Representation in the *Gesta Henrici Quinti*

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'Not in the strict sense a chronicle or history, and certainly not a 'compilation', it is rather an original and skilful piece of propaganda in which narrative is deliberately used to further the larger theme.' Categorisation of the anonymous *Gesta Henrici Quinti*, which describes the events of the reign of Henry V from his accession in 1413 to 1416, proves problematic for historians.[1] Written during the winter of 1416 and the spring of 1417, it is thought that the author may have been an Englishman in priest's orders, belonging to the royal household. A great deal of work has been focused on identifying the context and purpose of the *Gesta,* in the hope that this may reveal the identity of the author and the occasion for which it was written.[2] But little attention has been paid to how it was written; although Roskell and Taylor have stated that the narrative was used to 'further the larger theme', no detailed analysis of this narrative has been undertaken. The author's clerical background clearly had some bearing on the religious framework of the text, and attention will be paid to this issue. This essay aims to pursue a more literary analysis of the *Gesta*, examining the subject of character through a discussion of treason and heresy, and that of causation through discussion of Biblical imagery and prophecy. It has been suggested that the text was intended to be used by English negotiators at the Council of Constance.[3] A detailed reading of the narrative may substantiate this, or point to other directions for the *Gesta*'s intended audience, for example, international opinion, a domestic audience, the Church, or

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[1] F. Taylor and J. S. Roskell (eds.), *Gesta Henrici Quinti* (Oxford, 1975), pp. xxi-ii. All references to the *Gesta Henrici Quinti* are taken from this edition.

[2] See J. S. Roskell and F. Taylor, 'The Authorship and Purpose of the *Gesta Henrici Quinti*: I', *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 53 (1970-1): 428-64, for discussion of the authorship debate. Suggested authors have included Thomas Elmham, on the evidence of his *Liber Metricus de Henrico Quinto*, Thomas Rodbourne, Edmund Lacy and John Stevens, royal chaplains. Roskell and Taylor conclude that firmer evidence is required before the author can be identified. See also *Gesta*, pp. xviii-xxiii.

[3] *Gesta*, pp. xxiv-xxviii. Roskell and Taylor propose, from the focus on Henry's alliance with Emperor Sigismund in the text, that the *Gesta* was a deliberate piece of propaganda designed to justify Henry's policy and that of the Emperor to an audience at the Council.

Henry himself.

Historians have long been aware of the value of using contemporary literary texts; Harriss, in the introduction to his *Henry V,* makes use of examples from contemporary works in order to illustrate what he considers to be the important themes of Henry's reign.[4] While this approach appears to be valid, it may also be fruitful to turn it around, considering the works themselves before projecting a 'theme' onto them. Much attention has been paid in recent years to the advantages and disadvantages of taking a literary approach to sources commonly seen as 'historical'. Spiegel, pursuing a literary method in her study of the chronicles of St-Denis, discusses the postmodernist debate which undermined the 'confident, humanist belief that a rational, "objective" investigation of the past permits us to recover "authentic" meanings in historical texts'. She points to the harmful results for a historical understanding of both textuality and history of the post-Saussurean investigation into language systems through separating language from any inherent relationship to external influences. Her basic critical stance argues for a return to context, in remembering that language only acquires significance within a specific social and historical setting.[5] Slightly differently, but also taking a literary approach to historical texts, Morse advocates an exploration of medieval narratives in terms of the relationship between the claim to be telling the 'truth', and the conventional representation of such 'truths'.[6] It is the intention to utilise these approaches in focusing mainly on domestic events described by the author and then to consider whether the ideas expressed in them can be related to the themes considered to be the foundation of

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[4] G. L. Harriss (ed.), *Henry V. The Practice of Kingship* (Oxford, 1985), pp. 1-29. Chapter 7 of A. Gransden, *Historical Writing in England ii. c. 1307 to the Early Sixteenth Century* (London, 1982), pp. 194-219 gives a descriptive and useful account of the *Gesta* in the framework of the other biographies of Henry's reign.

[5] G. M. Spiegel, 'History, Historicism and the Social Logic of the Text in the Middle Ages', *Speculum* 65 (1990): 59-86. See also Spiegel, 'Political Utility in Medieval Historiography: A Sketch', *History and Theory* 14 (1975): 314-325 for a practical application of her theoretical approach.

