

**The Politics of Youth:
The Representation of Young Noblemen
in Late-Fifteenth and Early-Sixteenth-Century Interludes.**

Fiona Sloan Dunlop

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Abstract

This thesis is a study of the representation of young, noble and male characters in the late-fifteenth and early-sixteenth-century interludes *Nature* and *Fulgens and Lucrez* by Henry Medwall, *The Worlde and the Chylde*, *The Interlude of Youth* and *Calisto and Melebea*. Scholars of the early Tudor interlude have discussed the interest of these works in the concept of nobility, an interest evident from their portrayal of noble characters. However, few have acknowledged that these noble characters are presented in age- and gender-specific terms.

The thesis argues that these plays are concerned with the politics of noble identity. They reveal a high level of anxiety about noble masculinities, depicted as under threat as much from the dangerous youthful natures of men, as from external pressures. The idea that young masculinities are inherently deviant is shown to have developed from later medieval discourses of science, moral instruction, courtesy and politics. The interludes in consequence also reveal ways in which sixteenth-century concepts of the self, and ideas of self-fashioning were adopted and adapted from later medieval ideologies.

The thesis demonstrates that the texts construct as the goal of the development of young aristocrats a noble and adult masculinity, which makes noble households and the ideology of governance, central to its meaning.

The thesis also demonstrates that ideologies of youthful, noble masculinity provide a flexible political shorthand, which the interlude texts exploit in order to comment on contemporary politics and political personalities.

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To Mary Sloan, and in memory of Evelyn Dunlop.

**'I have been reminded of your sincere faith, which first lived in your grandmother Lois'.
2 Timothy 1:5.**

Abbreviations

EETS Early English Text Society

ES Extra Series

OS Original Series

SS Supplementary Series.

ELR English Literary Renaissance.

MED Hans Kurath and Robert E Lewis (eds.), *Middle English Dictionary*, 118 fascicles (Ann Arbor, MI, 1953-2001).

METH Medieval English Theatre.

MLQ Modern Language Quarterly.

OED JA Simpson and ESC Weiner (eds.), *The Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd edn., 20 vols. (Oxford, 1989).

PMLA Publications of the Modern Language Society of America.

Introduction

The interlude as a literary genre

Early records of drama show that the term 'interlude' was regularly used to denote entertainments and performances in the later medieval period and into the sixteenth century, but studies of these contexts have not enabled scholars to develop a precise definition of the term.¹ Rather, as Nicholas Davis has shown, the term interlude has been adopted in modern usage as 'the most convenient label for all those shortish late-medieval and early-Tudor plays, mainly preserved for us in printed editions, which we have grown used to regarding as comparable and to differentiating in our minds from other groupings of plays'.² The interlude is in this sense a modern category, which has been useful to literary historians in that it fills a chronological gap in literary history between the fifteenth-century dramatic traditions of the miracle play and morality play, and the Renaissance drama associated with the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. However, the category of the interlude occupies an awkward and liminal space, as it straddles a key literary historical boundary, that between the medieval period and the Renaissance or early modern period. In literary history – as in the discipline of history – the end of the fifteenth century and the beginning of the sixteenth have traditionally represented a crucial frontier in the history of ideas, associated with dramatic changes contingent on the emergence of modern sensibilities, and modern institutions.³

As far as the interludes are concerned, their being located in the gap between the medieval and the Renaissance has determined their reception. Nineteenth and twentieth century historians of drama constructed narratives of the development of dramatic forms,

¹EK Chambers, *The Mediaeval Stage*, 2 vols. (London, 1903), 2: 181-82; Nicholas Davis, 'The Meaning of the Word "Interlude": A Discussion', *METH* 6.1 (1984): 5-15; Marion Jones, 'Early Moral Plays and the Earliest Secular Drama', in AC Cawley et al, *The Revels History of Drama in English, Vol. 1: Medieval Drama* (London and New York, 1983), pp.213-91 (pp.235-36).

²Davis, 'Meaning', pp.5-6.

³On the sharp distinctions drawn between the medieval and Renaissance periods in literary studies, see David Aers, 'A Whisper in the Ear of Early Modernists', in idem (ed.), *Culture and History, 1350-1600* (Detroit, 1992), pp.177-202. For a convenient survey of the historiography of the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, see John L Watts, 'Introduction: History, The Fifteenth Century and the Renaissance', in idem (ed.), *The End of the Middle Ages? England in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries* (Thrupp, Gloucs., 1998), pp.1-22.

where the interlude represented a stage of progression towards the Shakespearean drama. Since the plays of Shakespeare represented the pinnacle of dramatic achievement for these scholars, inevitably the interlude emerged as a lesser form. John Addington Symonds described the emergence of the Renaissance drama from the interlude as an evolutionary process, the emergence of a higher species from a lower form of life:

The growth of a brief moment in the evolution of the modern mind, representing the passage from medievalism to the Renaissance, from Catholic to humanistic art, this species [the moral interlude] bore within itself the certainty of short duration, and suffered all the disabilities and awkwardnesses of a temporary makeshift. We might compare it to one of those imperfect organisms which have long since perished in the struggle for existence, but which interest the physiologist both as indicating an effort after development upon a line which has proved to be the weaker, and also as containing within itself evidences of the structure which finally succeeded.⁴

In this account, the interlude is a kind of missing link or genetic freak of literary history, of interest only because it explained the origins of a more highly valued form of literature.

This kind of thinking about the interlude has had a particular influence on the reception of the earliest Tudor interludes, those associated with the end of the fifteenth and beginning of the sixteenth centuries: that is, *Nature* and *Fulgens and Lucrez* by Henry Medwall;⁵ *The Worlde and the Chylde*;⁶ *The Interlude of Youth*;⁷ *Hick Scornor*;⁸ *Magnyfycence*;⁹ *Calisto and Melebea*.¹⁰ These interludes have frequently been judged on the extent to which they exhibited Renaissance qualities (as opposed to primitive medieval ones). It was clear, for example that *Nature*, *The Worlde*, *Youth* and *Magnyfycence* shared many features of the morality.¹¹ They focus on protagonists comparable to *Everyman*: universal figures whose experiences were meant to stand for those of all mankind. The interludes often described the progress of mankind from birth to death, and put a special

⁴John Addington Symonds, *Shakspeare's* [sic] *Predecessors in the English Drama* (London, 1900), p.118.

⁵*Fulgens and Lucrez* was printed c. 1512; *Nature*, c.1530. Both are usually assumed to have been written in the 1490s.

⁶Written c.1509(?), printed in 1522.

⁷Written c.1514; first printed in 1532-33.

⁸Written c.1514; first printed in 1516.

⁹Written c.1519; first printed ?1530.

¹⁰Written c.1525; first printed 1527.

¹¹These affinities are traced in most detail by Potter, who avoids the value judgments discussed above. RA Potter, *The English Morality Play: Origins, History and Influence of a Dramatic Tradition* (London and Boston, 1975).

emphasis on a process of fall and repentance. Inner spiritual conflicts were represented by the debates of the protagonist with personified sins or vices. Critics who saw these interludes as representing the end of the morality form, often described them in a negative light, as the decadence of the morality. For example, the interlude *Nature* has sometimes been described as if it were the last gasp of an outmoded and obsolete form.¹² Spivack, in a chapter tellingly entitled 'Change and Decay in the Morality Tradition', describes *Nature* as a falling off from the morality tradition, as only 'a faded echo' of it.¹³ Following Spivack, Anne Barton Righter described *The Worlde and the Chylde* as a play which exemplified a 'religious decadence' from the pious aims of the morality.¹⁴ Petersen in turn regarded *The Worlde* as showing an incomplete evolution from morality plays to Renaissance tragedy.¹⁵ Critics who viewed the earliest interludes more positively often did so on the basis of the new, 'humanist' qualities which they discerned in the texts. *Nature*, for example, explains man's sinfulness as a result of the fact that the young man is not yet governed by reason. Several critics have read this feature of the play as a sign of the development of modern notions of individualism, where sin is an aspect of an individual's rational choice, rather than being the universal condition of mankind.¹⁶ John Watkins has also recently read *Calisto and Melebea* in a similar way, and has cited Melebea's repentance to God as an example of the Renaissance idea that individuals should 'fashion their own identities'.¹⁷ These plays have also been regarded as humanist in their interest in particular kinds of learning. Scholars have drawn attention to the opening speech of *Nature* - which discusses the role of nature in creation - as a piece of humanist thinking which

¹²AW Reed, *Early Tudor Drama: Medwall, The Rastells, Heywood, and the More Circle* (London, 1926), p.100; Jones, 'Early Moral Plays', pp.223-4.

¹³Bernard Spivack, *Shakespeare and the Allegory of Evil: The History of a Metaphor in Relation to his Major Villians* (New York, 1958), p.215.

¹⁴Anne Barton Righter, *Shakespeare and the Idea of the Play* (London, 1964), pp.29-31.

¹⁵Joyce E Petersen, 'The Paradox of Disintegrating Form in *Mundus et Infans*', *ELR* 7 (1977):3-16.

¹⁶AP Rossiter, *English Drama From Early Times to the Elizabethans: Its Background Origins and Developments* (London, 1950), p.104; Spivack, *Shakespeare*, p.214; Potter, *English Morality Play*, p.60. Lancashire contrasts Medwall's 'humanism', with *Youth*'s 'medieval view of human nature'. See idem (ed.), *Two Tudor Interludes: Youth and Hick Scorner* (Manchester, 1980), p.38.

¹⁷John Watkins, 'The Allegorical Theatre: Moralities, Interludes, and Protestant Drama', in D Wallace (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Medieval English Literature* (Cambridge, 1999), pp.767-92, esp. pp.781-82.

reveals a new and scientific approach to the natural world.¹⁸ *Calisto and Melebea* has also been described as a product of the new 'humanist learning', in its reliance on the Spanish prose work *La Celestina*.¹⁹ The play has been read in connection with the humanist Vives's sojourn at the royal court.²⁰ In more general terms many critics have noted with approval the realistic representation of secular life in these interludes, which seem to indicate a movement away from the allegory of medieval morality drama, and towards the depiction of secular life in the Renaissance drama.²¹

Among these earliest interludes, *Fulgens and Lucrez* has proved the most capable of being co-opted as a thoroughly Renaissance play. Some critics have approved of it on the rather negative grounds that it does not seem to show many features of the medieval drama. Wilson, for example, approved of the lack of religious didacticism in the play and regretted that there were so few other early plays 'so free from religious and allegorical treatment'.²² *Fulgens and Lucrez* came to be viewed as the first purely secular play in English, one with a commitment to depicting individuals or social types rather than universal figures or personified sins.²³ Moreover, the play seemed to Altman one which embodied a new philosophical stance characteristic of the Renaissance.²⁴ *Fulgens and Lucrez* 'asks' rather than 'shows'; and is interrogative rather than didactic. *Fulgens and Lucrez* also seemed to prefigure the romantic comedies of Shakespeare in its matter (the story of the competition of two suitors for the hand of a young noblewoman), and its use of a sub-plot.²⁵

¹⁸FS Boas, *Introduction to Tudor Drama* (London, 1933), p.3; Joel B Altman, *The Tudor Play of Mind: Rhetorical Enquiry and the Development of Elizabethan Drama* (Berkeley, 1978), p.13.

¹⁹David Bevington, *From Mankind to Marlowe: Growth of Structure in the Popular Drama of Tudor England* (Cambridge, MA, 1962), p.45.

²⁰Gustav Ungerer, *Anglo-Spanish Relations in Tudor Literature* (Madrid, 1956), pp.9-25.

