disciples in the synoptic Gospels
to return measure for measure, the so-called Golden Rule: “in qua mensura mensi fueritis
metietur vobis” (Mt 7:2) and, more explicitly, in Mark: “videte quid audiatis in qua
mensura mensi fueritis remetietur vobis et adicietur vobis; qui enim habet dabitur illi et
qui non habet etiam quod habet auferetur ab illo” (Mk 24). In Lydgate’s interpretation
of the Golden Age, explicitly, “kouth was charite.”

In the “Song of Just Mesure,” the culmination of a series of dicta describing
ideally-measured personal and social practice is a reassertion of cosmic mesure n Gospel
language:

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Late euery man wisely aduertise,
He shal agayne receyve suche mesoure,
By egal peyse and in the same wise,
So as he weyeth vn-to his neyghbour;
Be it of hate, fauour, or rancoure;
The gospel tellith, lerne this of me,
So as thow weyest be mercy or rigoure,
The mesure same shal be don to the.
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Lydgate uses the so-called Golden Rule in multiple passages in the Fall of Princes and in
the lyrics, and the moral serves to tie divine retribution and political quital:

```plaintext
Countirpeised o moordre for another:
Albonivs slayn be Rosamounde his wiff
Bassent of Melchis, & aftir ech to other
The poisoun partid; ther gan a fatal striff.
Moordre quit for moordre, thei bothe lost her lyff.
Who vseth falsnesse, ful weel afferme I dar,
Shal with falsnesse be quit or he be war.
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As thei departed, suich part ageyn þei took;  
As men disserue, suich shal be ther meede.  
This froward story, eende of the Eihte Book,  
Of Rosamounde & Melchis wrought in deede,  
For short conclusioun biddith men take heede,  
Thei shal rescseyue ageynward suich mesour  
As thei mesure vnto ther nei[h]e]bour.  
\((\text{Fall of Princes III.3368-3381})\)

Once again, a possible source for this sort of conflation is Gower’s \textit{Mirour}:

\begin{verbatim}
Civile de viele escripture  
Endroit d’umaine creature  
Deinz briefs motz tout comprent la loy  
Q’attient a resoun et mesure:  
C’est ‘Fai a autre la mesure  
Sicomme tu voew q’il face a toy.
\end{verbatim}

\textbf{Princes and the Measured Macrocosm}

Lydgate’s political message in presenting this scheme is equally remarkable when we consider that the royal or princely estate is mandated by \textit{mesure}, dictated by \textit{kynde}, ordained by God. Thus, princely contemplation of the estates and in particular of his place within this estate is a \textit{primary} aspect of Lydgate’s \textit{Fall of Princes}, present from the Prologue itself. Instead of succumbing to Fortune’s wiles, “thei sholde euer ther estatis keepe” (1.167). Lydgate is here following on his authorities, particularly on John of Salisbury and (again) on Evrart de Conty, who makes the culmination of his prologue on the chess game an assertion of the divine right of kings:

\begin{verbatim}
Le roy ... des eschez represente le roy qui regne et seignorist sur tous,  
auquel tous les autres de son regne doivent avoir regard et obeir, et garder plainement ses lois et ses commandemens, comme il est neccessité en toute communité bien ordenee. Car tout aussi que on voit en l’ordre de nature qu’il y a un seul dieu et un seul prince souverain et premier duquel toutes les choses de nature se dependent, aussi est il neccessité en toute communité raisonable qu’il y ait un seul prince qui sur tous seignorisse.  
\end{verbatim}

\((2r1-2r9)\)
In this model, also, usurpation should be studied and understood because a usurper is ultimately a ‘special case of’ non-conformity to kynde. Related to this is Lydgate’s conwhat I only semi-facetiously term ‘Humpty-Dumpty’s Law,’ which states that the higher or steeper the climb to power (most generally, the usurpation), the greater the fall from power:

For who sit hiest, stant in iupartie,
Vndir daunger off Fortune lik to fall:
Myscheeff and pouert as for ther partie,
Be lowest brouht among these peeplis all.
