5

Merchandising peace

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Near the end of his *Debate of the Horse, Goose, and Sheep*, John Lydgate foregrounds the relationship between peace and prosperity, 'Wher pees restith ther is al weelfare'.[1] Lydgate wrote the *Debate*, about which of the three animals 'to man was most profitable' (28), after the duke of Burgundy's attack on Calais in 1436. Where both the goose and the horse describe themselves as serving the interests of war by providing feathers for arrows and transport for knights, the ram argues that the sheep serves the interests of peace and prosperity, a claim the horse counters by arguing that prosperity invites conquest. Ben Lowe has argued that the *Debate* contributes to the late medieval debate about the merits of peace in relation to the concept of the just war and that Lydgate, like John Gower in his *Praise of Peace*, sought to reverse the common affirmation of war as benefiting the common good.[2] However, Lydgate – who enjoyed remunerative relations with a variety of patrons from both crown and city – tempers his praise of peace with a final author's *envoi*. There, he urges moderation, reminding his readers that all stations are necessary, that the law of Nature ordains a place for each creature and, implicitly, for each argument. Rather than endorsing any single claim, Lydgate raises those issues pertinent to contemporary recommendations for peace that also appear in the works of Gower and Chaucer, as Lowe has indicated. In offering less an endorsement of peace than a construction of it in the *Debate*, Lydgate encapsulates a prolonged conversation about the relative merits of knight and merchant that is conterminous with the Hundred Years War.[3]

Though the conversation neither begins with the war nor ceases with its effective end in 1453, late medieval vernacular literary texts

suggest a shift in merchant rhetoric by which the merchant begins to shed the negative attributes found in estates satire and to emerge as the self-described broker of peace.[4] Peace, the necessary condition for 'weelfare', or a general well-being and prosperity, is signified by the goods that are the livelihood of mercantile endeavour. The late medieval merchant brokers more than peace; he or she brokers a rhetorical expansion of valuation by affirming the moral value of goods which enable and are enabled by peace. Despite Edward III's adroit use of the pulpit to propagandise and nationalise his war, as well as the merchants, clothmakers, armourers, carpenters and plunderers who profited from it, there were contemporary writers who saw the negative effects of war upon the social body. Although the chroniclers Robert of Avesbury and Thomas Gray made generous use of the newsletters Edward III and his captains sent to England, the second section of *The Brut* – from 1333 to 1377 – comments upon popular unhappiness with war's fiscal drain, growing dislike of what is perceived as Edward's war and the bad winds and weathers that characterise this period of English life.[5]

Where the *Brut*'s subtle chronicling of the unravelling of community well-being is one thread in its tapestry of English history, the popular romances *Richard Coer de Lyon*, *Octavian*, *Havelok the Dane* and *Bevis of Hampton*, along with *The Travels of John Mandeville*, offer other perspectives upon history by exploring the relative worthiness of knight and merchant in relation to peace and war. These texts look forward to the more explicit fifteenth-century considerations of Lydgate and of the author of *The Libelle of Englyshe Polycye*. Michael Bennett, expanding upon K. B. McFarlane's remarks that the war created an opportunity for the circulation of wealth, has suggested that the Plantagenet Empire functioned as an 'enterprise zone' and the war itself manifested a continuation of policies of the late thirteenth century which created networks between war and business.[6] M. M. Postan questioned MacFarlane, arguing that the cost of the war was greater than its benefits and that its social consequences were a good deal less opportunistic despite the assumed relationship between making war and making a profit.[7] The popular works which I discuss, all versions of earlier texts and all circulating in the mid- to late fourteenth century, offer perspectives upon social valuation that

adumbrate the terms of a complicated and prolonged conversation regarding the merchant's positive relationship to the social body.[8] This conversation is not linear, but suggests variable, and possibly local, understandings of the complex relationship between the mercantile endeavour and national peace and prosperity, hence of the merchant's importance to the body politic. While the knight may reap glory, the merchant provides the goods, the prosperity and the global perspective for which peace is a concomitant good.