²¹Boas, *Introduction to Tudor Drama*, p.3; Rossiter, *English Drama*, p.103; ME Moeslein (ed.), *The Plays of Henry Medwall: A Critical Edition* (New York and London, 1981), p.258; William Tydeman, *English Medieval Theatre, 1400-1500* (London, 1986), p.25; Jones, 'Early Moral Plays', pp.223-24.

²²FP Wilson, *The English Drama, 1485-1585* (Oxford, 1969), p.7.

²³Barton Righter, *Shakespeare and the Idea of the Play*, p.36. Boas and Reed first applied the label 'first secular play in English' to *Fulgens and Lucrez*. See Boas, *Introduction to Tudor Drama*, pp.4-5; Reed, *Early Tudor Drama*, pp.95-100.

²⁴Altman, *Tudor Play of Mind*, pp.13-30.

²⁵Frederick S Boas (ed.), *Five Pre-Shakespearean Comedies* (London, 1934), pp. vii-ix. See also Reed, *Early Tudor Drama*, p.100; Boas, *Introduction*, p.36.

The effect of this kind of discussion is to categorize *Fulgens and Lucrez* as essentially a Renaissance play, and the other earliest interludes as essentially medieval plays. Recent editors of Medwall's plays have felt it necessary to stress that there is no evidence that *Nature* is the prior play of the two, since so many discussions seemed to assume that this must be the case.²⁶ This assumption about the dating of the plays reveals a further assumption: that once Medwall had made the great leap forward into the Renaissance there could be no going back to medieval notions such as are evinced in *Nature*. In stressing that *Fulgens and Lucrez* is so different in kind from *Nature* and other of the earliest interludes, this kind of work tended to obscure what the interludes might have in common with each other, and what might make them a distinctive genre in their own right.

The focus on performance and performance contexts has brought a new emphasis on continuities across the genre of the interlude. TW Craik first sought to show that interludes were both sophisticated and engaging in their dramatic technique as a reaction against the view that interludes were drearily didactic.²⁷ He and others pointed out that internal references in many interlude texts showed that many of these plays were first performed in the great halls characteristic of many institutions of the late medieval and Renaissance periods.²⁸ Scholars such as Southern, Tydeman and Twycross have continued to discuss the distinctive dramaturgy developed for these contexts.²⁹ External evidence of performances of plays in town, great household and abbey accounts continues to be collected and collated by the Records of Early English Drama project. This confirms that dramatic performances were a regular feature of institutional life, particularly during the festive seasons of the year, such as Christmas and Shrovetide. This has allowed scholars

²⁶Moeslein (ed.), *Plays of Henry Medwall*, p.6; AH Nelson (ed.), *The Plays of Henry Medwall* (Cambridge, 1980), pp.20-21.

²⁷T W Craik, *The Tudor Interlude: Stage, Costume, and Acting* (Leicester, 1958). See especially pp.2-3.

²⁸See for example Chambers, *Mediaeval Stage*, 2:199; Potter, *English Morality Play*, pp.58-77. Greg Walker has provided an overview of surviving interludes which show evidence of having been written for performance in a great hall: see Greg Walker, *The Politics of Performance in Early Renaissance Drama* (Cambridge, 1998), pp.232-36.

²⁹Richard Southern, *The Staging of Plays Before Shakespeare* (London, 1973); idem, 'The Technique of Play Presentation', in Norman Sanders *et al*, *The Revels History of Drama in English, Vol.2: 1500-1576* (London and New York, 1980), pp.72-89; Tydeman, *English Medieval Theatre*; Meg Twycross, 'The Theatricality of Medieval English Plays', in R Beadle (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval English Theatre* (Cambridge, 1994), pp.37-84 (pp.66-83).

to interpret the interludes as evidence for otherwise lost traditions of festive drama.³⁰ It has also led to extensive work on the place of interludes and other entertainments in the Inns of Court and in noble households.³¹ It has also placed play texts in wider social and political contexts.

The association of many interludes with noble households has led scholars to view them in relation to the ideologies of the elites who sponsored them. In this respect, the work of David Bevington on interlude drama, along with that of Sydney Anglo and Gordon Kipling on royal patronage more widely, focused critical attention on the way in which particular 'ideas and platforms' might be advanced through the interludes.³² Following the work of Bevington and others, current attention on the earliest interludes has tended to consider them as political texts in two main ways. Interludes are political literature in that they allude to the personalities and current political debates of their time, and are frequently concerned with theory and practice of government.³³ Interludes are also political literature in the broader sense that they deal with the ideologies of a particular social group - the nobility - which are used to justify their privileged position and the maintenance of existing power relations.³⁴

³⁰Thomas Pettit, 'Tudor Interludes and the Winter Revels', *METH* 6 (1984): 16-27.

³¹On drama at the Inns of Court, see Olga Horner, 'Christmas at the Inns of Court', in M Twycross (ed.), *Festive Drama* (Cambridge, 1996), pp.41-53. On entertainments in noble households see, Suzanne Westfall, *Patrons and Performance: Early Tudor Household Revels* (Oxford 1990). See also Peter H Greenfield, *Festive Drama at Christmas in Aristocratic Households*, in Twycross (ed.), *Festive Drama*, pp.34-40. See also Suzanne Westfall, ' "A Commony a Christmas gambold or a tumbling trick": Household Theater', in JD Cox and D Scott (eds.), *A New History of Early English Drama* (New York, 1997), pp.39-58.

³²Bevington, *Tudor Drama and Politics: A Critical Approach to Topical Meaning* (Cambridge, MA, 1968), p.3. See also Sydney Anglo, *Spectacle, Pageantry and Early Tudor Policy* (London, 1969); Gordon Kipling, *The Triumph of Honour: Burgundian Origins of the Elizabethan Renaissance* (Leiden, 1977). See also WR Streitberger, *Court Revels, 1485-1559* (Toronto, 1994).

³³Greg Walker, *Plays of Persuasion: Drama and Politics at the Court of Henry VIII* (Cambridge, 1991); idem, *Persuasive Fictions: Faction, Faith and Political Culture in the Reign of Henry VIII* (Aldershot, 1996); idem, *Politics of Performance*.

³⁴Westfall, *Patrons and Performance*, esp. pp.180-99; Darryll Grantley, *Wit's Pilgrimage: Drama and the Social Impact of Education in Early Modern England* (Aldershot, 2000).

Masculinity, youth, nobility

Bevington's reading of *Fulgens and Luces* was influential in drawing attention to the way in which the interludes address the politics of identity.³⁵ In the interlude, the well-born Cornelius and the low-born Gaius compete for the hand of Luces. In order to determine which she should marry, Luces sets a test: she will marry the more noble suitor. Luces judges that Gaius is the more noble of the two, on the basis of his virtue and industry. Bevington argued that this interlude had a political agenda and was working to justify Henry VII's appointment of administrators under on the basis of their ability, rather than their aristocratic lineage. It was written to serve the interests of a rising group of 'new men', and to critique established noble families. *Fulgens and Luces* attempts to redefine what it means to be noble in response to social and political change.

The interludes also seem intended as educational texts aimed at young noblemen, as Ian Lancashire suggested in connection with *The Interlude of Youth*.³⁶ This interlude depicts the fall of a young man into sinfulness in terms of his choices between competing counsellors, and it seems intended to act as 'prudent advice' to other young noblemen on how to select their advisors.³⁷ As Lancashire pointed out, it also fits comfortably into the larger body of educational literature addressed to young nobles, such as the texts added to London, British Library MS Royal 18 D.II by Henry Algernon Percy, the fifth earl of Northumberland, which also apparently adorned the walls of his houses at Leconfield and Wressle in Yorkshire.³⁸ Recent work by scholars such as Westfall and Grantley has continued to emphasise the concern with concepts of nobility and noble education across sixteenth century drama.³⁹ Westfall in particular related this to a Bevingtonian debate between the 'old' and 'new' aristocratic families. She, like Bevington, saw the earliest interludes as a response to political and social change at the beginning of Henry VII's reign.

Bevington's reading of *Fulgens and Luces* may not rely on a narrative of the development of dramatic forms like Symonds'; but it does rely on an historical narrative

³⁵Bevington, *Tudor Drama and Politics*, pp.42-53.

³⁶Lancashire (ed.), *Two Tudor Interludes*, pp.53-54.

³⁷*Ibid*, p.53.

³⁸*Ibid*, pp.28-29. For a description of the ms. see George F Warner and Julius P Gilson (eds.), *Catalogue of the Western Manuscripts in the Old Royal and King's Collections*, 4 vols. (London, 1921), 2:308-10.

³⁹Westfall, *Patrons and Performance*; Grantley, *Wit's Pilgrimage*.

which makes Henry VII's reign into a turning point, a decisive break with a 'medieval' past.⁴⁰ Bevington's thesis seems to owe much to Lawrence Stone's *The Crisis of the Aristocracy* which had located the beginning of fundamental changes to the position of the nobility firmly at the beginning of Henry VII's reign.⁴¹ Stone saw Henry VII and Henry VIII as pursuing policies intended to destroy the influence of their over-mighty subjects. Subsequent work by historians has tended to play down the idea of such a policy, and to stress the continuities between the reign of Henry VII and that of Edward IV and the medieval kings.⁴² Lancashire's suggestion that *The Interlude of Youth*, and by extension other of the early interludes, should be viewed as educational literature suggests that these texts ought have strong ideological continuities with the medieval past. Much of the large body of educational works extant in the fifteenth century continued to circulate amongst English readers well into the sixteenth century.⁴³ No scholar as far as I am aware has attempted to read interludes in connection with this body of literature in order to identify the continuities or the changes apparent in the interludes.

Moreover, while it has long been accepted that the interludes were concerned with identity, in the sense that they sought to distinguish between who was and who was not noble, there has been a surprising neglect of other aspects of identity. Perhaps the most glaring absence from discussions of the early interludes is the issue of gender. Scholars of early interludes have made little explicit comment on the ways in which men and women are represented in them, and the ideologies which are implicit in such representations. There has been a little more attention to the interludes' depiction of the young and their concern with defining what it means to be young and to be old. Lancashire has discussed the representation of Youth in *The Interlude of Youth* as a dissolute young nobleman, and has drawn attention to the fact that the Earl of Northumberland and Lord Clifford described their sons in very similar terms.⁴⁴ Davenport's work on the figure of the 'gallant' in interludes such as *Nature, Youth and The Worlde and the Chylde* suggests that such

⁴⁰Watts, 'Introduction'.

⁴¹Lawrence Stone, *The Crisis of the Aristocracy* (Oxford, 1965), pp.199-270.

⁴²GW Bernard, *The Power of the Early Tudor Nobility: A Study of the Fourth and Fifth Earls of Shrewsbury* (Brighton, 1985).

⁴³Nicholas Orme, *From Childhood to Chivalry: The Education of the English Kings and Aristocracy, 1066-1530* (London, 1984), pp.81-111.

⁴⁴Lancashire (ed.), *Two Tudor Interludes*, pp.28-29.

descriptions are thoroughly conventional for this stock figure.⁴⁵ Northumberland and Clifford were not providing objective and dispassionate accounts of their sons but are borrowing terms from a wider discourse to add weight to their denunciation of their aberrant children. Lancashire, Davenport and others see these depictions as deployed for the purpose of criticising groups of young men or individual young men like Henry Percy or Henry VIII; and have noted how the criticism is couched almost solely in moral terms.⁴⁶ This has the effect of conflating social and moral norms so that each reinforces the other: the behaviour deemed unsuitable for a noble is presented as sinful, and this connection marks the behaviour doubly undesirable. These discussions do not make it clear why the breaches of social and moral norms should so persistently be associated with young noblemen, however. On the whole, scholars seem have accepted the representation of old and young, male and female in the interludes as natural and obvious.