Summe folk han sugir, summe taste gall;
Salamon therfore, merour off sapience,
Tween gret richesse and atween indigence[.]

(Fall of Princes I.4331-4337)

The moral for most is to adhere to the mene (3436); the moral for lawfully-entrenched princes, presumably, is that they are in the right place! Stanza 6 of Lydgate’s “Midsomer Rose” presents a good example of this law. This example from the tragedie of Oedipus (Fall of Princes) expresses the connection of this idea to Lydgatean nature, or kynde:

Al cam from erthe, and [al] to erthe shall;
Ageyn nature is no proteccioun;
Worldli estatis echon thei be mortall,
Ther may no tresor make redempcioun.

Who clymbeth hiest, his fal is lowest doun;
A mene estat is best, who koude it knowe,
Tween hih presumyng & bowyng doun to lowe.

(Fall of Princes I.3431-3437)
In this model, princes appear to be different in kind rather than in degree from the rest of the population. However, *suffisaunce* is particularly necessary to the life of a prince.

In this model, then, *mesure* is “roote of al good policye,” as Lydgate’s “Mesure is Tresour” puts it. Kings should govern by *mesure*, but their job is also to ascertain that society is kept in *mesure*, that citizens (1) stay within their bounded estates and (2) carry out the practices associated with their estates. It is hoped that this Chapter has demonstrated that the *Fall of Princes* is not simply a handbook of advice to princes that happens to suggest a philosophy of politics but a sophisticated literary essay: as David Aers has written of Chaucer’s Knight’s Tale, an “assertion of aesthetic, cosmic, and metaphysical order.”

**Conclusion: Mesure and Remedie: Metaliterary Reflection in the Fall of Princes**

Ultimately, the *Fall of Princes* is a text that invites reflection on literary production at key junctures. Reflection on Lydgate’s concept of *mesure* and on his application of that concept to the social world in general, as well as to *schemata* of the professions in particular, leads inevitably to reflection on Lydgates deliberate positioning of the poet himself in his tightly-ordered social macrocosm. Hence I shall conclude this study by discussing Lydgate’s theorization of ‘measured’ poet and poetry, focussing in particular on the term *remedie* as it is used in the *Fall of Princes* and the rest of Lydgate’s
poetic output, together with the relationship of literary production to polarities of
idlenesse and bisynesse in the text of the Fall. An ethics of literary production is quite
arguably as important an aspect of Lydgate’s presentation in the Fall as are the key
components of his advising of princes.

Lydgate encourages his audience to contemplate writers and writing at all stages
of the Fall of Princes. His Prologue to the work begins with a brief biography of
Laurent de Premierfait, “noble translatour” (Fall of Princes I.99) of the Des cas. In
describing Laurent, Lydgate’s aim is less to portray or even to lionize him than to use
him rhetorically as an exemplar of poetic virtue. Laurent becomes the exemplary poet:
“He in his tyme of cunnyng dede excelle/ In ther language [that is, in the French
language] … [he] was holde of rhetorik the welle” (Fall of Princes 43-49). To this is
 appended a long, but selective, catalog of Chaucer’s works that describes the English
poet’s moral character as much as it describes his work. Finally, there is the praise of
Duke Humphrey, “stable in study,” himself a kind of poet by proxy.

Poetry comes to the fore again in a Chapitle that Lydgate adds to Boccaccio’s
third Book, “of þe gouernance of Poetis” and in the preceding “Chapitle of men doing
Such thing as þey be dispo[s]ed to.” Admittedly, the governaunce of poets is described
mostly in terms of the patronage model and takes the form of an address to Humphrey of
Gloucester; however, the tone is serious. Poets need to be sequestered and comfortable
for contemplation and consequent production:

To descryue the disposicioun
Of al poetis be old ordynaunce,---
Thei shold be quieet fro worldli mocioun,
And it sequestre out of ther remembraunce,
Fare compotent vnto ther sustenaunce,
Drynk wyn among to quike ther dilligence,
Here as elsewhere, the poet’s role is super-imposed on the original material. In the Prologue to Book Three of the Fall of Princes, he becomes the focus of almost heroic conflict. Lydgate describes himself as standing at two crossroads “in double werre”; the language of his battles with dulnesse is apparently serious. And again, while his entreaties to his patron may rather seem mock-heroic to a late-twentieth-century reader, their tone is serious.