The appraisal of the relationship between the merchant and the social body fluctuated throughout medieval Europe, becoming more positive with the growth of cities at the end of the twelfth century. As John W. Baldwin notes, from Augustine onwards, churchmen saw merchants as benefiting society because they transported goods.[9] In the later Middle Ages, Aristotle's statement in Book I of the *Politics*, that the end of the state was living and living well, was joined to the Ciceronian emphasis upon the individual's duties to the common good.[10] Thus to the good of peace were added the fruits of peace, among them prosperity. As Ptolemy of Lucca noted, possessions are necessary 'on account of their pleasantness for reviving the spirit'.[11] If necessary, where on the social body does the merchant belong? That body's parts were not entirely stable and reflected shifting social estimations of value. In a sermon delivered to clergy in 1373, Thomas Brinton, bishop of Rochester, invoked that body with its various members, describing the knights as its right hand and the merchants as its left, a move up the torso from John of Salisbury's 'flanks' [lateribus] of the body politic.[12]

The ideological model of the social body which hierarchically places king, churchman and knight in relation to one another rests upon an explicit disdain and disapproval of what seems to violate 'authoritative' categories of gender and status or what does not have a firm place upon that body. William Langland employs these categories in his dramatisation of Meed's critique of the Treaty of Brétigny (1360) in the A-text of *Piers Plowman* (*c.*1368–74) by using the terms of estates satire to criticise the king's doubleness in agreeing to the treaty by which he profited, and thus blurred the lines between knight and merchant. Lady Meed, like many of Edward's subjects at the time, accuses the king of selling too low

by choosing a short-term gain, of trading his claim to the French throne for three million *écus*, thus for far less than he would have won in prestige and wealth as king of France. As Denise Baker points out, by placing the critique in Meed's avaricious mouth, Langland aims at the king, who does not disavow her on principle but attempts to control (and thus validate) Meed by incorporating her into the social body and marrying her to Conscience. Behind Langland's king is Edward, who promoted the cult of chivalry to justify a war whose rewards and successes can be measured on a merchant's scale. By having Meed criticise a treaty that does not pay enough, Langland exposes the gulf between the ideology of Edwardian chivalry and the actualities of the violent and profit-oriented armies that despoiled France with his approval.[13] This is a subject Hoccleve likewise raises near the end of his *Regiment of Princes* when he reminds Henry V of the devastation caused by 'his wars'.[14] Chaucer has the Knight assure his listeners that Theseus sends Palamon and Arcite to prison 'perpetuelly' because he does not accept ransom for captured knights.[15] More pointed is the critique of the French knights as merchants in *Richard Coer de Lyon* where Richard disdains the French king for cowardice and greed because of his willingness to take ransom from the Saracens:

> Frenssche men arn arwe and feynte,
> And Sarezynys be war and queynte,
> And of here dedes engynous;
> The Frenssche men ben covaytous …
> Phelyp of hem took raunsoun:
> For mede he sparede hys foon. (3849–52; 3900–01)[16]

Unlike Philip or Saladin, who offers Richard power and wealth in exchange for forswearing his faith and becoming Muslim, Richard fights with a savage energy, slaughtering Saracens, 'men, chyldren, and wyves' (4756). Only after the French armies depart the Holy Land does Richard offer a group of besieged and desperate Saracens a choice between ransom and death (6175–212), a gesture that does not mitigate the poet's relentless emphasis upon the king's chivalric violence. In the end, Saladin agrees to Richard's request for a truce for three years, three months and three days, so pilgrims might visit the Holy Land and Richard attend to matters in England. On his

way home through Europe, an old enemy kills him and his body is laid to rest in Fontevraud, in Angevin France. In this version of *Richard Coer de Lyon*, the poet opposes chivalric and mercantile values and thus links mercy to cowardice and greed.

The Middle English *Bevis of Hampton* contains a curious episode that likewise opposes knight to merchant.[17] Near the end of the poem, when Bevis has returned to England to redress the wrongs that King Edgar has committed, he goes from Southampton to Westminster where, fighting a false accusation of treason, he visits violence on London before achieving a peace with King Edgar (4287–589). The king's steward, who has accused him, raises Cheapside against Bevis. What follows is a city riot, with citizens arming themselves with staves (4342) against Bevis and six knights, who kill five hundred, then against Bevis, now alone, who kills five thousand. His sons come to his rescue, and the fighting continues until 'al Temse was blod red' (4530). Afterwards, Edgar and Bevis celebrate a peace, ratified by marrying their children to one another (4555–62), and Bevis leaves England to return to the land where he is king. In a poem filled with battles against Saracens and a wonderfully clever Saracen princess, Josian, who becomes his wife; a marvellous horse, Arondel; and constant action – the episode in London stands out because it juxtaposes knightly prowess to civic ineptitude in a city supposedly filled with thousands of dead whose blood reddens the Thames. Fantastic as the episode is, it disturbs what is an action poem by locating some of that action in an urban space the poem's English audience would know was populated by merchants and tradespeople whose businesses were part of the fabric of peace that was England. What is swashbuckling on the battlefield is, in the city, a violation of the very order promulgated by city walls, wards, charters, officials, watches and curfews. Like the author of the a-version of *Richard*, the author of *Bevis* draws a line between the values and skills of merchant and knight. Where *Richard* places the merchant on the Crusades, *Bevis* places the knight in the city.