[6] R. Morse, *Truth and Convention in the Middle Ages: Rhetoric, Representation, and Reality* (Cambridge, 1991).

Lancastrian kingship, or if they can offer any further indication as to the purpose of the work. While an investigation of the whole work would be preferable, it is beyond the scope of an essay of this length. It concentrates, therefore, mainly on events that take place in England, as many close readings of the French battles have already been undertaken, albeit for different purposes.

Medieval historians and chroniclers have often been criticized by 'modern' historians for conventionalizing and stereotyping their characters in both actions and appearance, in order to clarify their moral point. Some have gone so far as to maintain that this can be traced to a medieval scientific 'mode of perception', which saw man simply as a set of features, making it impossible for chroniclers to understand or portray a character in its entirety.[7] While it is true that what modern scholars term 'stereotyping' is conventional in medieval historical literature, in the *Gesta*, this can be seen as a deliberate choice on the part of the author, rather than revealing a lack of understanding of character, as it permitted certain political issues to be addressed. Henry V is portrayed by the *Gesta* author as a 'holy monarch', a type with which its audience would have been familiar. Most importantly, this image legitimized Henry's kingship; from the very beginning the king is described as God's chosen who worked continually for the advancement of the Church: '…ut versus electus dei, que sursum sunt sapiens, ea studuit omni devocione complecti que honorum dei, ampliacionem ecclesie'.[8] Constant reference is made to Henry's work on behalf of the ecclesiastical concerns, for example in his foundation of three monasteries: '…inherens sacratissimo proposito de ampliandis ecclesiis et pace regnorum, primo tria fundare cepit monasteria'.[9]

Description of the king as God's agent on Earth, His 'elect', allows the *Gesta* author not only to legitimize the Lancastrian monarchy, but also to show Henry as subject to God's will. This becomes

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[7] The opinion of W. J. Brandt, referred to in Spiegel, 'Political Utility', 319-20.

[8] *Gesta,* p. 2.

[9] *ibid.*, p. 12.

most apparent in the presentation of the domestic insurrection that occurred in the early years of the reign. The author, describing the Southampton Plot of 1415, suggests that it was an ordeal sent by God in order to put Henry's kingship to the test: '…deus volens experiri constanciam electi sui, permisit eum iterato temptari, et tundi eciam alio dire turbancionis malleo'.[10] That Henry overcomes this trial legitimizes his rule, but he does not have to manage alone; although the trial is sent by God, it is also through His aid that the traitors are defeated: '…qui sedet super cherubin et intuetur abissos et scit quam vane sunt cogitaciones hominum cito liberavit iustum ab impiis et revelavit iniquitatem Iude et prodicionem malorum'.[11] The description of the Southampton Plot can be compared with that of the Oldcastle Revolt at the very beginning of the work. The Lollard rebellion is presented as having been permitted by God to allow Henry to prove his right: 'ut simul vexacio daret intellectum et in conflatorium tribulacionis probaretur electus eius, permisit adversarium in eum insurgere'.[12]

Further comparisons can be drawn between the two episodes; insurrection is portrayed not merely as due to the evil nature of those who planned the rebellions, but as the work of the devil: the Southampton plot began because '…diabolus, qui semper invidet omni bono proposito, intravit in corda quorumdam qui prope erant a lateribus eius'.[13] The idea of the devil as inciting men to temptation and

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[10] *ibid.*, p. 18. The Southampton Plot was uncovered at the end of July 1415, betrayed by Edmund Mortimer, earl of March. The intentions of the leaders, Richard, earl of Cambridge, Henry, Lord Scrope of Masham and Sir Thomas Grey of Heton, have long been debated. It has been suggested that it may have a dynastic plot, a revival of the Mortimer-Gwn Dwr-Percy alliance, or part of a Lollard conspiracy. The plot is considered in C. T. Allmand, *Henry V* (London, 1992), pp. 74-8.

[11] *Gesta,* p. 18.

[12] *ibid.*, p. 2. The Lollard revolt, led by Sir John Oldcastle, took place in January 1414, after its leader had escaped imprisonment for heresy in the Tower of London the previous year. The impression given by contemporary chroniclers, particularly Walsingham, is of a rebellion of several thousand people from all over England. See *Gesta*, p. 8, n. 1. The *Gesta* author, while not offering figures, also gives the impression of large numbers gathering in the parish of St. Giles. Legal records, however, name only 300 rebels, suggesting either that many escaped the king's officers, or that the revolt was really only a small-scale affair. See Allmand, *Henry V*, pp. 298-9.