For Lydgate, perhaps the most important implication of this presentation is that poets must themselves be bound by mesure; they must practice the temperate virtues outlined above. Poets can compose ethical verse provided only that “no presumpcioun/In ther chaungyng haue noon auctorite,” where “chaungyng” means literary adaptation. Poets must be ruled by “meeknesse” (Fall of Princes I.31) and by “parfit charite/ (I.33). This is how Lydgate presents Laurent de Premierfait, or uses him rhetorically, from the opening lines of the Fall. Accordingly, we read from the first lines of the Fall that Laurent de Premierfait was a paragon not merely of poetry but of meekness (Fall of Princes I.36-49): He “from hym envie excludid” (I.35). This is a

\[\text{179 While this may seem oblique, envy is a vice common to lack of mesure:}\]

\begin{verbatim}
Whan mesure faileth in dome or iugement,
Rightwisnes is tourned to woodenesse,
A rigurous iuge, a foltissh president,
With hate and rancour doth his vertu dresse;
Vengeaunce by envye theyre reason doth oppresse;
Whan they ben blynde and can no mesure se,
False rooted malice and cruel wilfulnesse,
Wil suffre no mesure in theyr court to be.
(“Song of Just Mesure,” 27-32)
\end{verbatim}

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translation of Laurent’s own expressions in Des cas—but it is certainly, also, an embellishment. This is also how Lydgate presents Chaucer (Prologue), Boccaccio or “Bochas” (Book VI), Petrarch (Book IV), and Dante and Boccaccio in their confrontation in the Fall’s eighth Book. According to this scheme, the poet must himself conform to measure and be meek: this model demands an ethical response, based on moderation or attempraunce.

This model may, to some extent, be compared with the traditional model of the prophet whose visions are the direct result of his purity of heart. In Purgatorio 22, for instance, we are told that Daniel “dispregiò cibo ed acquistò savere.” Lydgate’s John the Baptist reflects this model, again, to some extent. Like the ideal poet in the Chapitle in Book III, he is content with “moderat foode.”

If the estates have representative virtues, what is the representative virtue of a poet? Conceivably, the answer lies in Lydgate’s rhetorical presentation of Cicero as exemplary rhetor, in an original addition to Book VI of the Fall. Cicero’s engagement as an orator—that is, as a public literary figure—mandated that he practice prudence:

Thes said[e] thynges be inli necessarie
To every prudent notable oratour,
Nat to hasti nor ouer long to tarie,
But to conveie his processe be mesour;
In cheer accordyng stant al the fauour:
For in pronouncyng, who lakketh cheer or face,
Of Tullius scoole stant ferr out of grace.
(Fall of Princes VI.3368-3374; my italics)

It will be seen here that the distinction between this “prudent … oratour” and his ‘measured’ oratory is practically blurred: in an economy where the poet’s duty is to inform, even to shape, state doings, prudence is a life-and-death matter.