The English-language *Havelok the Dane* provides a more nuanced picture of the body politic by privileging the merchant as a royal appendage. *Havelok* is a tale with roots in Lincolnshire and is certainly relevant to the legendary history of the region, and

especially of Grimsby, whose putative founder is a key figure in the tale. In its several versions it suggests the varying social categories of its audiences. The tale exists in three main texts: Geoffrey Gaimar's twelfth-century *Estoire des Engleis*, the slightly later 'Lai d'Haveloc' and the late thirteenth-century English-language *Havelok the Dane*. *Havelok the Dane*, which is dated to the end of the thirteenth century (*c.*1280–90) but exists complete in a single fourteenth-century manuscript (*c.*1300–25), embeds within a traditional romance of lost-and-found identity a rags-to-riches adventure story that traces the rise of Grim the fisherman's family, whose mercantile canniness saves them and Havelok. In the two Anglo-Norman accounts of Havelok, Grim is a nobleman who saves the young prince and takes him to England, where, after a shipwreck, Grim becomes a fish-salter in a small town near Lincoln in order to support his own family and nurture Havelok. In these two accounts the characters who surround Havelok are noble by birth.

The English-language poet's embedded tale of Grim is different. Grim is a thrall, a Danish fisherman with whom Godard, who has usurped the Danish throne, makes a deal: he will grant Grim his freedom if he drowns the young boy. Grim accepts the terms, binds the boy, wraps him in an old cloth, stuffs rags in his mouth, and bids his wife guard him, saying that they will gain their freedom and much gold for casting the child in the sea. However, the light that plays on the boy's mouth as he sleeps and the king's birthmark on his shoulder identify him as the prince of their dead king. Grim's attempt to deceive Godard and collect his reward fails, and they flee to England, promising to protect Havelok. Before going, Grim converts all his possessions to cash, packs his boat with food, his own five children, his wife and Havelok. They navigate up the Humber to a little harbour, where Grim makes a living fishing; he sells his catch in the more prosperous Lincoln, where he converts his earnings to food, fishing lines and nets. When famine strikes, Havelok seeks work and becomes a porter in Lincoln. Later, married to Goldeboru, like him a disinherited royal heir, Havelok returns to search for Grim, who has since died. The little harbour has a name, Grimsby, and Grim's children are now grown and wealthy. They turn over their goods to Havelok and vow to serve him. He asks the sons to go with him to Denmark when he returns to claim his throne,

promising them wealth, castles and lands. At this point, Havelok has a dream that does not exist in the Anglo-Norman versions. He dreams that his long arms encompass Denmark, and all that live in Denmark cling to him. He then dreams that he and his henchmen fly over the sea to England, where he closes his hand around his conquests and gives all to his royal English wife, Goldeboru (1286–1312).[18] When he arrives in Denmark, Havelok poses as a trader and seeks a licence to sell. When Havelok reclaims his Danish kingdom, he makes the three sons of Grim barons with 'lond and other fe' [property] (2351). After he restores England to Goldeboru, Grim's two daughters are married to earls. The dream comes true: his Danish allies join him in returning the English throne to its rightful heir; fishermen become noblemen; Danes become English, as the sea, which Havelok controls, collapses distance and identity.

Havelok joins commercial venture to royal patronage. David Staines has argued the poem is a handbook for princes from a lower-class perspective and an idealised royal biography meant to praise Edward I – like Havelok, known for his long limbs. The poet certainly pays attention to the king's need to administer justice and to be aware of his people's needs However, the poet has focused Havelok not so much upon the lower classes as upon the merchant class. Edward's reign was marked by issues regarding merchants' ability to collect their debts, foreign merchants in England and English merchants abroad, customs on goods and the maintenance of the sea, all of which related to the Crown's need for money.[19] The English-language poem quietly suggests the realities of political alliance. Grim acts out of a desire for profit, first agreeing to Godard's plan, then deceiving him and trying to collect what he does not earn. He leaves Denmark, casting his fortunes with a boy-king who does pay up. Grim's sons become nobility because they honour their bargain with Havelok. The poem describes their skill and courage in the battles Havelok wages, and their efforts save him. Havelok becomes king of Denmark and England because he honours his bargain with them, even marrying their sisters into the nobility. In so doing, Havelok participates in what its audience knew was a familiar pattern of upward mobility for those with luck and wit. Fishermen become merchants; merchants become knights; knights become barons.