The work of Paul Whitfield White, on the other hand, reveals that there are important differences in the way in which young men are represented across the interlude genre. White's *Theatre and Reformation* showed how Protestant polemicists exploited the interlude as a vehicle for the discussion and promulgation of Protestant ideas, and in this context the bringing up of children emerges as a key theme.⁴⁷ However, much of the interludes' attention is directed at bad parents: those who spoil their children, or who raise them in the old religion.⁴⁸ The young characters of these plays - who are from a diverse range of backgrounds - are frequently shown in familial contexts, and depicted in relation to fathers, mothers, and siblings. White's observations throw into stark relief the representation of young men in several earlier interludes. The young male protagonists of earlier plays tend to be noblemen,⁴⁹ and are never shown in relation to family members, but depicted in master-servant relationships. Uniquely, the protagonist Infans becomes the

⁴⁵Tony Davenport, ' "Lusty Fresche Galaunts"', in P Neuss (ed.), *Aspects of Early English Drama* (Cambridge and Totowa, NJ, 1983), pp.111-28.

⁴⁶See also Westfall, *Patrons and Performance*, pp.161-64.

⁴⁷Paul Whitfield White, *Theatre and Reformation: Protestantism, Patronage, and Playgoing in Tudor England* (Cambridge, 1993). See also idem, 'Theater and Religious Culture', in Cox and Kastan (eds.), *New History of Early English Drama*, pp.133-51.

⁴⁸Ibid., pp.113-14.

⁴⁹Westfall, *Patrons and Performance*, pp.180-98. In *Hick Scornor*, characters like Freedom and Imagination are presented as young gallants, but are not themselves noble. Rather, their comments satirize those who claim noble identity with no real right to it. See *Hick Scornor*, ll.255-27, 646-47, 705-08, in Lancashire (ed.), *Two Tudor Interludes*.

servant of The Worlde in *The Worlde and the Chylde*. In several plays young male characters become the masters of servants (*Fulgens and Lucrez*, *Nature*, *The Interlude of Youth*, *The Worlde and the Chylde*, *Calisto and Melebea*, *Magnyfycence*). The spiritual conflict for the soul of the young men in the 'moralities' *Nature*, *Youth*, *The Worlde* is framed not so much in terms of a battle, but in terms of the struggle of rival groups of household servants for influence over their master.⁵⁰ Master-servant relationships are also a feature of the 'secular' plays *Fulgens and Lucrez*, and *Calisto and Melebea*. In *Calisto and Melebea*, the young knight Calisto has to decide between the conflicting advice of Sempronio and Parmeno. In *Fulgens and Lucrez*, the young noblemen Cornelius and Gaius, both engage servants in the course of the play. In fact, it is only the female protagonists, the noblewomen Lucrez of *Fulgens and Lucrez* and Melebea of *Calisto and Melebea* who are depicted in relation to family members, and in both cases they are shown in relation to their fathers. This opens the question of what sort of ideologies are operating in the earlier interludes which make relationships of young noblemen and servants so prominent, to the exclusion of familial relations. Whatever these ideologies are, they draw a clear distinction between what it means to be a nobleman, and what it means to be a noblewoman, as noblewomen (where they do appear) are constructed in relation to their fathers, while noblemen are conspicuously fatherless.

A small body of texts from the late-fifteenth and early-sixteenth centuries - *Nature*, *Fulgens and Lucrez*, *The Worlde and the Chylde*, *The Interlude of Youth*, *Calisto and Melebea* - therefore offers an opportunity to discuss the ways in which complex processes of constructing a gendered status identity are represented, through a study of the representation of the young men who feature in each of the plays. These five plays are particularly suited to this project because of their emphasis on men's life-cycles. *Nature*, *The Worlde and the Chylde* and *Youth* address the issue of the growth and development of men directly, as each shows a part or the whole of a male character's progress from birth to death. The interest of these interludes in male development is masked to a certain extent, since they claim to depict a universally applicable life-course. The names of the protagonists suggest that they are universal figures, with whom all can identify: in *Nature* we see Man; in *The Worlde and the Chylde*, Infans; in *The Interlude of Youth*, Youth. In fact, all inhabit what are clearly male bodies. In the secular plays, *Fulgens and Lucrez* and

⁵⁰Potter, *English Morality Play*, pp. 59, 64; Moeslein (ed.), *Plays of Henry Medwall*, p. 257.

Calisto and Melebea the interest in stages of men's lives is indicated indirectly in the oppositions texts set up between old and young male characters, which implies a model of a male life-cycle behind the texts. The central characters of *Magnyfycence* and *Hick Scornor* are certainly gendered as male, and are probably to be understood as young, on the basis of the behaviours and experiences which they share with other young men of the interludes. However, the issues of youth and age, and transition to adulthood are not raised in the texts themselves.

The awareness these texts show of male development and ageing helps us to identify specific modes of thinking about gender that operate in these texts. Recent interest in later medieval masculinity has stemmed in part from work on ideologies of the body. These have emphasised the biologically essentialist nature of much later medieval thinking about men and women. That is, the qualities, characteristics and behaviours ascribed to men and women in scientific discourse, in moral texts, in legal codes are frequently justified by reference to the physical characteristics of the sexed bodies of men and women.⁵¹ Later medieval concepts of masculinity, whether the social practices which frame men's lives, or the norms and values which are integral to what it means to be a man in the period- are thus often rendered 'natural' in later medieval texts, as proceeding from the essential nature of men, rather than being the product of a specific time and place or a specific society and culture. Modern scholars have also stressed that the operations of factors such as status and ethnicity served to produce multiple masculinities and femininities.⁵² These multiple identities are frequently explicitly constructed in relation to each other.

This work offers important frameworks for the study of the young noblemen of *Nature, Fulgens and Lucrez, The Worlde and the Chylde, The Interlude of Youth, Calisto and Melebea*. Each grounds (explicitly or implicitly) a set of personality traits and behaviours in the young male bodies of the men concerned. Each also constructs male youth in relation to other age-related masculinities. The depiction of the life-cycle in

⁵¹Joan Cadden, *Meanings of Sex Difference in the Middle Ages: Medicine, Science and Culture* (Cambridge, 1993); Sarah Kay and Miri Rubin (eds.), *Framing Medieval Bodies* (Manchester, 1994); Jeffrey Jerome Cohen and Bonnie Wheeler (eds.), *Becoming Male in the Middle Ages* (New York, 1997).

⁵²See Thelma Fenster, 'Why men?', in CA Lees (ed.), *Medieval Masculinities: Regarding Men in the Middle Ages* (Minneapolis, 1994), pp. ix-xiii; Jacqueline Murray, 'Introduction', in J Murray (ed.), *Conflicted Identities and Multiple Masculinities: Men in the Medieval West* (New York and London, 1999), pp. ix-xx.

Nature, The Worlde and the Chylde and *The Interlude of Youth* shows that what it means to be a young man is very different to what it means to be an old one. Relational categories are apparent in *Fulgens and Luces* and *Calisto and Melebea*, where the young male characters are defined in terms of a series of binary oppositions between themselves and other figures in the plays: virtuous young noblemen and vicious young noblemen (Gaius vs. Cornelius); young noblemen and young noblewomen (Gaius and Cornelius vs. Luces, Calisto vs. Melebea); young noblemen and old noblemen (Gaius and Cornelius vs. Fulgens, Calisto vs. Danio); young noblemen and non-noble men (Gaius and Cornelius vs. A and B, Calisto vs. Sempronio and Parmeno).⁵³

The focus in all of these texts on problematic young noblemen, and the lack of exemplary young noblemen - except for the figure of Gaius in *Fulgens* - seems to suggest something of a crisis specifically in noble masculinity at the end of the fifteenth and beginning of the sixteenth centuries. Historians have paid considerable attention to the nobility of this period though this work has tended to focus on personalities and high politics. Noble men have in one sense been at the centre of histories of the reigns of Henry VII and Henry VIII since these have focused on issues like the relationship of the crown with great nobles, and the extent to which Tudor kings attempted to reduce the power of their nobles.⁵⁴ Helen Miller's study of the nobility under Henry VIII, and Bernard's study of the fourth and fifth earls of Shrewsbury both countered ideas of a crisis of the aristocracy produced by draconian Tudor policies, by stressing the lack of change in the position of the nobles they described.⁵⁵ Individual studies of nobles such as Harris's study of Edward Stafford, duke of Buckingham, and Gunn's study of Charles Brandon, duke of Suffolk do not offer much scope for generalising about noble masculinity and tend to follow the lines established by previous work; though Gunn's monograph is illuminating in terms of the ways in which Brandon set about constructing an identity as a great aristocrat after his elevation to the peerage.⁵⁶ These studies tend to give an impression that an understanding of noble identity remained stable across the later Middle Ages. From the point of view of students of gender, the problem with such work is that it tends to discuss the concept of

⁵³Grantley, *Wit's Pilgrimage*, p.61.

⁵⁴See Watts, 'Introduction' for a historiography of the period.

⁵⁵Bernard, *Power of the Early Tudor Nobility*; Miller, *Henry VIII and the English Nobility*.

⁵⁶BJ Harris, *Edward Stafford, third Duke of Buckingham, 1478-1521* (Stanford, 1986); Steven J Gunn, *Charles Brandon, Duke of Suffolk, c.1484-1545* (Oxford, 1988).

nobility as if it were gender free, while in fact writing almost exclusively about men.⁵⁷ Paradoxically, by making noblemen into the norm, this kind of history also renders noble *men* invisible.

Medieval historians with an interest in gender and gender theory, on the other hand, have not shown much interest in later medieval noble masculinity, perhaps because of the focus on the nobility of this period by political historians. In the recent collection of essays *Masculinity in Medieval Europe*, for example, all the contributions on aristocratic masculinity focused on the early and high Middle Ages.⁵⁸ Likewise, early modern scholars working on masculinity have tended to not to consider the early sixteenth century.⁵⁹ With the exception of Greenblatt, scholars working on early modern concepts of identity, and specifically the construction of noble identities have likewise tended to focus on the Elizabethan period; and few have considered gender in their discussions.⁶⁰ Noble masculinity of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries remains under-researched. The interludes are a valuable source for its study, since they show an ongoing dialogue about noble masculinity in this period.

The representations of noblemen in these texts need to be treated with caution. It would be rash to assert that noble masculinity was in crisis on the basis of these plays alone. As Breitenberg has observed, masculinities always seem to be in crisis.⁶¹ What modern scholars may perceive as a crisis may just be a reaction to the fact that masculinities are not the stable identities we assume they ought to be, but are always engaged in a process of redefinition, in response to changing historical and social contexts. It is perhaps worth

⁵⁷Recent work by historians of the later medieval nobility has attempted to fill this gap by turning attention to the life and careers of aristocratic women. See Jennifer Ward, *English Noblewomen in the Later Middle Ages* (Harlow, 1992); eadem (ed. and trans.), *Women of the English Nobility and Gentry, 1066-1500* (Manchester, 1995); Carolyn P Collette, 'Joan of Kent and Noble Women's Roles in Chaucer's World', *Chaucer Review* 33 (1999): 350-62; Barbara J Harris, *English Aristocratic Women, 1450-1550: Marriage and Family, Property and Careers* (Oxford, 2002).

⁵⁸DM Hadley (ed.), *Masculinity in Medieval Europe* (London and New York, 1999).

⁵⁹See for example Lynn Enterline, *The Tears of Narcissus: Melancholia and Masculinity in Early Modern Writing* (Stanford, 1995); Mark Breitenberg, *Anxious Masculinity in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 1996).