[13] *Gesta*, p. 18.

treachery has already been introduced by the author in his description of Oldcastle as 'traditus Sathane',[14] his evil nature reinforced by the imagery used which brings to mind the idea of Hell: '…exinde in antris et latibulis latitavit'.[15] It is possible that a medieval audience would have connected the image of lurking in holes and corners with earthly entrances to Hell. Lollardy's description as a pestilence, 'pestis', and Oldcastle's ulcers of presumption, 'ulcera', reinforce the notion, bringing to mind Hell's punishments.[16] Oldcastle's treachery is emphasised by Old Testament references; he is another Cain, to be punished even more severely than Dathan and Abiram.[17] A medieval audience are likely to have linked reference to Oldcastle's deadly venom ('veneno mortifero'), and poison ('virus') with images of deception in the Garden of Eden.[18] The *Gesta* author made good use of the imagination of his audience through implications such as these.

Stereotyped characterisation, placing the king's enemies in direct contrast to his own 'holiness', could be said to be typical of medieval chronicles. The author of the *Gesta*, however, furthers their characterisation through the use of language that stresses a contemporary political concern. Emphasis is laid in both episodes on the close position to the king held by the traitors. Oldcastle is '…unum de precarissimis et magis domesticis suis', and is also associated with the apostle Peter, in betraying his lord three times.[19] Henry, Lord Scrope, one of the principle players in the Southampton Plot, is

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[14] *ibid.*, p. 8.

[15] *ibid.*

[16] *ibid.*, pp. 8, 4.

[17] *ibid.*, p. 8 and n. 3; Num. 16: 12-33. Dathan and Abiram were often used by contemporary chroniclers as an example of treachery.

[18] *ibid.*, p. 4.

[19] *ibid.*, p. 2; 'Set deo volente hac tercia prodicione comperta', *ibid.*, p. 8; Mat. 26:34.

described as '…de sibi magis domesticis et qui secretis regiis vix fuit alicui tercius in regno'.[20]

While the presence of traitors in the royal circle could be seen as evidence of poor leadership, the *Gesta* author has transformed the situation into something quite different – an appraisal of the issue of duplicity, a concern that must have weighed heavily on the mind of a king whose reign was at first dominated by plots, and whose father had gained the throne by usurpation. Oldcastle hides his '…feditatis corrupte intentum sub velamine sanctitatis'.[21] Through using these images of deception and duplicity in his description of Oldcastle, the *Gesta* author plays on the medieval association of heresy with falsity and counterfeiting. Heretics must necessarily be tried in order to prove their falseness. In the same vein, heretics are present among the people in order to test their faith, ('in conflatorium tribulacionis probaretur electus eius') and in Henry's case, to prove that he is worthy of the monarchy.[22]

The issue of falsity and duplicity is also connected with the *Gesta* author's description of Oldcastle's followers as guilty of blasphemy. That which orthodox understanding saw as Lollardy's focus on the material, demonstrated in the refusal to see any symbolism or transformation in the host, was evidence of the sect's false and counterfeit nature. Although the *Gesta* author does not explicitly make this association, it is likely that his audience would have understood the implication of the imagery, as a connection between Lollards and counterfeiters was commonly evoked by contemporary preachers.[23] Although the application of a theme that appears to have been in common parlance does not suggest a particular class of audience, (although it could be suggested that it would have been immediately appreciated by churchmen), its specific connection with English ideas of heresy and

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[20] *ibid.*, p. 18.

[21] *ibid.*, p. 10.

[22] *Gesta*, p. 3; P. Strohm, *England's Empty Throne. Usurpation and the Language of Legitimation, 1399-1422* (New Haven and London, 1998), p. 134. The Lancastrian preoccupation with falsity and duplicity is considered in chp. 5, pp. 128-152.

[23] See *ibid.*, p. 138 and n. 42 for an example of a Middle English sermon on this theme.

treason imply that the author had an English audience in mind.