The English-language *Octavian* offers an even more provocative portrait of the merchant's usefulness to the social body. From its composition in French early in the fourteenth century until a fifteenth-century print version by Wynken de Worde, the poem was translated into English, Italian, German, Danish, Dutch, Icelandic and Polish. The earliest French version was copied by an Anglo-Norman at the beginning of the fourteenth century; the poem itself was probably composed near to the date of the manuscript (Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Hatton 100). There are two English-language versions, one from Yorkshire the other from London or Essex.[20] Like *Havelok*, *Octavian* is a tale of family betrayal, of a royal identity lost and reclaimed, a tale that displays an awareness of the growing complexities of a world where the ideogram of the social body must expand to include the ambiguously defined middling classes. Of Octavian's two lost sons and lost wife, the narrative of the second son, who is found and raised by a 'burgesse' of Paris, Clement, the 'Velayne', is the most interesting. Clement, whose low-born status receives a double emphasis – citizen of Paris and commoner – is the comic star of the narrative in both the French and the English versions, which Frances McSparran, editor of the English versions, feels are the products of written, rather than oral or minstrel, transmission.[21]

The English versions of *Octavian* follow the French in presenting Clement as both a buffoon and a hero, a figure who intersects with the nobility but neither aspires to noble status nor understands its characteristics. He is practical, resourceful, good-hearted and capable. He enters the poem when Octavian's second son, stolen by an ape and rescued by a knight, is offered for sale by outlaws who have fought the knight for the baby. They offer to sell him to Clement, who, like a canny tradesman, bargains them down from forty pounds to twenty. He then puts the baby in a pannier, finds a nurse, returns to Paris from his seven-year pilgrimage to the Holy Land, tells his wife the child is his own, and blesses her for accepting the boy into their household (532–624). They name him Florent, like the gold florins Clement uses to purchase him. Clement's practicality meets its match in Florent, whose innate and impulsive appreciation for hawks and horses costs his adopted father an ox and forty pounds. Both the northern and southern authors follow the

French source and underline the importance of money to mark the differences between common citizens and the nobility. Clement's focus upon cost turns him into a buffoon during the banquet in honour of Florent's knighting, where he worries that he will have to pay for the event. However, there is more to Clement than money.

Not only does Clement care about his adopted son, he helps him follow his instincts and become a knight and a champion. When Paris is threatened by a Saracen army and its giant warrior and Florent wishes to fight but has no armour, Clement, whose heart 'nere braste' for sorrow (935), finds the necessary – but old and rusty – accoutrements and arms him. Florent goes forth in the ridiculous gear ('unfaire wede', 959) his butcher father provides, cheered on by the weeping Clement and his wife, and wins the day. Love with a Saracen princess, knighting by the king of France, reunion with his blood father, king of Rome, riches and honour follow as Florent moves into a world very different from that of his first twenty-four years. The southern version gives Clement more attention than the northern, making him a knight near the end of the narrative when all the principles are safe and united.[22] However, all versions include a crucial scene in which Clement is the hero because his lower social status renders him curiously amorphous.

Clement's victory comes not from his physical prowess but from his intelligence. In order to secure the Sultan's daughter Marsabelle as his wife, Florent must defeat the Sultan, who owes his invincibility to a marvellous horse. Florent takes his problem to his father, and Clement's response is subterfuge, or, as the southern English-language version puts it, 'queyntys' (1354). Artifice triumphs where force will not, but Clement's artifice rests on his education in the world:

> Clement gan hymselven dyghte
> Lyke an unfrely fere
> And went into the heythen oste
> Thore the presse was althermoste,
> A Sarazene als he were. (1556–60)

Disguised, unsightly and able to speak 'Sarrazinois',[23] Clement passes as a Saracen, convinces the Sultan that no one can master a steed better than he, and is invited to ride the horse whereupon he

rides it back to Paris and gives it to Florent. Though Clement does not fight, he procures what is necessary for victory, like Havelok's henchmen, serving the king.