⁶⁰Stephen J Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare* (Chicago, 1980); Frank Whigham, *Ambition and Privilege: The Social Tropes of Elizabethan Courtesy Theory* (Berkeley, 1984); David M Posner, *The Performance of Nobility in Early Modern European Literature* (Cambridge, 1999).

⁶¹Breitenberg, *Anxious Masculinity*, p.3.

noting that many of the interludes cited above presents their noble male protagonists at moments of transition from life-stage to life-stage, either as they age (as in *Nature, The Worlde and the Chylde and Youth*), or as they contemplate marriage (as in *Fulgens and Lucrez*). These young men are in fact working towards an adult masculinity. To paraphrase Simone de Beauvoir, these men are not born noblemen, but become (or fail to become) noble men.

How might noble masculinity be responding to social change at the end of the fifteenth and beginning of the sixteenth century? Bevington argued that the nobility debate at the centre of *Fulgens and Lucrez* was evidence of the rise of a new kind of aristocrat, by advancement through royal service.⁶² There was nothing particularly new about such nobility debates.⁶³ Indeed since such debates were a Burgundian aristocratic fashion in the later fifteenth century, so it is perhaps more accurate to see them as part of an established aristocratic culture, which is more concerned with redefining and re-presenting itself to the world in order to preserve its position at the top of the social hierarchy.⁶⁴ The concern which such texts express may be more to do with *how* to be a nobleman than with *who* is a nobleman: with the expression and display of one's noble identity as a man, rather than with arguing about whether one qualifies as a noble in the first place.

As Kaminsky has expressed it medieval nobles were driven by an 'imperative of display'.⁶⁵ It was, in fact, never enough to *be* noble, in the sense of possessing an illustrious lineage. Nobility may have been understood as an innate, intangible quality conveyed by birth, but nobles were required to make that nature visible. One method of doing so was through conspicuous consumption, by investing in the right clothes, houses, plate, jewels; and by living in a style considered appropriate to a noble - indulging in aristocratic pastimes like hunting or hawking, keeping a suitable retinue of servants, patronising artists, scholars and institutions.⁶⁶ Display for nobles was not just a matter of possessing the right things,

⁶²Bevington, *Tudor Drama and Politics*, pp.42-53.

⁶³Robert C Jones, 'The Stage World and the "Real" World in Medwall's *Fulgens and Lucrez*', *MLQ* 32 (1971): 131-42; Moeslein (ed.), *Plays of Henry Medwall*, p.72.

⁶⁴Kipling, *The Triumph of Honour*.

⁶⁵Howard Kaminsky, 'Estate, Nobility, and the Exhibition of Estate in the Later Middle Ages', *Speculum*, 68 (1993): 684-709.

⁶⁶David Starkey, 'The Age of the Household', in S Medcalf (ed.), *The Later Middle Ages* (London, 1981), pp.225-90; Kate Mertes, 'Aristocracy', in R Horrox (ed.), *Fifteenth-Century Attitudes: Perceptions of Society in Late Medieval England* (Cambridge, 1994), pp.42-60 (50-51).

but of enacting or performing one's nobility. For noble masculinity, military service had a traditional importance. It was not only an act which nobles were required to perform, but an act in the performance of which noble identity was confirmed to a watching world. In the middle and later middle ages military prowess remained the leading characteristic associated with, even the *raison d'être* of the nobility.⁶⁷ It remained so well into the sixteenth century, as *The Institucion of a Gentleman* (1555) makes clear:

To be a perfect soldier or Captaine in the warres or to haue knowledge in the feates or armes is so honourable in a gentlemen that there can be nothyng more prayse worthy, nether is there any thing which hath reised nobilitie to a higher honour than valiency in armes hath done.⁶⁸

Military prowess remained central to the idea of noble masculinity, even when absence of war with France deprived English nobles of an international stage on which to fulfil their historic duties. The enthusiasm of the greater nobles for glamorous foreign wars is indicated in their response to Henry VIII's French campaigns of 1513. Although this was an episode with little real strategic point,⁶⁹ an overwhelming majority of peers participated in the campaign in person, while others made sure they were represented by men sent in their stead.⁷⁰ Having said this, military endeavour is noticeable by its absence in the interludes cited above. None of the noble protagonists of the plays go to war, except for the exemplary Gaius in *Fulgens and Luces*. Other kinds of violence are addressed in the texts, but these have a problematic relationship to noble masculinity. Curiously, apart from the possible exception of *Fulgens and Luces*, these texts do not really advocate - explicitly or implicitly - going to the wars as a crucial way for the young noblemen to establish their noble identity as men

In what other ways might a nobleman construct a noble identity for himself performatively? A concern with other ways of performing nobility is apparent in Edmund Dudley's treatise *The Tree of Commonwealth* (1509).⁷¹ In this text, Dudley admonishes noblemen to adopt 'noble condicions' to match the 'Honorable blood and great possession' they already possess, and advises them to rear their sons 'to the learning of vertue and

⁶⁷Ibid., pp.51-53. See also Chris Given-Wilson, *The English Nobility in the Late Middle Ages* (London, 1987), p.2;

⁶⁸Anon., *The Institucion of a Gentleman* (London, 1555), sig. D.viii.

⁶⁹John Guy, *Tudor England* (Oxford, 1988), p.84.

⁷⁰Miller, *Henry VIII*, pp.136-37.

⁷¹DM Brodie (ed.), *The Tree of Commonwealth: A Treatise Written by Edmund Dudley* (Cambridge, 1948).

conning'.⁷² Dudley goes on to link the bad education of young noblemen to their perceived failure to fill positions in public life which ought to be their due:

For verely I feare me, the noble men and gentlemen of England be the worst brought vp for the most parte of any realme of Christendom, and therefore the childeren of poore men and meane folke are promotyd to the promocion and auctorite yt thee childeren of noble Blood should haue yf thei were mete therefore.⁷³

This sounds entirely in keeping with Bevington's argument that the idea of nobility was being reconfigured by rising men, but in fact Dudley is not arguing about who is or who is not noble. He does not say, for instance, that young noblemen cease to be noble by their lack of particular qualities. Young noblemen's failure to attain 'vertue and conning' may be a shame in and of itself – it may be entirely unfitting in a moral sense. However, this lack threatens noble masculinity in a different way, since it debars the young nobleman from performing the roles he ought to as a nobleman. In particular it prevents him from gaining the 'auctorite yt thee childeren of noble Blood should haue'. Dudley presents the governing of others as something constitutive of noble and male identity. The noblemen cannot enact his noble masculinity without it.

There are other indications that noblemen felt that ways of performing their identity was under threat in this period. Sumptuary legislation was enacted repeatedly at the end of the fifteenth century and particularly in the early sixteenth century: in 1482-83, 1509-10, 1514-15, 1515-16 and 1532-33.⁷⁴ This legislation attempted to restrict the use of types of cloth and amounts of cloth used in clothing according to social group. The aim of this legislation was to restrict the signs of nobleness, in terms of clothing, to those who were noble by birth. It is notable that much of this prescription applies specifically to men. For example, the 1509-10 legislation dictates that only servants of the degree of gentleman may have 'two brode yerdes and a half' in a short gown, and 'three brode yerdes' in a long gown; and may face their garments with 'eny clothe above the price of 20d'.⁷⁵ These measures attempt to reinforce the visual distinctions between those who are noblemen by birth and those who are not. The erosion of distinctions between the noble and the non-

⁷²Ibid., pp.44-45.

⁷³Ibid., p.45.

⁷⁴Record Commission, *Statutes of the Realm*, 11 vols. (London, 1963), 2:468-70; 3:8-9, 121-23, 179-82, 430-32.

⁷⁵Ibid., 3:8-9.

noble is presented as a threat specifically to noble masculinity. In fact women are often exempted from the legislation altogether. The 1532-33 legislation suggests that this is because the noblemen is central to governance. This legislation claims that the lower orders' adoption of the dress of the nobility works to 'the subvercion of good and politike ordre in knowledge and disinccioon of people according to their estates, preemynences, dignities and degrees..'⁷⁶

The fact that the legislation had to be enacted repeatedly shows both how important visual signs were to the construction of noble masculinity, and how the changing patterns of consumption continued to threaten it. Indeed there is some evidence to show that nobles in the late fifteenth century were changing their patterns of consumption in order to preserve visual distinctions between themselves and other social groups. For example, when the wives of artisans started lining their clothes with squirrel fur – once a luxury which could only be afforded by nobles – nobles switched to purchasing the more exclusive (because scarcer) marten fur.⁷⁷

Work by buildings archaeologists and architectural historians also suggests that nobles were turning to other methods of performing their noble identity, through the manipulation of space in great houses built and rebuilt in the later fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. At the end of the fifteenth and sixteenth century great lords were increasing the distance between themselves and the rest of their household in a literal sense. Many great men, such as the Duke of Buckingham and the earl of Northumberland, did not routinely dine in the great hall, but in their own suites of apartments.⁷⁸ The creation of suites of rooms beyond the hall enabled the noble to emphasise his high status by creating spaces to which access could be controlled.⁷⁹ However the buildings archaeologist Jane Grenville has also argued that nobles of the early sixteenth century also used space within the great hall to underline their status. While new halls in the sixteenth century tended to be larger than in the past, this period also shows a 'definite increase in the number of

⁷⁶Ibid., 3:430-32.

⁷⁷Christopher Dyer, *Making a Living in the Middle Ages: The People of Britain, 850-1520* (New Haven and London, 2002), p.322.

⁷⁸Mark Girouard, *Life in the English Country House* (New Haven and London, 1978), pp.30-31, 45-46.

⁷⁹See David Starkey's discussion of Henry VIII's control of access to him: David Starkey, 'Intimacy and Innovation: The Rise of the Privy Chamber, 1485-1547', in D Starkey *et al*, *The English Court From the Wars of the Roses to the Civil War* (London, 1987), pp.71-118.

exceptionally long, narrow halls'.⁸⁰ Grenville suggests that through the manipulation of space, nobles were attempting to reinforce, even increase the sense of social distance between those at the top of the hierarchy and those at the bottom, by emphasising the value of the high end of the hall at the expense of the low.⁸¹ The increasing physical distance between high and low within the hall reflects an attempt to increase the sense of social distance between the noble and the non-noble.

The early interludes which deal with the acquisition of adult and noble masculinities by young men address some of the issues of the display of nobility. As Westfall has noted, figures such as Pryde in *Nature* and Youth in *The Interlude of Youth* refer to the way in which noble identity may be constructed in part through material possessions such as clothes.⁸² Though references to the ways in which the characters are costumed are necessarily brief, such discussions would have had a much greater impact in performance, particularly in the context of a noble household, where the members of the audience were themselves dressed to display their status.

However, in providing their noble protagonists with servants, these plays also open out the discussion of the way a nobleman should perform his identity into new areas. Nobles' investment in the fabric of great houses was part of their performance of identity, and the household which inhabited these buildings was also important for the business of constructing identity. The noble household or great household has been defined by Kate Mertes as a 'collection of servants, friends and other retainers around a noble and possibly his immediate family', which lived 'as a single community, for the purpose of creating the mode of life desired by the noble master and providing suitably for his needs'.⁸³ The household in this sense is a nexus of relationships centred on a single individual, usually a nobleman. The household had intensely practical functions, such as in the administration of the nobleman's estate and in the government of the locality.⁷¹ At the same time it had no

⁸⁰Jane Grenville, *Medieval Housing* (Leicester, 1997), pp.108-09.

⁸¹*Ibid.*, p.109.