The *Gesta* author's condemnation of Oldcastle is not only concerned with the issue of duplicity. A connection is made in the text between Oldcastle's treachery and his heresy; he is portrayed as betraying the king both politically and religiously, particularly as Henry is depicted as God's agent on Earth. As a churchman, the author had a vested interest in condemning heresy in as comprehensive a manner as possible, and the revolt provided the perfect opportunity to achieve this. As Aston has noted, 'no doubt Oldcastle's doings seemed to strengthen the grounds for connecting Lollardy with positive treason.'[24] The *Gesta* author, while implying this connection throughout the description of the rebellion, makes it explicit in stating that Oldcastle was condemned as a traitor to God and man for his heresy: 'Thomas Arundell…prefatum proditorem dei et hominis…ymmo violenta et obstinata assercione convictum, dampnavit hereticum…'.[25]

Aston has also commented that the emphasis placed by churchmen on the seditious aspects of Lollardy demonstrated a concern to warn those in responsible roles away from an association with the sect.[26] It is likely that the *Gesta* author, with his focus on Oldcastle's trusted position, and that of the leaders of the Southampton Plot, which contemporaries had also associated with Lollardy, was doing just this. It seems particularly relevant that the *Gesta* author intended these passages as a warning, as he was writing at a point when, although the rebellions had been crushed, Oldcastle was still at large and heretical acts continued. The correlation between Lollardy and treason and its inherent warning suggest that the author directed this part of his work to an English audience, particularly the nobility and gentry. It may also be the case, however, that the author was presenting Henry's firm stance against

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[24] M. Aston, 'Lollardy and Sedition, 1381-1431' in her *Lollards and Reformer. Images and Literacy in Late Medieval Religion* (London, 1984), p. 29.

[25] *Gesta*, p. 4.

[26] Aston, 'Lollardy and Sedition', p. 9.

heretics to an international audience as the action of a most Christian king, at a time when the crushing of heresy was a European concern.

The attention paid to the issue of Lollardy in the *Gesta* and the fact that it dominates the first pages of the work raises interesting questions. The author was obliged to deal with the Oldcastle rebellion first, as he dealt with events in chronological order. However, in beginning with a divinely ordained domestic trial and victory, and including notions of the value of peace, of justice being seen to be done and of the unification of the country through the crushing of heresy by a saintly king, the *Gesta* author presented with clarity the themes that were to dominate the rest of his work.[27] The demonstration of Henry's ability to deal with domestic issues provided validation for his active foreign policy, particularly one which involved the pursuit of justice. Strohm, in his literary approach to Lancastrian texts, examines the representation of Lollardy in other contemporary sources. He raises the issue of whether the Lollard was '…a genuine threat or a political pawn, agent of destabilizing challenge or a hapless creation of self-legitimizing Lancastrian discourse?'[28] While the *Gesta* author may well have viewed Lollardy as a serious religious and political menace, his focus on the Oldcastle revolt and on Oldcastle himself offered a neatly comprehensive introduction to his piece.

The *Gesta* author, therefore, can be seen to deliberately utilise a 'stereotypical' view of character and event in legitimizing Henry's policies through placing them in a moral and religious framework. It has been argued that the stereotypical use of character and event led chroniclers to discard any need for a process of causation. Spiegel, however, has suggested that although causation in a 'modern' sense may be lacking, the medieval chroniclers' use of a typological interpretation of the Bible functioned in providing an idea of connection between past and present events.[29] An analysis of the description of the

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[27] The king's role in promoting unity is discussed in Allmand, *Henry V*, pp. 405-9.

[28] Strohm, *England's Empty Throne*, p. 33.

[29] Spiegel, 'Political Utility', p. 321.

London pageant that took place on Henry's return from the Agincourt campaign may provide an opportunity to examine whether the *Gesta* author put this method to use.

Allmand states that the London pageant was designed to 'make plain the message that Henry…depended upon divine aid for the successes which he had achieved.'[30] The *Gesta* author, having made the idea of divine aid clear from the beginning of his work, continues to reinforce it in this description; he describes the release of a flock of birds in celebration as a sacrifice to God: '…ad sacrificium deo gratum de data victoria.'[31] Although God's aid is used an explanation for victory by the *Gesta* author, his analysis of causation goes beyond this. The king is described as being received with bread and wine, just as Melchizedek received Abraham: '…ut consimiliter in pane et vino eum reciperunt, sicut Melchisedech Abraham a cede quatuor Regum cum victoria revertentem.'[32] Reference to the Old Testament continues as Henry is likened to another David, and the French to Goliath: '…alteri David a cede Goliath, qui in Gallorum superbia superbia congrue designari poterit'.[33] This overt statement, although not providing a modern theory of causation, presents Henry's victory through a connection with and re-enactment of Old Testament scenes, at once explaining and legitimising it. This typological implication is not limited to Old Testament examples. At the beginning of the description, Henry's arrival is given Christ-like overtones, described as 'eius adventu', and reinforced by the boy-angels' chant of the anthem 'Benedictus qui venit in nomine Domini.'[34] These descriptions demonstrate a clear use of New Testament typological interpretation as an explanation for recent events.