Clement the butcher moves through the boundaries of class, race and language because he has travelled, learned a foreign language and mastered the arts of disguise. He can present himself as other than he is. Though his classlessness turns him into the butt of noble joking, his fluidity, combined with his shrewdness, allows him an anomalous freedom to devise and to act. What nobleman would obliterate his status and dress as a Saracen, or, in the southern English version of *Octavian*, as a palmer whose 'lesynges quaynte' (1364) convince the Sultan he learned everything about horseflesh from time in King Arthur's court? Clement may be a joke, but the real joke is on the nobility, as the centuries to come will show. Like *Havelok*, *Octavian* contains an embedded tale that suggests the social mobility of the middling classes and thus the *mouvance* within a supposedly ordained hierarchical social model.

The Book of John Mandeville likewise suggests the ambiguities of a world unfixed by a social model. In the Prologue, Mandeville evokes that model by castigating the pride and greed of lords who use the commons to disinherit others and the need for a reconciliation where lords and 'their' commons would voyage to the Holy Land. He avers his own knightly status ('I, John Mandeville, knight ... born and raised in England in the town of St Albans') and begins with his voyage to Jerusalem, suggesting that he is both knight and pilgrim. He does not call himself a knight in his closing statement, and the pilgrimage becomes a trip throughout the known world and the text a travel narrative.[24] He also notes his military service under both the Sultan and the Great Khan, as well as the variousness of a world filled with people of all shapes and shades, communities organised according to many different principles, and natural wonders such as diamonds growing like flowers. Mandeville describes a world for the most part already discovered and merchandised, with the notable exception of Prester John's realm. He mentions merchants in his accounts of India (chapter 19), Canton (22), and Cathay (23), but the realm of the mythical Prester John is relatively unfrequented because it is too far away (30, 34). He ends his narrative by nodding both to tales of adventure and accounts of

pilgrimage. He, first, re-describes himself as 'I John Mandeville ... who left our countries ... in ... 1322 ... and who has been in much good company and in many a fine undertaking'. Next, Mandeville asks his readers to pray for him, making those who do so 'partners' and granting them 'part of all the good pilgrimages I ever made'.[25] As his editors remind us, Mandeville himself had most of his adventures and pilgrimages in an excellent library; like Clement, able to disguise himself, to slide between worlds, Mandeville still resists firm identification. The fluidity of his identity within the text fits into the well-travelled and merchandised world he describes.

The merchant is not only on the move geographically and socially, but also rhetorically, serving a sovereign's need for arms or horses and a broader need for the good things of life. Chaucer offers snapshots of merchant affluence and dreams of prosperity in the tales of Shipman and Merchant and, throughout his works, depictions of the luxury merchants identify and import in references to fabrics, spices, perfumes and jewellery. In the Merchant's wish that 'the see were kept for any thyng/ Bitwixe Middelburgh and Orewelle' and in the Shipman's familiarity with the havens from Gotland in Sweden to Cape Fenestre in Spain, Chaucer indicates the double claims of stability and mobility that are the conditions of the merchant's livelihood.[26] However, the Wife of Bath's attempt to equate goods with good suggests he is not inclined to find in those goods links to a common good for which peace is a necessary condition. Nor does Gower's 'Praise of Peace' praise prosperity. Instead, Gower speaks to the king, urging him to serve his people by promoting peace rather than war.[27] Gower praises peace as a principle and addresses the sovereign as creator of peace. If the goods are everywhere and tantalising, the merchant who purveys them has not yet moved beyond the suspicion that merchants also promote and frequently practise deception.[28]

Lydgate suggests the terms of the rhetorical shift in merchant rhetoric by which the merchant, who encourages and satisfies the desire for goods, brokers peace. The sheep's argument in the *Debate of the Horse, Goose, and Sheep* makes an explicit claim for the relationship between goods and peace. More powerful, perhaps, is Lydgate's account of Priam's building of Troy. Both Lydgate and the author of the *'Gest Hystoriale' of the Destruction of Troy*

use Guido de Columnis's *Historia Destructionis Troiae* (1287) as their source text. Unlike his own source, Benoît de Sainte-Maure's *Roman de Troie* (1175–85), Guido does not simply describe the fortifications, architectural elegance and noble luxury of Troy but adds a section on the public squares containing stalls for a multitude of crafts, which he names.[29] Guido's city is a place of variety and commerce, such as was depicted by Ambrogio Lorenzetti in the Palazzo Pubblico in Siena between 1337 and 1340. As Quentin Skinner has argued, Lorenzetti's fresco reflects the civic ideology of the vigorous literature of political philosophy that emerged from the Italian city states in the preceding century.[30] By the time Guido's depiction of Troy as a hive of commerce and prosperity was Englished by Lydgate and the author of the *'Gest Hystoriale'*, it could serve as a trope for the well-functioning medieval city.