⁸²Westfall, *Patrons and Performance*, pp.159, 163

⁸³Kate Mertes, *The English Noble Household, 1250-1600: Good Governance and Politic Rule* (Oxford, 1988), p.5. On later medieval noble households as institutions, see also Girouard, *Life in the English Country House*, pp.14-80; Starkey, 'The Age of the Household'; and CM Woolgar, *The Great Household in Late Medieval England* (New Haven, 1999).

⁷¹Girouard, *Life in the English Country House*, p.15; Starkey, 'Age of the Household', pp.244, 263; David Loades, *Tudor Government: Structures of Authority in the Sixteenth Century* (Oxford, 1997), pp.244-46; Woolgar, *Great Household*, pp.16-17.

less important symbolic functions. The size of the household - in terms of the numbers of people in it - was an indicator of the wealth and status of the nobleman, and great nobles were certainly expected to keep larger households than lesser nobles.⁷² The household was also employed to re-inscribe on a daily basis the status and authority of the nobleman through a never-ceasing round or ceremonial attendance upon the nobleman by his household servants and others within the household.⁷³ It may be said that this conscious display of the nobleman's status had an intensely practical purpose. It was instrumental in winning the respect of those at the political centre and the allegiance of those in the localities, and hence in helping the nobleman to promote his own interests.

Service was a particularly important aspect of later medieval life, not only because of the prevalence of relationships of service in most areas of medieval life, but because of the ideologies which were attached to it.⁷⁴ As Horrox has put it, service, 'has some claim to be considered the dominant ethic of the middle ages'.⁷⁵ Service was however essentially a personal relationship between two people: in the context of a great household, usually between a man and a man.⁷⁶ The management of these relationships was crucial to a nobleman in that they required him to display his 'good lordship', his capacity to look after the interests of his servants, in return for their faithful service.⁷⁷ In depicting such relationships between noble master and servant, the interludes draw attention to their importance to nobles, and give opportunities of investigating the ways in which noble masculinity is made to depend on them.

⁷²Starkey, 'Age of the Household', p.244; Woolgar, *Great Household*, pp.8-16.

⁷³Girouard, *Life in the English Country House*, pp.16, 22-23, 46-51.

⁷⁴On service in the later middle ages, see ME James, *A Tudor Magnate and the Tudor State: Henry Fifth Earl of Northumberland* (York, 1966), pp.5-9; Rosemary Horrox, 'Service', in Horrox (ed.), *Fifteenth-Century Attitudes*, pp.61-78; and PJP Goldberg, 'What Was A Servant?', in A Curry and E Matthew (eds.), *Concepts and Patterns of Service in the Later Middle Ages* (Woodbridge, 2000), pp.1-20.

⁷⁵Horrox, 'Service', p.61.

⁷⁶Ibid, pp.63-65.

⁷⁷Ibid., pp.65-66; James, *Tudor Magnate*, pp.8-10.

Politics and youth

The nobility of the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries was a ruling class, involved in the government at a local and a national level. This suggests that the noble masculinities discussed in interludes should also be closely bound up with questions of rule and governance. As we have seen, interludes have long been regarded as political literature in the sense that they comment on the personalities and politics of the political centre. The association of particular interludes with high political culture was natural in the case of those interludes associated with named authors, such as Medwall's *Fulgens and Lucrez* and Skelton's *Magnyfycence*. Through these authors it was possible to connect the texts with some of the leading political figures of the of the day.

Medwall's *Fulgens and Lucrez*, for example, is usually associated with the household of John Morton, on the basis of the description of the author in the first printed edition of the play-text as 'late chapelyn' to Morton.⁷⁸ Morton was Archbishop of Canterbury and Lord Chancellor, and as a trusted councillor of Henry VII was one of the few individuals credited with any real influence over the king.⁷⁹ Boas and Reed, the first modern editors of the play, saw it in the context of early Tudor diplomacy, by interpreting references to the 'basse dance' of Spain and a line of Flemish in the text as allusions to Spanish and Flemish ambassadors amongst the audience.⁸⁰ This allusion encourages a reading of the play as a part of the negotiations for the marriage between Arthur and Katherine of Arragon, in which Lucrez' choice of the low-born but virtuous Gaius is designed to press the merits of Arthur and the newly-established dynasty of the Tudors.⁸¹

Bevington's reading of *Fulgens and Lucrez* - as one supporting a royal policy of promoting 'new' aristocrats to positions of influence, at the expense of aristocrats from old established families - has encouraged subsequent scholars to seek allusions to particular personalities in the Tudor court. Some have focused on the figure of Cornelius, the noble

⁷⁸On some caveats with this association, see below.

⁷⁹MM Condon, 'Ruling Elites in the Reign of Henry VII', in C Ross (ed.), *Patronage, Pedigree and Power in Later Medieval England* (Gloucester, 1979), pp.109-42 (pp.128-29). On Morton's life and career, see *DNB*, 10:1048-49; AB Emden, *A Biographical Register of the University of Cambridge to 1500* (Cambridge, 1963), pp.412-13; Christopher Harper-Bill, *The Register of John Morton, Archbishop of Canterbury, 1486-1500*, Canterbury and York Society 75 (1987), p.vii-ix.

⁸⁰FS Boas and AW Reed (eds.), *Fulgens & Lucrez: A Fifteenth-Century Secular Play* (Oxford, 1926), pp.xix-xx.

⁸¹Kipling, *Triumph of Honour*, pp.20-21.

suitors, who is presented as an unflattering portrait of an arrogant aristocrat, and have suggested that the play should be seen as a satire of aristocrats whom the Tudor court wished to exclude and discredit.⁸² Godfrey on the other hand saw the text as one which supports 'new' aristocrats. He related the issue of the printed edition of the play to the marriage of Charles Brandon, the newly created duke of Suffolk, to Mary Tudor, the sister of Henry VIII, and the newly widowed Queen of France.⁸³ According to Godfrey, Brandon wanted to make use of the play's model of 'true' nobility based on virtue, rather than birth, in order to justify the rather unequal marriage. Olga Horner, on the other hand, has interpreted the figure of Lucretia as an allusion to Lady Margaret Beaufort, mother of Henry VII, who was active in political and court life.⁸⁴

Lancashire suggested that *Youth* should be associated with the household of the fifth earl of Northumberland, in which context it can be read as an educational work, addressed to the earl's son, Lord Henry Percy.⁸⁵ In Lancashire's reading the profligate *Youth* is a satire of the young Henry VIII, sharpened by Northumberland's disappointment at not being given more political authority in the north.⁸⁶ The association with the Northumberland household has generally been accepted, so much so that Happé recently described the interlude as a 'political allegory' rather than a moral one.⁸⁷ Scholars were less convinced by Lancashire's association of *The Worlde and the Chylde* with the household of Richard Grey, earl of Kent.⁸⁸

⁸²On Cornelius as Perkin Warbeck see Moeslein (ed.), *Plays of Henry Medwall*, pp.60-68. On Cornelius as Edmund de la Pole, see RG Siemens, ' "As Strayght as Only Pole": Publius Cornelius, Edmund de la Pole, and Contemporary Court Satire in Henry Medwall's *Fulgens and Lucretia*', *Renaissance Forum* 1.2 (September 1996) [<http://www.hull.ac.uk/renforum/v1no2/siemens.htm>].

⁸³RA Godfrey, 'Nervous Laughter in Henry Medwall's *Fulgens and Lucretia*', *Tudor Theatre* 3 (1996):81-96. On Brandon's life and career, see Gunn, *Charles Brandon*.

⁸⁴Olga Horner, '*Fulgens and Lucretia*: An Historical Perspective', *METH* 15 (1995): 49-86. On Lady Margaret's life and career see Michael K Jones and Malcolm G Underwood, *The King's Mother: Lady Margaret Beaufort, Countess of Richmond and Derby* (Cambridge, 1992).

⁸⁵Lancashire (ed.), *Two Tudor Interludes*, pp.26-30.

⁸⁶*Ibid.*, pp.54-58.

⁸⁷Fox, *Politics and Literature*, p.235; Westfall, *Patrons and Performance*, p.115; Walker, *Plays of Persuasion*, p.10. See also Peter Happé, *English Drama Before Shakespeare* (London and New York, 1999), p.140.

⁸⁸Ian Lancashire, 'The Auspices of *The World and the Child*', *Renaissance and Reformation* 12 (1976): 96-105. For a critical appraisal of Lancashire's argument, see Clifford Davidson and Peter Happé (eds.), *The Worlde and the Chylde* (Kalamazoo, 1999), pp.4-5.

As this survey suggests, scholars have found it natural to see some of the earliest interludes as political plays, alluding to specific people and events. However, though *Nature* was written by the same author, and apparently for the same patron as *Fulgens and Lucres*, there has been little attempt to read *Nature* as a political play. The kind of readings cited above depend on the modern scholar's being able to spot the allusions in the text: and allusions by their very nature are not always immediately apparent to the modern reader of play-texts. However there does seem a certain resistance to seeing *Nature* as a political play, and this is probably at least in part due to *Nature*'s being categorised as a 'morality' play. Scholars seem still to assume that the play deals with the universal to the exclusion of the particular, and refers only to a closed, self-contained and medieval system of thought. However, as Potter has pointed out *Nature* is a 'courtly' text, written for a sophisticated and politically astute audience at the political centre.

The work of Potter, and other, more recent scholars, on *Magnyfycence* suggests some alternative approaches which would enable us to see early moral interludes as political in another way: as texts which draw on and discuss the theory of government in order to comment on the practice of government around them. As Potter first put it, *Magnyfycence* is different to morality plays such as *Everyman* in that the problem of human sinfulness is discussed in terms of 'a problem of government... thus finding in the relation of king and court a metaphor of wide significance'.⁸⁹ Walker has shown that *Magnyfycence* draws on contemporary political theory in its reference to the Aristotelian kingly virtues.⁹⁰ Moreover, like Aristotelian political theory, it links these virtues to the governance of a royal household. The king shows that he possesses – or does not possess – these virtues in the way he deals with his servants, so that *Magnyfycence*'s royal household is a place where he reveals his capacity, or lack of capacity, to govern others. Walker has gone on to develop the idea that interludes are a form of political literature, to be read in connection with sixteenth-century mirrors for princes literature, such as Elyot's *The Governour* and

⁸⁹Potter, *English Morality Play*, p.79.

⁹⁰Greg Walker, 'A Domestic Drama: John Skelton's *Magnyfycence* and the Royal Household', in idem, *Plays of Persuasion: Drama and Politics at the Court of Henry VIII* (Cambridge, 1991), pp.60-101. See also Alistair Fox, *Politics and Literature in the Reigns of Henry VII and Henry VIII* (Oxford, 1989), pp.237-40; John Scattergood, 'Skelton's *Magnyfycence* and the Tudor Royal Household', *METH* 15 (1995): 21-48.

Castiglione's *The Courtier*.⁹¹ Walker suggests that interludes take up the position of the honest, truth-telling counsellor, as described in princely mirrors, who has the moral courage to criticise his lord when necessary.⁹² The honest counsellor is constructed in these texts in opposition to the flatterer, who tells the lord what he wants to hear, usually to ensure his own gain. In watching an interlude which offers perhaps unpalatable criticism, a nobleman takes up the position of the good ruler in mirrors for princes, who is characterised by his ability to accept good counsel and reject bad counsel. In this way, the act of watching the interlude becomes a kind of political act, a way for the nobleman to advertise his political competence in terms drawn from political theory.