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[30] Allmand, *Henry V*, p. 411.

[31] *Gesta*, p. 106.

[32] *ibid*., p. 108; Gen. 14:18.

[33] *Gesta*, p. 110; I Sam. 18:6.

[34] *Gesta*, pp. 100, 104.

These references to a Biblical model of the 'Chosen People' were not confined to the King's person. Throughout the text the English are referred to as God's chosen: 'deus ipse propitius et misericors Anglorum populo', and the idea of England as a new Israel is evoked: 'Studeatque Anglia nostra deo sine intermissione placere…qui mirabilia fecit in Israel et dedit victoriam christo suo.'[35] Allmand points out that the reference to Henry's entry as Christ places London in the position of a new Jerusalem, perhaps a comparison that Londoners felt they deserved following their grants of substantial loans to fund the French campaign.[36]

The *Gesta* author followed conventional lines in his use of this theme. Similar comparisons had been made during Edward III's early victories against France, and had also been put to use throughout Europe in the later Middle Ages.[37] The 'Chosen People' premise had been used by Philip the Fair of France and his apologists for the promotion of his war with Edward I and Boniface VIII, and according to Strayer, was an important tool in the development of the French state at the end of the twelfth century.[38] Housley's discussion of 'sanctified patriotism' suggests the belief that war in the defence of the homeland was a holy act became a widespread phenomenon as war came to replace the crusading ideal. The national sentiment evoked by such a theme again suggests that although it would have been recognised and appreciated in an international arena, the *Gesta* author primarily addressed an English audience.

Connected with the notion of typology is that of prophecy; the king's victory is not merely

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[35] *ibid.*, pp. 120, 98.

[36] Allmand, *Henry V*, pp. 409-10.

[37] *ibid.*, p. 410, n. 22.

[38] N. Housley, 'Pro deo at patria mori: Sanctified Patriotism in Europe, 1400-1600', in P. Contamine (ed.), *War and Competition between States* (Oxford, 2000), p. 225; J. R. Strayer, 'France: the Holy Land, the Chosen People, and the Most Christian King', in T. K. Rabb and J. E. Seigel (eds.), *Action and Conviction in Early Modern Europe* (Princton, 1969), pp. 3-16.

explained by a connection with Biblical events, but through a fulfilment of expectation. The prophets

of the London pageant are described as 'venerande canicieie cuneus prophetarum'.[39] The *Gesta* author

had already touched on the theme of prophecy in the Oldcastle episode. The emphasis there, however,

is different to that expressed in the London pageant of the fulfilment of a divine expectation. The author

describes a brilliant star ('stellam splendidam'), suggesting that it was a sign that rebellion would be

successfully crushed, but not offering any further explanation for fear of being accused of blasphemy:

'…nolens ponere os in celum, eius presagium deo auctori nature et elementorum operacioni relinquo.'[40]

That the *Gesta* author includes both an astrological and a Biblical view of prophecy in his explanation

of events is interesting, as is his connection, in his description of the star, of the religious with the

astrological, as it provides complete explanation and justification for Henry's success.

The notion of prophecy is not confined to a fulfilment of Biblical expectation. The *Gesta* author

refers to the arms of St George, St Edmund and St Edward, combined with Henry's own arms and

draped around the tower of the conduit, and also to the twelve kings of the English succession, who

were symbolically connected in the pageant with the twelve apostles: '…erant viri venerande senectutis

in vestitu et numero apostolico…una cum xij Regibus, martiribus et confessoribus de successione

Anglie'.[41] The kings are used to emphasise the idea of a glorious English past, a past that Henry is able

to emulate through the aid of his English saints. Specifically national events are used as a means of

explaining Henry's success, and Henry is seen as fulfilling their prophecy. The *Gesta* author furthers

the idea of English greatness with imagery depicting Henry as emperor and England as empire. Coote

suggests that Henry's entry is portrayed as a 'Roman triumph in the manner of 'Gallorum levitas' and

'gens barbara.'' Henry's arms, combined with those of St. George and the Emperor, adorn the tower

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[39] *Gesta,* p. 106.