For Guido, who also adds the detail about Troy's elaborate sewage system flushed by the Xanthus, and the author of the *'Gest Hystoriale'*, the orderly and beneficial infrastructure of the city manifests its importance as a polity. Lydgate shifts the emphasis to foreground sovereign power, or Priam. Thus the 'material accomplishment' of Troy – its beauty and cleanliness – as Paul Strohm has argued, reflects the power of the good prince and serves as a reminder to England's rulers of their responsibility to the common good.[31] Troy's destruction, ironically enabled by Priam's bad diplomacy and single-minded belief in chivalric action, is far more than the destruction of the royal heart of the city that Virgil recounts; it represents the obliteration of civic life. Where the *'Gest Hystoriale'* author dispatches Troy in a few lines by fire, Lydgate mourns Troy as Jeremiah mourned Jerusalem. He curses the false gods upon whom the Trojans depended and laments a city 'By ruyne ... brouȝt to nouȝt'.[32] James Simpson describes Lydgate's treatment of the histories of two fallen cities in his *Troy Book* and *Siege of Thebes* as messages to England's rulers of the 'catastrophic fiasco that France turned out to be'. Likewise, R. D. Perry has suggested that in his *Pilgrimage of the Life of Man*, Lydgate allows his description of military 'glory' to suggest the ephemeral and meaningless rewards of wars.[33] The description of Troy's vitality and prosperity, inevitably evoking London, or New Troy, serves also as a description of what is lost to war.

That *what* is the subject of *The Libelle of Englyshe Polycye* (*c.*1436–38).[34] The poem proclaims the need for England to 'cherish' merchandise and 'master' (6–7) the sea. In order to justify this cherishing of merchandise, the author of the *Libelle* first details the 'commodytees' of England and of the many countries with whom England trades, arguing that the desire for these commodities prompts peace among nations. The recurrent use of the noun is significant, since it enters English in the fifteenth century from the French *commoditée* and designates both a resource or something of value (as it does today), but also a beneficial or a useful thing. In other words, by his use of the word, the author suggests that a commodity can serve the common good and the desire for a commodity can broker peace. For example, the author says of Portugal, 'They bene oure frendes wyth there commoditez' (130), similarly with Spain and Flanders, whose commercial prosperity England's 'keeping' of the sea (108–25) enables. For the poet, the world is a vast *emporium* for the exchange of goods and moneys that England should control for its own profit and that of the world, a view that resounded later, in early modern England.[35] He says that rich merchants mean a prosperous land (482–5), using the example of London's rags-to-riches mayor Richard Whittington (487–95) as proof of the 'worthinesse' of mercantile wealth.

After enumerating the commodities available on sea and land, the author closes by praising kings Edgar, Edward III and Henry V for their strength in 'keeping' the sea and protecting the value of the English noble. *The Libelle* describes the alignment of regal force and mercantile power as the driving force of nation. Sebastian Sobecki has argued that the poem was composed within the private circle of Henry VI and uses the authority of Henry V to 'forge a set of lasting doctrines for his young successor'.[36] If the poem did emerge from the Privy Seal, its intertwining of the values of merchants and kings suggests the author's awareness of the need to offer England's merchants a view of themselves as maintaining the sea by their 'besinesse' (1106) and banishing war among 'brothers' joined by a highway of profit. It also serves as a reminder to the sovereign that in 'keeping' the sea, he enables the peace signified by merchandise.[37] The poem thus speaks to the king about the social and political realities of merchant power

and provides those merchants with an image of themselves as peacekeepers in need of the king's force.