The fact that interludes are closely engaged with political thought is not incompatible with their function as educational literature for young noblemen, in the way suggested by Lancashire. In fact, most educational literature for noblemen in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries was political literature, in the form of the long tradition of mirrors for princes written and re-copied over the fifteenth century.⁹³ These works, though initially at least, addressed to named princes were widely circulated amongst the English nobility. They dealt explicitly with political theory, because their ostensible purpose was to educate a young man for the business of government.

Among the most popular of these texts in fifteenth century England was Giles of Rome's *De regimine principum*, and the pseudo-Aristotelian *Secretum secretorum*. *De regimine principum* was written c.1275 for the heir to the French throne, and began to circulate in England in the early fourteenth century.⁹⁴ Charles Briggs has identified sixty extant manuscripts of English provenance, which contain French, Latin and (in a unique case) Middle English versions of the text.⁹⁵ Several manuscripts were or appear to have

⁹¹Greg Walker, 'Household Drama and the Art of Good Counsel', in idem, *Politics of Performance*, pp.51-75.

⁹²Ibid., pp.63-75.

⁹³On the mirrors for princes genre in England as educational literature, see Orme, *From Childhood to Chivalry*, pp.81-109. See also RF Green, *Poets and Princepleasers: Literature and the English Court in the Late Middle Ages* (Toronto, 1980), pp.135-67; and Judith Ferster, *Fictions of Advice: the Literature and Politics of Counsel in Late Medieval England* (Philadelphia, 1996). On use of topoi of counsel in the sixteenth century, see JA Guy, 'The Rhetoric of Counsel in Early Modern England', in D Hoak (ed.), *Tudor Political Culture* (Cambridge, 1995), pp.292-310.

⁹⁴Charles F Briggs, *Giles of Rome's De regimine principum: Reading and Writing Politics at Court and University, c.1275-c.1525* (Cambridge, 1999), pp.9, 53-56.

⁹⁵John Trevisa's English translation found in London, British Library MS Digby 233 (produced between 1408 and c.1417) has recently been edited: see DC Fowler, CF Briggs and PG Remley (eds.),

been owned by the English nobility, and documentary sources suggest that other royal and aristocratic figures owned copies.⁹⁶ Many of the manuscripts were used as a convenient digest of Aristotelian moral philosophy by university students studying Aristotle for arts courses.⁹⁷ The *Secretum secretorum*, which purports to be a letter from Aristotle to his pupil Alexander, was perhaps even more popular.⁹⁸ There are at least eight independent prose translations into Middle English extant in manuscripts which date from across the fifteenth century; along with a verse rendering by John Lydgate and Benedict Burgh; and a Scots version by Gilbert Haye.⁹⁹ The *Secretum secretorum* was printed by Robert Copland in 1528.

Many other English writers of the later medieval period composed their own vernacular mirrors which often used the *Secretum secretorum* and *De regimine principum* as sources. Among these, the most popular were probably Gower's *Confessio amantis* (1386-90, revised 1393), Book Seven of which is based on the *Secretum secretorum*; and Hoccleve's *Regement of Princes* (c.1412). Gower's work seems to have been particularly popular in the early sixteenth century, as it was exempted in legislation for the suppression of pre-Reformation literature.¹⁰⁰ Copies of the *Confessio amantis* were owned by several figures from Henry VIII's court, including Charles Brandon, duke of Suffolk; and Elizabeth Blount, mother of Henry VIII's illegitimate son, Henry Fitzroy, duke of Richmond.¹⁰¹ Manuscripts of the *Regement* give evidence of sixteenth century owners, including Sir John Allyn, Lord Mayor of London, and Thomas Wall, who was Windsor Herald in 1525.¹⁰²

These texts advance ideologies of government which present men, particularly noblemen and princes principally in terms of their function in ruling others. In other words,

The Governauce of Kings and Princes: John Trevisa's Middle English Translation of the De regimine principum of Aegidius Romanus (New York and London, 1997).

⁹⁶Ibid., pp. 53-69.

⁹⁷Ibid., pp. 91-95.

⁹⁸The Arabic origins of the text and its circulation throughout medieval Europe are described in MA Manzalaoui (ed.), *Secretum secretorum: Nine English Versions*, EETS, OS 76 (1977).

⁹⁹See *ibid.*, *Secretum secretorum*. See also RR Steele (ed.) *Three Prose Versions of the Secreta Secretorum*, EETS, ES 74 (1898); and *idem* (ed.), *Lydgate and Burgh's Secrees of old philisosffres: A Version of the Secreta secretorum*, EETS, ES 66 (1894).

¹⁰⁰Kate Delia Harris, 'Ownership and Readership: Studies in the Provenance of the Manuscripts of Gower's *Confessio Amantis*' (PhD Thesis, University of York, 1993), pp. 9-13.

¹⁰¹Ibid., pp. 171-72, 174-177, 209-43.

¹⁰²MC Seymour, 'The Manuscripts of Hoccleve's *Regiment of Princes*', *Transactions of the Edinburgh Bibliographical Society* 4 (1974): 253-97. See esp. p. 257.

they establish a model of noble masculinity which makes the noble identity of men dependent on the ways in which they discipline both themselves and others. Moreover, in the discussions of the role of counsel in government, young men are depicted as having a particular significance as emblematic of bad kingship and incompetent rule.¹⁰³ This means that the young men even of overtly moral plays like *Nature* or *The Worlde and the Chylde* have a political significance, since they are so often shown as being the objects of counsel offered by servants. The texts borrow from and contribute to a wider political discourse. This in a sense is natural if we view interludes as the product of noble cultures and concerned with discussing noble ideologies. As Walker has suggested, it is also likely that noble patrons and their interlude writers are attempting actively to make use of these political discourses in order to contribute to a wider process of image-making on behalf of the patron, and part of this process is opening up a space for free criticism of themselves in interludes.¹⁰⁴ Watching an interlude, and accepting its hard-hitting criticism is for a noble patron a political act, which speaks of the patron's competence as a ruler in terms drawn from the ideology of counsel. This begs the question of what political messages contained in the representation particularly of the young noblemen in the texts; and how accepting these messages might redound to the credit of the noble patron as their audience.

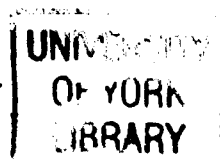
Sources

The interpretation of these interludes in the context of noble strategies for self-presentation relies on an assumption that these texts were first performed in noble households. This kind of interpretation assumes that elements of the play allude directly and more frequently indirectly to this context: to the noble patron who was present at the performance, to his political situation in relation to court politics, or to his enemies and rivals. External evidence from household records suggests that many interludes were produced and consumed within the noble household: for example, the earl of Northumberland's household book provides for the almoner to have a clerk, should he be a writer of interludes.¹⁰⁵ This implies a first performance of interludes amongst a group of

¹⁰³Ferster, *Fictions of Advice*, pp.108-133.

¹⁰⁴Walker, 'Household Drama'.

¹⁰⁵Westfall, *Patrons and Performance*, pp.119-20.



people closely attuned to the patron's affairs, who would be able to pick up oblique references without these being belaboured. Some anecdotal evidence of performances suggests that audiences were used to reading the political subtexts of plays by making connections between them and the high status members of the audience. Hall recounts how Wolsey took offence at an interlude staged at Gray's Inn in 1526.¹⁰⁶ Suspecting that the play was making personal criticism of him and his influence over Henry VIII, Wolsey is said to have jailed John Roo, and carpeted the young gentlemen who acted in the performance. It may have been that Wolsey was mistaken in his assumptions; or it may have been that Roo and his company were indeed using the play to make barbed political commentary at his expense. However this may be, the anecdote certainly suggests not only that Wolsey made a personal application of the play to himself but that he expected others to do so too. Interlude drama seems to be written at least in the first instance for particular audiences - and by extension for particular times, places - and these contexts are likely to elicit particular meanings in performance.

However, in the case of the surviving interlude texts, it is precisely these details of context which often remain obscure. References in accounts to performances by 'players' and interluders suggest that perhaps hundreds of plays were once performed,¹⁰⁷ but there is little information about the titles or content of these dramatic works in contemporary sources, apart from those interlude-texts which were printed in the sixteenth century. The printed play-texts may only represent a small sample of the texts which were actually performed.¹⁰⁸ As the history of *Fulgens and Lucrez* shows, it has proved all too easy even for printed play-texts to disappear. Up until 1919, it was only known to exist in two brief fragments, when a complete copy only came to light through the sale of the library of Mostyn Hall.¹⁰⁹

It is difficult to be sure how representative these texts are of the drama of the period,

¹⁰⁶H Ellis (ed.), *Hall's Chronicle* (London, 1809), p.719.

¹⁰⁷These English terms are usually used to designate dramatic performance, rather than musical performance. The use of Latin terminology seems to be much more inexact. For example, the term 'histrion' - which REED usually renders as 'entertainer' - is a very general term. It has proved impossible to say what kind of entertainer or entertainment might be referred to by it. Even within the same sets of accounts, usage may vary. See Davis, 'Meaning'. See also John Wasson, 'Professional Actors in the Middle Ages and Early Renaissance', *Medieval and Renaissance Drama* 1 (1984): 1-11.

¹⁰⁸Pettit, for example, raised the possibility that the surviving interludes may represent the remnant of otherwise lost traditions of seasonal plays. See Pettit, 'Tudor Interludes'.

¹⁰⁹Moeslein (ed.), *Plays of Henry Medwall*, pp.185-191.

and we do not really understand much about the reasons why particular texts were selected for printing, nor even who was ultimately responsible for making that selection.¹¹⁰ Some of the earliest interludes to be printed do not seem to present themselves as play-texts at all. As Ian Lancashire noted with respect to *Hick Scorer*, the printed text nowhere refers to itself as a play, and it may be that its printer, Wynkyn de Worde, was presenting it as a 'verse satire', rather than a performance text.¹¹¹ Davidson and Happé have also noted the lack of textual apparatus for actors in the edition issued by de Worde in 1522.¹¹² They suggest that the printing of the play was intended to fit 'the body of moralizing, devotional, and meditational reading matter', issued by early presses.¹¹³ The title page of Richard Pynson's edition of *Everyman* (1510x1519) describes the text as 'a treatyse..in maner of a morall play'.¹¹⁴ Pynson may be aligning the play to fit in with the existing market for printed works of spiritual guidance. Rastell's edition of *Calisto and Melebea* of c.1525 describes the play as a 'new commodye in englysh in maner of an enterlude'.¹¹⁵ This description, one of the earliest uses of the term comedy, was probably intended to align the play with the kind of Terentian drama, which was beginning to be acted in schools and universities.¹¹⁶ Later printed editions of plays are presented in more direct terms as texts to be acted, with stage directions and references on title pages to ways in which the plays might be cut in performance; to the number of actors the text required; and to their entertainment value.¹¹⁷

Relating the printed text to a specific performance is also a something of a problem, since, for the early plays at least, there is no explicit reference to performances in the rubrics to the plays. Internal references in these texts indicate that they are indeed 'records of single performances in a known location with familiar conditions for which the script has been specially tailored'.¹¹⁸ These locations seem often to have been great halls. All the plays

¹¹⁰These issues are discussed in detail by Greg Walker: 'Early Drama and the Printed Text', in *idem*, *Politics of Performance*, pp.6-50.

¹¹¹Lancashire (ed.), *Two Tudor Interludes*, p.12. De Worde's edition dates from 1515x1516.

¹¹²Davidson and Happé (eds.), *The Worlde and the Chylde*, p.2.

¹¹³*Ibid.*, p.3.

¹¹⁴AC Cawley (ed.), *Everyman* (Manchester, 1961), p.1.