Poetry in Measure: Lydgate’s Literary Remedie(s)

Remote from a late fifteenth-century context as they may be, Lydgate’s primary auctores do stipulate that literature cannot, conceptually, be sensual. Boethius’ De musica, referenced above, begins by positing that the senses are fickle. Augustine notes in his own De musica that “amor inferioris pulchritudinis animam polluit”: love of lower beauty (that is, beauty associated with the ‘lower numbers’ in the cosmic hierarchy) enmires or pollutes the soul. This is why the poet must compose by mesure and why the angels sing by mesure: the purpose of literature is to direct the mind upward to contemplation. The purpose of poetry, if it is anything else, is to mimic cosmic mesure, to lay out ordered schemata corresponding to it, for princes to contemplate. Indeed, poets have this in common with all artists and craftsmen, who cannot proceed without proportion or measure:

Without mesure may non artificere
In his wirkyng parfitely procede,
Peyntour, steynour, mason, nor carpentere,
Without mesure accomplissh nat in dede;
Where mesure fayleth, wrong wrought is euery dede,
Of thyng to longe the superfluite
Mesure cutte of, and thus who can take heede,
Iche thyng is praysed if it in mesure be. 180

Practice of a craft, then, will fail where it is not informed by mesure. When Lydgate’s Initial characterization of Laurent de Premierfait is considered in this light, the importance of measure comes to the fore: even though “[a]rtificeres hauyng exercise/
May chaunge and turne bi good discrecioun/ Shappis, formys, and newli hem deuyse,”, personal modesty and moderation make the composition truthful and one with tradition:

“… no presumpcioun/ In ther chaungyng haue noon auctorite/ And that meeknesse haue dominacioun, Fals Envie that she not present be.”

In this model, then, the poet both enacts and schematizes mesure and attendant virtue. This accords with the Boethian notion of music described by Conty. Poetry is its close relative:

il [sc the author of the Echecs amoureux] ressemble aux poetes car il fait son livre par rimes et par vers; et de ceste maniere de parler par rimes et par vers ou mettres, usent communement en leurs faiz les poetes, pour plus sutillement et plaissaument dire ce qui’ilz veulent, car en rime et en mettre est la parole assies et mesuree par musical mesure, c’est a dire par nombres ressemblables a ceulx don’t les consonances musicaulx dependent, en laquel musical consonance se delite moult l’ame humanine naturelement, come Aristote dit ailleurs.” (1r39-1v1)

The key word for the kind of measured literary composition that Lydgate sets up as his literary ideal, in the Fall and elsewhere, is remedie. The term remedie occurs some thirty times in the Fall of Princes, with varying degrees of pertinence to studying Lydgate’s literary theory: (1) allusions to remedies for Fortune and (2) allusions remedie qua literary genre, particularly with reference to Petrarch’s De remediis utriusque fortune, form two distinct groups for study in the Fall of Princes. In the Fall, the term remedie can simply signify irreparable harm, particularly in the phrase, “was no remedie” and its several variants. Cadmus, for instance, finds “no remedie” from his wife’s arms (Fall of Princes I.2089), and “[t]her was noon helpe nor other remedie” for


182 "He conforms to the idea of a poet in that he makes his book in rhymes and strophes, and this is the diction that poets commonly use to make their meaning more pleasing and more subtle, for, in rhyme and meter, speech is placed and measured by musical measure, that is by numbers resembling those on which musical consonance depend, and as Aristotle says, the human soul delights in this musical consonance according to its nature."
the problem of the Theban sphinx (1.3366). Remedie can also have a medicinal usage: Narcissus becomes “[a] watir-lelie, which doth remedie/ In hote accessis, as bookis speceffie” (1.5676-5677). In the story of Hercules, it has a judiciary bent: “Til Pirotheus, to fynden a reles/ The cas declared onto Hercules/ Which off his knythythod a remedi fond [.]” In multiple instances, it is tyrants who are said to possess or to enact no remedy.

Above all, however, remedie is a term whose presence/absence indicates presence or absence of tragedie: the same lyric states that “[o]lde exaumples off pryncis that ha[ue] fal/ Ther remembraunce off newe brouht to mynde,/ May been a merour to estatis all, How thei in vertu shal remedies fynde[.]” In fact, remedie is explicitly the term that Lydgate uses for his tragic Envoys, commissioned by Duke Humphrey: “I sholde in eueri tragedie,/ Afftir the processe made mencioun,/ At the eende sette a remedie,/ With a lenvoie conueied be resoun” (Fall of Princes II.146-151). Indeed, in Lydgate’s translation of Boccaccio’s Book VI, Fortune characterizes Bochas’ task in writing the De casibus as the writing of a series of literary remedies:

Wheryn Bochas, I telle the yit ageyn,  
Thou dost folie thi wittis for to plie;  
All thi labour thou spillest in veyn,  
Geyn my maneres so felli to replie,---  
Bi thi writyng to fynde a remedie,  
To interupte in thi laste dawes  
My statutis [and] my custumable lawes.