These texts from the early fourteenth to the mid-fifteenth centuries suggest something of the complexities of shifting understandings of the mercantile endeavour. What they do not suggest is a linear progression from negative to positive perceptions of merchants. Though the romances originate before the Hundred Years War, the manuscripts that contain them and the scribes who alter or rewrite those early romances are mid-fourteenth century or later. The many versions of the insular romances testify to their long-term appeal and suggest their importance as registers of social preoccupations within a changing social environment.[38] Moreover, the authors of these texts do not give the merchant a voice but employ satire or humour to suggest social boundaries. In *Havelok*, it is Grim's children who become noble. Lydgate and the author of the *Libelle* ventriloquise for the merchant. Lydgate speaks through a fable; his timid sheep speaks through a ram. In the *Troy Book* he displays the beauty, wealth and vitality of Troy as an extension of Priam's forethought, implicitly suggesting that London, like Troy, reflects the king. The author of the *Libelle* gives merchants a voice that allies them with the sovereign even as they proclaim their service to all. Nonetheless, all three works depict a world where merchants' interests are not risible, where beauty does not simply belong in the king's palace and where goods are aspects of the good. These works locate the merchant securely in the social body by relating merchant power to royal power. On the other hand, the rhetoric they ascribe to mercantile value relates that value to the common good.

The rhetorical shift in the moral calculus by which goods and the merchants who move them and profit from them might be evaluated is a key part of the narrative of England's growing commercialisation. Pamela Nightingale has argued that the shift in the actual attitude towards trade, along with the noble or gentry involvement in it, preceded the rhetorical shift.[39] Thus, when fourteenth-century gentry audiences were laughing at Clement, they perhaps recognised in his keen fiscal calculations and monetary intelligence something of their own interest in profitable

undertakings. Where *Octavian* appears to draw a firm line between merchant and knight, the social reality was much more porous. Mandeville's depiction of a world where Christian knights fight for Muslim rulers, where those knights move along pilgrim paths, where the distinctions between knight, pilgrim and merchant are indefinite, and where moral worth does not necessarily belong to the Christian West creates a suggestive social collage.[40] Knights might play merchants and merchants grow rich enough to purchase estates in Essex, but the enterprise of getting wealth demands what we would call a rebranding that proclaims that business essential to common well-being. No longer the figure of avarice drawn from estates satire for whom war is bounty or the wily buffoon who can barter, spin a tall tale and steal a horse, the merchant supports the city and its values. Merchants awaken desire for luxuries, provide those goods which make life beautiful and pleasant, support civic and ecclesiastical institutions, and maintain order. The *Libelle*'s nod to Richard Whittington is a gesture to his capacity, charity, piety and prosperity, thus not to a buccaneer but to a pillar of London.[41] The horse may object and the goose honk, but the timid and respectable sheep reminds us of the value of peace, a value enjoyed by commoner and king. In this endeavour, the business of making a profit during the long war served the appetite for goods, but, more important, provided a language for validating goods and those who moved them.

Notes

1 Lydgate, *Minor Poems*, ed. MacCracken, vol. 2, 539–66, citation at line 495. For discussion of the poem in relation to Lydgate's life and works, see Pearsall, *John Lydgate*, 200–4.
2 Lowe, *Imagining Peace*, 132–8.
3 Simpson describes Lydgate as producing for a wide variety of patrons 'a heterogeneous collage of differently figured histories'; see 'Bulldozing the Middle Ages', 233.
4 For an exploration of merchant status and merchant narratives, see Staley, *Following Chaucer*, 97–140.
5 Given-Wilson, *Chronicles*, 187; Ormrod, *Edward III*, 298. See especially, Thompson (ed.), *Robert Avesbury*, 304, 312, 340; *Brut*,

ed. Brie, 293, 295, 304. On the royal effort to use the war to engender nationalism, see Bellis, *Hundred Years War in Literature*, 50, 76.

6 Bennett, 'Plantagenet Empire'; McFarlane, 'War, the Economy and Social Change'.

7 Postan, 'Some Social Consequences'; and 'Costs of the Hundred Years' War'.

8 For the romances, see Severs, *Manual of the Writings in Middle English*, 23–7, 158–60. See Heng, *Empire of Magic*, for an argument linking romance to the creation of national communities.

9 Baldwin, *Masters, Princes, and Merchants*, 1, 263. For Baldwin's discussion of views of merchants, see 1, 261–307. See Wood, *Medieval Economic Thought*, esp. ch. 5, 'The Mercantile System', where she charts the gradual shift in attitudes towards merchants, citing Thomas of Chobam, Alexander of Hales, Thomas of Aquinas and Giles of Rome.

10 Aristotle, *Politics*, trans. Jowett (1252a), vol. 2, 1986; Cicero, *On Duties*, trans. Miller (book 1 para. 85), 87.

11 Ptolemy of Lucca, *On the Government of Rulers*, trans. Blythe, 249.

12 Brinton, *Sermons of Thomas Brinton*, ed. Devlin, 1.111. Both Owst (*Literature and Pulpit in Medieval England*, 587) and Wood (*Medieval Economic Thought*, 120) also cite Brinton. See also John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, ed. Nederman, V.10.