¹¹⁵Richard Axton (ed.), *Three Rastell Plays; Four Elements, Calisto and Melebea, Gentleness and Nobility* (Cambridge and Totowa, NJ, 1979), p.70.

¹¹⁶*Ibid.*, p.16.

¹¹⁷Walker, 'Early drama', pp.16-25.

¹¹⁸*Ibid.*, p.33.

studied in this thesis show signs of having been performed in such a great hall venue. *Fulgens* and *Nature* are divided into two parts, probably to accommodate performance between the courses of a banquet or on two separate evenings. There is also in *Fulgens* explicit textual reference to the audience's eating and drinking.¹¹⁹ These plays are probably to be associated with festive occasions such as Twelfth Night which was one of the key days for feasting and entertaining in the year of a noble household.¹²⁰ Lancashire has discussed *Youth's* references to drinking and sport, and its emphasis on penance and confession as suitable to the twelve days of Christmas, and to Shrovetide respectively.¹²¹

There are also references to the typical architecture of halls. Indeed both Cornelius and the servant A in *Nature* refer directly to 'this hall' in which they find themselves.¹²² Characters in *Fulgens and Lucre*s and *Nature* refer to the 'fyre' in the hall.¹²³ Pryde in *Nature* describes himself as one who 'comys in at the dorys'.¹²⁴ Presumably he has entered through the doors in the screens passage at the low end of the hall, through which strangers would have entered the household.¹²⁵ *Calisto and Melebea* makes use of the screens doors to indicate Calisto's departure 'outside' to his garden.¹²⁶ Several of the plays also refer to the household staff who were in attendance as the entertainment proceeded. Pryde in *Nature* goes as far as complaining of his reception in the hall, by the 'real' servants among the audience; and *Worldly Affeccyon* berates the bystanders (presumably household servants) for not fetching him a chair.¹²⁷ In *Fulgens*, the servant B refers beyond the play to the marshal who has permitted him to enter the hall and watch the play, while A calls on the usher to serve more wine.¹²⁸ Cornelius seeks a servant amongst the audience whom he addresses as 'gode felowes..in this hall'.¹²⁹ At the end of Part One, A says that the rest of the play will performed 'At my lordis pleasure', while at the end of Part Two A asks the

¹¹⁹*Fulgens and Lucre*s, I.2-3,1415-20,1422-23. Line references are to Nelson (ed.), *Plays of Henry Medwall*.

¹²⁰Nelson (ed.), *Plays*, pp.18-19. On seasonal drama within noble households, see Pettit, 'Tudor Interludes'; Greenfield, 'Festive Drama'.

¹²¹Lancashire (ed.), *Two Tudor Interludes*, p.21.

¹²²*Nature*, I,354, 631; II.50. Line references are to Nelson (ed.), *Plays of Henry Medwall*.

¹²³*Ibid.*, I.1302.

¹²⁴*Fulgens and Lucre*s, I.726.

¹²⁵*Nature*, I.723-30.

¹²⁶Southern, 'Technique', p.89.

¹²⁷*Nature*, II.512-19.

¹²⁸*Ibid.*, I.147-49,1422-23.

¹²⁹*Fulgens and Lucre*s, I.354.

'gode women' present for their opinion on Lucre's way of choosing a husband.¹³⁰

Though these interludes were designed for performance in a great hall, there is much less evidence as to the specific venues or patrons of the first performance. The identification of auspices is a question of a balance of probability. It is probable that *Fulgens and Lucre's* and *Nature* were first performed in the household of Cardinal John Morton, the Chancellor of England, since the title pages of both plays refer to their author Henry Medwall as 'late chapelayne to the ryght reverent fader in God Johan Morton'.¹³¹ However, it is entirely possible that the Morton's name is being invoked here for other reasons. Edwards and Meale have shown that, in the case of early printed works, the citing of the name of a noble by the printer does not necessarily indicate direct patronage of the text in any way.¹³² The connection between a noble and the printed work which bears their name may be a much more tenuous one.

The ascription of other interludes discussed in this thesis to particular households is an even more difficult affair. This must often be done on the basis of the interpretation of allusions in the play-text, which are in their very nature capable of more than one interpretation. By their very nature - usually as in-jokes - such allusions rely on the audience's ability to spot references to personalities or events, without the need for these to be spelled out. There is also the danger of making allusions into 'keys' for interpreting the whole text: and hence making them carry more interpretative weight than they can bear.

Sometimes, as in the case of *The Interlude of Youth*, the attribution of an interlude to a specific noble household can be made because it appears that the interlude would fit neatly into what we already know about that household. The earl of Northumberland's household is particularly well documented, so that we know much about his patronage of touring players, the organisation of his chapel, the series of dramatic performances which punctuated the household year, and his interest in the educational literature aimed at young men. It is clear that *The Interlude of Youth* would sit very comfortably in this household. It may be of course that if we had more information about other noble households in the north, we might not be so ready to identify *Youth* with the Northumberland household.

The dating of plays can also be a difficult matter. With some plays, internal

¹³⁰Tbid., I.1432.

¹³¹Nelson (ed.), *Plays of Henry Medwall*, pp.32, 92.

¹³²ASG Edwards and Carole M Meale, 'The Marketing of Printed Books in Late Medieval England', *The Library*, series six 15 (1993): 95-124.

references suggest fairly precise dates, such as is the case with *Youth*.¹³³ With other texts, the only date referred to may be that of printing, such as is the case with *The Worlde and the Chylde*, and *Calisto and Melebea*. The case of *Nature* and *Fulgens and Lucre*s is slightly more open. The date of the printed editions can be deduced from typographical evidence to c.1512 for *Fulgens and Lucre*s and c.1530 for *Nature*.¹³⁴ The texts are usually assumed to have been written in the 1490s because of their association with Morton, who died in 1500.¹³⁵ Medwall disappears from the legal and episcopal records, which document his professional activities under Morton, in 1501;¹³⁶ but it is entirely possible that he entered some other kind of service after Morton's death, for which documentation does not survive.¹³⁷

Given the difficulties of writing about actual, originary performances of these play-texts, I consider in this thesis potential performances rather than actual ones. The allusive nature of interlude texts, and the fact that contexts of performances were so important in producing responses indicate that the meanings of the texts are not to be found in texts alone. But even in the same physical space and before the same audience, two performances of the same text might well make a different impact. My emphasis will be on the ways in which performances might elicit different meanings from texts, and this implies a range of different responses possible in the contexts of different households and before different personalities.

Scope, aims and methodology of the thesis

This thesis is a study of the representation of the young noblemen in the early Tudor interludes *Nature*, *Fulgens and Lucre*s, *The Worlde and the Chylde*, *The Interlude of Youth* and *Calisto and Melebea*. It will focus on what the interludes have to say about noble masculinity, about it means to become an adult and noble man. Where previous work has emphasised the way in which interludes discuss the construction of noble identity through

¹³³Lancashire (ed.), *Two Tudor Interludes*, pp.18-22.

¹³⁴This evidence is discussed in detail in Moeslein (ed.), *Plays of Henry Medwall*, pp.194-97, 396-98.

¹³⁵See for example, Nelson (ed.), *Plays of Henry Medwall*, p.3.

¹³⁶*Ibid.*, pp.13-14.

¹³⁷Horner, '*Fulgens and Lucre*s', pp.76-77.

visual signs such as dress, I will read the interludes in connection with educational literature of the fifteenth and early sixteenth century to investigate other ways in which the plays discuss the process of the construction of noble masculinity. In particular, I will examine the neglected issue of the household in these plays. The depictions of relations between noble masters and their household servants do not only provide realistic scenes of household life, but suggest ways in which noble masculinities are made dependent on the negotiation of relationships with servants and counsellors. The thesis will also suggest ways in which the figures of young and noble householders in the plays might act as a kind of political shorthand, which is employed in order to help noble patrons of the interludes express something of their own political competence.

This study of young men in a small group of early Tudor interludes is therefore a study of the ideas about the young, rather than an enquiry into the realities of the lives of the young. It does not assume that these plays offer an unmediated description of the young of their time. As has been suggested above, the representations of young noblemen in the group of interludes are strongly influenced by the generic conventions of moral, political and other literature. Rather, this kind of study is concerned with the ways in which a particular literary genre constructs an image of young men at a particular time.

In the thesis I will assume that the depiction of the young (and indeed the old) is not only historically specific, but gender- and status-specific. Concepts of youth or age cannot be considered as natural, trans-historical phenomena, any more than concepts of gender can be. Youth and childhood are themselves socially and historically specific, in that what it means to be young may be radically different in different times and places.¹³⁸ This implies that there is a more complex discussion of identity categories at play in these interludes than is sometimes acknowledged. They do not refer to one category of 'nobility' only, and not just one debate about the definition of the noble versus the ignoble. Instead, the texts present a series of masculinities and femininities which are being defined and redefined in relation to each other. I do not assume that these descriptions of young and noble men are neutral, but that the texts are setting out to mark certain masculinities as appropriate and others as inappropriate to those of noble birth.

This thesis is interdisciplinary in its nature, in that it aims to use the sources of one

¹³⁸Philippe Ariès, *Centuries of Childhood*, trans. R Baldick (London, 1972); James A Schultz, *The Knowledge of Childhood in the German Middle Ages, 1100-1350* (Philadelphia, 1995), pp.1-20.

discipline (the literary sources of the early Tudor interlude) in order to examine issues from other disciplines (the history of concepts of masculinity, and of the concept of youth). Parts of the thesis will also use sources and methodologies not traditionally associated with the study of literature, in order to build an interpretative framework for the interludes which will be the main focus of the latter part of the thesis. For example, when I discuss the great household as a context for interludes, I draw on architectural evidence (such as the disposition of hall space) and historical material (such as household ordinances) in order to illustrate the kinds of idealised households which were imagined by elites, and against which the interludes invite us to compare the households headed by young men. In this I am, of course, following the example of many scholars of medieval and Tudor artistic endeavour, including Chambers, Bevington, Anglo, Kipling, Lancashire, Westfall and Walker.

The focus of the thesis on masculinity also means that it relies on the work of gender theorists and sociologists for a theoretical understanding of the ways in which identity categories are constructed. For example, I rely on theories of performance in order to discuss the ways in which young men might construct a self through different kinds of display. This relies on an understanding of the performance of a social persona developed by Erving Goffman; and is informed by the discussions of early modern scholars on the constructing of selves in the Renaissance period.¹³⁹ I also make use of Judith Butler's work on gender performativity.¹⁴⁰

My understanding of the ways in which stages of the life span may be conceived, and the implications of modern ways of defining age categories such as 'child', 'youth' and 'adolescent' owes much to the work of the sociologists Chris Jenks, Alison Prout, Christine Griffen, Johanna Wyn and Rob White.¹⁴¹ The work of Aries and Schultz has provided

¹³⁹Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (first published Edinburgh, 1956). Early modern scholarship on the construction of the self includes: Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning*; Whigham, *Ambition and Privilege*; Posner, *Performance of Nobility*.

¹⁴⁰Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York, 1990); eadem, 'Imitation and Gender Insubordination', in D Fuss (ed.), *Inside/Out: Lesbian Theories, Gay Theories* (New York, 1992), pp.13-31.