[40] *ibid*., p. 10.

[41] *ibid*., p. 106.

that had been constructed around the cross at Cheapside. Coote suggests that this had nothing to do with the visit of Sigismund, who did not visit until 1416, but instead presented the view that Henry, as king of both England and France, was, or soon would be, an emperor. [42] The pageant is described as the performance of the relationship between the emperor and the imperial city, the fulfilment of political prophecies which had been depicted since the end of the thirteenth century. [43]

The argument could be made that the *Gesta* author, particularly in the description of the London pageant, does not offer his own interpretation, as it was an event consciously designed with explicit religious overtones and references to England's former great kings. While it is true that those who participated in the pageant must have been aware of these references, this does not imply that the *Gesta* author could not offer his own understanding and representation of them. He can be seen to do so in his comparison of Henry with Old Testament figures, in the depiction of the birds, which he makes circle around Henry, and in his description of the king's humility that stands in stark contrast to the gaiety surrounding him: 'Ex ipsa quidem vultus taciturnitate, mansueto incessu et progressu sobrio, colligi poterat quod Rex, tacite rem gerens in pectore, soli deo non homini grates et gloriam referebat.'[44] The pageant occupies a central place in the work; its portrayal is vivid and lavish, ensuring that the reader makes full use of the senses in its descriptions of light, colour, movement and sound, and also that he is aware of the expense of the enterprise, with mention of large amounts of jewels and costly ('preciosis') sprays of laurel.[45] The themes contained in the description may be conventional but its detail is the author's own representation; that it is so elaborate suggests that he wanted his audience to

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[42] L. A. Coote, *Prophecy and Public Affairs in Later Medieval England* (York, 2000), p. 173; *Gesta*, p. 108.

[43] Coote, *Prophecy and Public Affairs*, p. 174.

[44] *Gesta*, pp. 106, 112.

[45] *ibid.*, p. 104.

pay full attention to it. The focus on and praise for the noble citizens of London ('cives nobiles') suggests perhaps that the author wrote with an awareness that Londoners would form part of his audience.[46]

The multilayered representation of events in the *Gesta,* accompanied by the ornate language, suggests that the author was competent in the art of rhetoric. Coote has pointed out that the language used in the description of the London pageant resembles that of classical Roman writers, particularly in Henry's 'imperial detachment'.[47] The author's style brings to mind classical rhetorical principles in its description of particular events as a struggle against Nature, for example in the description of the storm that blew up while the English were crossing the sea to return home: the sea 'erumpebat in montes scopulosos' and the waves became merciless hurricanes.[48] The direct address to the audience and the repetition involved in order to reinforce a point demonstrate the use of technique found in contemporary sermons, reminding the modern reader of the author's status as a chaplain. Exhorting the English to praise God for their victories, the author repeats the phrase 'let us', with slight variations, at the beginning of each sentence, using an 'amplificatio' technique to dramatize his argument.[49]

The use of a rhetorical, embellished style implies that the author may have written for an audience that he thought would appreciate such features. Although this essay has concentrated on domestic events, which may have distorted the overall emphasis of the text, the author's focus on specifically English concerns such as Lollardy, the themes used in their description and the fact the he

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[46] *ibid.*, p. 102.

[47] Coote offers Ammianus Marcellinus's description of Constantius II's vctory (AD 375) as a comparison. Henry's 'mansueto incessu et progressu sobrio' can be compared with Constantius's motionless figure and straight gaze. *Prophecy and Public Affairs*, p. 174; *Gesta*, p. 112.

[48] *Gesta*, p. 176.

[49] 'Let our', 'let her' and 'let us' are used: 'Studeatque Anglia nostra', 'Fundatque preces, oraciones et lacrimas', 'Cantemusque simul'. *Gesta*, p. 98. The 'amplificatio' is discussed in Morse, *Truth and Convention,* pp. 63-4.

addresses his English audience suggests that the *Gesta* was intended primarily for domestic consumption by the upper classes. A close literary reading of the entire text may, however, produce different results. A literary comparison of the *Gesta* with similar contemporary works such as Thomas Elmham's *Liber Metricus* could prove useful in thinking about what the text was designed to achieve. Although historians may never find all the answers they would like in the text itself, a literary analysis may take them a step closer.

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