13 Baker, 'Meed and the Economics of Chivalry in *Piers Plowman*'. See also Ormrod, *Edward III*, 411–13.

14 Hoccleve, *Regiment of Princes*, 5335–41. For discussion of these lines, see Staley, *Island Garden*, 130–2.

15 Chaucer, *Riverside Chaucer*, *CT*, I.1024.

16 *Richard Coer de Lyon*, ed. Larkin; citations will be parenthetical by line number. See also ll. 4690–94. As Larkin points out (21), the poem exists in seven manuscripts and two printings, but no text is the source for another. From its earliest version in the Auchinleck manuscript to its latest printed version in 1582, the poem was continuously rewritten (10). Larkin's edition is of the a-text, with his base manuscript Cambridge, Gonville and Caius College MS 175/96, a late fifteenth-century copy (3–4, 21). See Pearsall, 'Middle English Romance and Its Audiences'; Finlayson, '*Richard Coer de Lyon*'. On the Auchinleck *Richard* and the complicated textual problems elided by editions of the poem, see Libbon, 'Invention of King Richard'.

17 *Bevis of Hampton*, in Herzman et al. (eds), *Four Romances of England*; citations will be parenthetical by line number. This is the version from

the Auchinleck manuscript (187). For the variations among texts, see Baugh, 'The Making of *Beves of Hampton*'. The incident I discuss does not appear in the Anglo-Norman version.

18 *Havelok the Dane*, in Herzman et al. (eds), *Four Romances of England*; citations will be parenthetical by line number.

19 Prestwich, *Edward I*, 88–100, 277–8, 530.

20 For information about the manuscripts of the northern and southern English language versions, see *Octovian*, ed. McSparran; *Octovian Imperator*, ed. McSparran. Unless otherwise noted, all quotations refer to the northern version, Lincoln, Dean and Chapter Library MS 91, and will be cited by line number. This is also the version edited by Harriet Hudson for *Four Middle English Romances*, to which all citations, unless otherwise noted, refer.

21 *Octovian*, 18.

22 *Octovian Imperator*, 1807.

23 *Octavian*, ed. Vollmöller, 4112.

24 See *Book of John Mandeville*, ed. and trans. Higgins, for information about the text and its wide appeal. Quotation at p. 5.

25 *Book of John Mandeville*, ed. and trans. Higgins, 185.

26 Chaucer, *Riverside Chaucer*, *CT*, IV.276–7, VII.408–9.

27 'In Praise of Peace', ed. Yeager. See especially lines 71–91 and 113–19.

28 See *Wimbledon's Sermon*, ed. Knight l.104, where Wimbledon warns merchants against deception.

29 Guido delle Collonne, *Historia Destructionis Troiae*, ed. Griffin, 48.

30 See Skinner, 'Ambrogio Lorenzetti'.

31 Strohm, 'Sovereignty and Sewage'. Lydgate's royal emphasis perhaps echoes Benoît, whose *Roman de Troie* is linked to the court of Henry II. For the texts, see Lydgate, *Troy Book*, ed. Bergen, II.564–730; *'Gest Hystoriale'*, V.1537–1628; Benoît de Sainte-Maure, trans., *Roman de Troie*, trans. Burgess and Kelly, 2963–3040.

32 *'Gest Hystoriale'*, XIX.12002–10; *Troy Book*, IV.6931–7084.

33 Simpson, 'Bulldozing the Middle Ages', 233; Perry, 'Lydgate's Virtual Coteries', 675, 696–7.

34 *Libelle of Englyshe Polycye*, ed. Warner; citations will be parenthetical by line number.

35 See Fowler, *English Sea Power*, 23.

36 Sobecki, 'Bureaucratic Verse'.

37 Richmond argues that the *Libelle* manifests merchant apprehension that the king would not safeguard the sea with patrols, but leave it to the merchants to do so by licence. See his 'Keeping of the Seas'.

38 See Cooper's important study, *English Romance in Time*.

39 Nightingale, 'Knights and Merchants'. See also Britnell, *Commercialisation of English Society*, especially 161–70, for a discussion of the years between 1330 and 1415.

40 As many have noted, Mandeville is not ambiguous about his negative judgment of the Jews.

41 See, for example, Burgess, 'Making Mammon'; Sutton, 'Whittington, Richard'.