(Fall of Princes VI.148-154)

In terms of their range, these uses of the term remedie in the Fall show Lydgate reading the word as indicative of and/or as being a moral literary genre. As such, its immediate antecedent is Petrarch’s De remediis utriusque fortune, owned by Humphrey of Gloucester in three copies (two of which have been dated at 1439 and 1444) and
known both to Chaucer and to John Lydgate. Diekstra’s exemplary edition of a fifteenth-century translation of two dialogs from the *De remediis* discusses the “relatively wide circulation” of that text in the late Middle Ages. More remotely, the idea of the remedium comes from Ovid and from Seneca, *De remediis fortuitorum*, a key Petrarchan source.

Indeed, an impression of Lydgate’s indebtnedness to the concept, if not to the form, of Petrarch’s text cemented by two key references to *De remediis* in the *Fall*, in the Prologue and and in the Prologue to Book IV. There are also a handful of minor references to *De remediis* in the text of the *Fall*, for instance, IX.2013, where the tragic actor “ageyn Fortune fond no remedie.” Of course, as Diekstra notes, “nothing leads us to assume that Lydgate’s knowledge of Petrarch was anything else but superficial”; at this stage in the development of English letters, *De remediis* was appreciated rather for its “lofty moral tone” 183 than for its humanism. This does not mean, however, that Lydgate is not performing his own *exegesis* on the notion of literary remedie and applying it to the *Fall*. Of course, the Ovidian strain of the remedium is about remedying love, not Fortune. On the other hand, as we have seen, there is a close correlation between the two. Machaut’s *Remede de Fortune* is known to Lydgate, as we saw above. Prologue to the *Remede* and relation to *Fall*. But above all it is Lydgate’s reliance on the *Echecs amoureux* that connects the *Fall* to the love strain of use of the term remedium. In this passage from the *Mirour de l’omme*, the poet Ulysses is described as stopping up his ears to evade the Sirens’ ‘amorous’ advances: “Uluxes, qant par mer sigla, /Tout sauf le peril eschapa/ De les Sereines ove leur chant/Qu’il les orailles estouppa/ Un bon

183 Diekstra, 28.
remedie y ordina. At the same time, the remote heritage of the remedie idea is once again Boethian, as Lady Philosophy tells Boethius, “medecinae ... tempus est quam querelae” (1pr2). Thus, medecyne is also a dedicated term in the Fall of Princes and in the Lydgatean corpus. The Song of Just Mesure relates the concept of the medecyne explicitly to that of attempraunce. Demesure is contrary to medecyne:

Temperyd by mesur is every medysyn,  
Proporcion sent unto the Apotecarie,  
Helthe Recuryd, folowyng the doctrine  
Ypocras set in his dietary,  
Surfatt to mesure is noyous and contrarie,  
Wher-by is causyd grett in-fermyte,  
In this mattr what sholde I longar tarye,  
Wher mesure reyngyth, ther may non exses be.

In a more figurative sense, the Chapitle on the professions in Book III of the Fall of Princes equates abstinence and labor (analogous to attempraunce) with medecyne: “To poore men the beste medecyne/ Is due labour with moderat abstynence[.]” In this formulation, it is the work (the bisynesse) of the peasant, prince, or poet that becomes his remedie. By the same token, the poet should eschew idleness and be content with “moderat food.”

Conclusion: Literature and Temporal Redemption in the Fall of Princes

“ I would like to credit Lydgate with a new quality, the courage of his convictions.”

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184 This passage is also mirrored by Gower in the Mirour de l’Ommé (16671-16680) and in the Confessio amantis (I.516). It is regrettable that the subject of commerce between Lydgate and Gower on the Echecs tradition is unknown to history.

185 MacCracken, vol. 2, no. 61.

186 Lawton, 779.
It might at this point be objected that Lydgate’s literary productions are anything but measured. The Prologue to the *Fall of Princes*, together with the Prologues to the second, fourth, and ninth Books do seem to suggest this, especially in terms of Lydgate’s use of the term *compendious*.

However, I should like to argue that Lydgate appends *moral* content to post-Petrarchan formulation of *remedie*. Under the heading of moral expansion to *remedie* are found three separate categories of reflection: exegesis of the biblical notion of *redimentes temporum*, together with the literal term *redempciooun* in *Fall of Princes*, and finally the *idlenesse/bisynesse* polarity broached elsewhere in this dissertation. There is not sufficient time nor space to discuss the term *redempciooun* in the *Fall of Princes*, save to suggest that Lydgate conflates the term *redempciooun* with the concept of *remedie* discussed above. On the other hand, the *idlenesse/bisynesse* polarity should be discussed in full because of its intimately analogous relationship to the polarity between *resoun* and *sensualite* outlined in previous chapters. As we saw in Chapter 3, Lydgate frequently uses expressions of the active life, including *idlenesse* and *bisynesse*, in the *Fall of Princes*, which in turn relate the *Fall* to devotional material. One need look no further than the Benedictine Rule to find *idlenesse* being warned against: “*otiositas inimica animae*.”

However, the most important analogues for the *Fall* are found, of course, in the tradition of the *Romance of the Rose*. In this tradition, *Ydilnesse* (Chaucer’s translation of *Oiseuse*) is the porteress of vices. Similarly, the Second Nun’s Tale replicates the commonplace that Idilnesse is “the ministre and noircie unto vices.” The *Echecs amouereux* tradition replicates this commonplace in detail.
This idea of combating *idleness*, while it does (again) have biblical antecedents, is a linguistic and ideological carry-over from the world of the *Roman de la Rose*, a tendency that Lydgate chooses to heighten. Perhaps the most important incident of this is his condemnation of the Luxurie of Princes in Book III of the *Fall of Princes*. Boccaccio’s original tone had been polemical. Lydgate alters his original to reflect the Reason/Sensuality divide, as Bergen notes.

Perhaps writing most clearly instances ethical production against idleness.\(^{187}\) Indeed, in the Prologue to the *Fall of Princes*, Lydgate asserts that Chaucer himself “in vertu … sette all his entent/ Idilnesse and vicis for to fle.” Given Lydgate’s rhetorical use of famous authors in his Prologue, it is no accident that he is describing Chaucer’s *Romaunt of the Rose* in this passage, given that *idleness* is an entrenched topic in the *Romaunt*. Writing is an activity that redeems the time. For Evrart de Conty in his commentary on the *Echecs amoureux*, this was the *de facto* purpose of that work’s composition:

“Finablement, l’entente principal de l’acteur dessusdit et la fin de son livre, c’est de tendre a vertu et a bonne œuvre et de fourir tout mal et toute folie oyseuse” (1r30-

\(^{187}\) Despite its anachronistic quality, there is (perhaps) some truth to the rather charming parallel that Werner draws with Goethe’s Faust in terms of writerly portrayal: “Was fast ein halbes Jahrtausend spater, durch Goethes ‘Faust’ als weltliches Evangelium verkundet wurde, das findet sich hier bereits ausgesprochen: zur Ueberwindung zum Frieden und zur Versohnung gleangt der Menscch nur durch Aerbeit, durch nutzbringende Thatigkeit im Dienste der Menschheit.”

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Equally, exemplarity is a form that assists in ethical writing. A passage in Book II of the *Fall of Princes* makes this explicit (*Fall of Princes* II.247):

188 “Ultimately, the principal intent of this author and the goal of his book is to lead people to virtue and to good works and to flee all evil and all foolish idleness.”