¹⁴¹Christine Griffen, *Representations of Youth: The Study of Youth and Adolescence in Britain and America* (Cambridge, 1993); Allison James, Chris Jenks and Alan Prout, *Theorizing Childhood* (Cambridge, 1997); Allison James and Alan Prout (eds.), *Constructing and reconstructing childhood: contemporary issues in the sociological study of childhood* (London, 1990); Chris Jenks, *Childhood* (London, 1996); Johanna Wyn and Rob White, *Rethinking Youth* (London, 1997).

important ways of defamiliarising these familiar concepts, treating them as constructed and subject to change, rather than phenomena which are natural, obvious and universal.¹⁴² The idea that an academic discipline (such as medicine) or a text (such as an early Tudor interlude) might form 'objects' (such as particular psychological pathologies, or an idea of 'youth') which 'emerge' at specific historical moments, goes back to Foucault's *The Archaeology of Knowledge*.¹⁴³ Here Foucault first established the idea that processes of designation and naming, classification and differentiation were fundamental to the constitution of such objects.

The opening chapters of the thesis examine some of the ways in which an idea of 'youth' had already been constituted as a 'object' of study and knowing in the later medieval period. In Chapter One I engage with the ways in which the period of (male) youth came to be defined by medical and scientific traditions in the medieval period. I consider in particular the ways in which schemes of the Ages of Man name and define periods of youth, and the implications of these practices. This forms the basis of a comparison between Ages of Man with the structures of the interludes, which shows the variation of male 'youths' offered by the interludes, which is masked by their apparent conformity to Ages of Man traditions. Chapter Two goes on to study the ways in which later medieval moral and devotional literature, courtesy literature, and political traditions of the fifteenth century constructed images of young men, often founded on an understanding of male development derived from natural philosophy and medicine.

In Chapters Three and Four of the thesis I read the interludes' depiction of young men in the context of the ideologies of the later medieval noble household. Chapter Three considers the ways which the group of interludes construct a concept of noble masculinity with reference to the act of house-holding by a noble master. The household - as a physical space, administrative unit, and as a social and political institution - already carried its own ideological baggage on which the interludes draw and to which they contribute. Chapter Four develops the ways in which the depictions of young men in the interludes may be interpreted in political terms, in relation to concepts of rule and authority. It applies the framework of the household as a model of the individual and the kingdom, derived from the study of political literature in Chapter Two, to the interludes to show how the figure

¹⁴²Ariès, *Centuries of Childhood*; Schultz, *Knowledge about Childhood*.

¹⁴³Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (London, 1972).

of the young man acts as a symbol for political ineptitude. This chapter also shows how individual interludes can be said to exploit the multiple meanings of young men in order to comment on personalities and politics of the period. Since the foregoing chapters will tend to stress what the depictions of young men have in common, I examine some of the idiosyncratic features of the depiction of young men in *Nature*, *Fulgens and Lucretia*, and *Youth*, and indicate ways that the figures of young men might be co-opted into the political strategies of the nobles with whom they have been associated, or in which those within their household might take up the stance of the truth-telling critic.



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Chapter One. Defining Youth.

Of the interludes which are the subject of this thesis, three are plays which depict the male life-cycle: *Nature*, *The Worlde and the Chylde* and *The Interlude of Youth*. *Nature* and *The Worlde and the Chylde* present the complete life-cycle of their male protagonist, so that we see Man and Infans grow from childhood to old age. *Youth* shows what seems to be one stage from that life-cycle. In doing so, the interludes draw on the conventions of the Ages of Man tradition which flourished in the medieval period.¹ Ages of Man schemes construct a model of the typical life-span which divides it up into a number of different stages. Each stage of life, or 'Age' is defined exactly in terms of age in years, and labelled with a specific term.² In these texts the period of male youth is constructed primarily in relation to medieval knowledge about ageing. *Fulgens and Lucres*, and *Calisto and Melebea* do not present male life-cycles in this way. Instead they construct categories of youth and age through a series of binary oppositions between their characters. The young noblemen of *Fulgens and Lucres*, Cornelius and Gaius, are depicted in relation to the old nobleman Fulgens; the young Calisto of *Calisto and Melebea* to the old Danio. In other words, these young characters stand for a gendered, age-related, and status-related category - the young and noble man. This chapter discusses the ways in which these texts construct youth as an age-related and gendered concept, in the context of later medieval theories of the development of male bodies; and it considers youth first of all as a biological category.

Later medieval knowledge about age and ageing was articulated most succinctly in the form of schemes of the Ages of Man, referred to above. The Ages of Man was a popular motif both in art and writing in medieval England. Schemes of the Ages were depicted in stained glass, such as the Ages of Man window in Canterbury Cathedral

¹Alan Nelson (ed.), *The Plays of Henry Medwall* (Cambridge and Totowa, NJ, 1980), p.24; Clifford Davidson and Peter Happé (eds.), *The Worlde and the Chylde* (Kalamazoo, 1999), pp.10-15, 16-20; Ian Lancashire (ed.), *Two Tudor Interludes: The Interlude of Youth; Hick Scorer* (Manchester, 1980), p.49.

²On the Ages of Man tradition see: Franz Boll, 'Die Lebensalter', *Neue Jahrbücher für das klassische Altertum* 31 (1913): 89-145; Adolf Hofmeister, 'Puer, Iuuenis, Senex: Zum Verständnis der mittelalterlichen Altersbezeichnungen', in A Brackman (ed.), *Papstum und Kaisertum* (Munich, 1926), pp.288-316. Recent monographs on the Ages of Man include: JA Burrow, *The Ages of Man: A Study in Medieval Writing and Thought* (Oxford, 1986); Mary Dove, *The Perfect Age of Man's Life* (Cambridge, 1986); Elizabeth Sears, *The Ages of Man: Medieval Interpretations of the Life Cycle* (Princeton, 1986).

(c.1180);³ in manuscript illuminations, such as the wheel of life in the De Lisle psalter (c.1310);⁴ in wall paintings such as that at Longthorpe Tower (c.1330);⁵ in moral and devotional poetry, such as *The Parlement of the Thre Ages* (late fourteenth century), and the fifteenth-century works *The Mirror of the Periods of Man's Life*, and 'Of the seuen ages';⁶ and in painted wall hangings, such as that belonging to Thomas More's father in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth century.⁷ These works, both together and separately, were engaged in a process of definition and naming which created a concept of a period of youth.

It should be said that the Ages of Man offered *one* way of understanding and dividing the male life-cycle. In the Middle Ages, as in the modern world, alternative periods of male youth were produced by other intellectual traditions and through a variety of social practices, and these periods of youth -constructed in relation to different first principles - do not necessarily dove-tail neatly together into one stable category. Legal discourses of medieval England, for example, produce a model of the life-cycle, where there is a sharp distinction between a period of non-adulthood and a period of adulthood. In the common law this period of non adulthood is known as 'infancy' or 'nonage', and adulthood as 'full age'.⁸ The period of youth in this case is constructed in relation to an adult status: it is a period when people are not subject to the obligations of adults, and are not permitted to avail themselves of the privileges of adult status. However, different legal codes established a range of ages at which children may be regarded as adults, while within codes different ages of maturity were established on the basis of gender and/or status. Under

³Burrow, *Ages of Man*, pp.90-92; Sears, *Ages of Man*, pp.72-74. See pl.1.

⁴Burrow, *Ages of Man*, pp.45-47; Sears, *Ages of Man*, pp.146-48. See pl.2.

⁵Burrow, *Ages of Man*, pp.43-46; Sears, *Ages of Man*, pp.137-38. See pl.3.

⁶For *The Parlement of the Thre Ages*, see Warren Ginsberg (ed.), *Wynnere and Wastoure and The Parlement of the Thre Ages* (Kalamazoo, 1992). For *The Mirror of the Periods of Man's Life*, see FJ Furnivall (ed.), *Hymns to the Virgin and Christ; The Parliament of Devils; and Other Religious Pieces*, EETS, OS 24 (1868), pp.58-78. For 'Of the seuen ages', see Alan H Nelson, ' "Of the seuen ages": An Unknown Analogue of *The Castle of Perseverance*', *Comparative Drama* 8 (1974): 125-38. See fig. 4 for the ms. illustrations for 'Of the seuen ages'. On these texts, see also Burrow, *Ages of Man*, pp.46-47, 71-72, 148; Sears, *Ages of Man*, pp.139-40; Davidson and Happé (eds.), *Worldde and the Chylde*, pp.6-10.

⁷Thomas More's verses (late fifteenth or early sixteenth century) for these hangings survive. See ASG Edwards *et al* (eds), *The Complete Works of St Thomas More*, 15 vols. (1963-1997), 1:3-7.

⁸Frederick Pollock and Frederic William Maitland, *The History of English Law Before the Time of Edward I*, 2 vols., 2nd edn (Cambridge, 1898), 2:438.

canon law, for example, minimum ages for marriage came to be fixed at fourteen for boys and twelve for girls.⁹ The treatise known as 'Bracton' on English common law presents a sliding scale of ages of majority for different social groups (twenty-one for the heirs of knights and tenants under military fee, fifteen for the heirs of sokemen).¹⁰

Despite the variety of ages they invoke, canon law and common law are based on a similar kind of internal logic. The setting of particular ages is justified by reference to a principle of capacity. The ages specified are those at which the individual should display the physical, intellectual or moral abilities necessary for them to function as adults in adult roles, with all their attendant rights and liabilities. Under canon law, for example, individuals had to be sexually mature in order to contract a marriage, so that a marriage would not be valid where this was not the case.¹¹ On the other hand, individuals below the age specified for first marriage could be regarded as sufficiently mature for marriage on the basis of moral capacity: in being able to distinguish between good and evil.¹² Bracton explains that the age of majority under English common law is 'not defined in terms of time but by sense and maturity', so that a burgess's son can be regarded as being of full age 'when he knows how properly to count money, measure cloths and perform similar paternal business'.¹³ The late age of majority for the heirs of knights and tenants in military service is justified on the basis that 'Those that pertain to military service require greater strength, and greater understanding and discretion'.¹⁴ These models of youth - both gendered and status related - are the product of scientific and social ideologies.

Schemes of the Ages of Man also present a gendered and status-related concept of youth despite their claim to a universal application. They purport to describe and explain the life-course of 'man', in the sense of human kind. But in fact they describe and explain only the male life-course, a natural consequence of their focus on the male body. Ages of

⁹Ibid., 2:389-91. See also KM Phillips, 'The Medieval Maiden: Young Womanhood in Late Medieval England' (PhD diss., University of York, 1997), pp.31-39.

¹⁰GE Woodbine (ed.) and Samuel E Thorne (trans.), *Bracton on the Laws and Customs of England*, 4 vols. (Cambridge, MA, 1968), 2:250-251. The treatise dates from around the second quarter of the thirteenth century. See also Pollock and Maitland, *History of English Law*, 2:438-439; Phillips, 'Medieval Maiden', pp.41-45.

¹¹Phillips, 'Medieval Maiden', pp.31-39.

¹²Ibid., p.36.

¹³Woodbine (ed.), *Bracton*, 2:250.

¹⁴Ibid., 2:251.

Man schemes show such little interest in the female that it would be virtually impossible to write a history of female youth and adulthood from them.¹⁵ The concepts of youth presented by such schemes are therefore male youths rather than a universal stage of life.

The focus of the Ages of Man tradition on the male body is a consequence of the origins of this system of thought. Schemes of the Ages of Man were first drawn up in academic and scientific discourses of antiquity, as an outcome of attempts to describe and explain the observable physical phenomenon of ageing. In this sense, the period of youth needs to be understood primarily as a stage in bodily development. Medieval writers in the fields of natural philosophy and medicine drew on the theories of Aristotle (384-322BC) and Galen (d. c.200AD) which provided the conceptual tools for explaining the phenomenon of human development in terms of natural principles.¹⁶ Schemes of the Ages did not remain confined to specialist scientific texts but became widely disseminated throughout medieval Europe in encyclopaedic literature, such as Isidore of Seville's *Etymologiae* (before 636) and the *De proprietatibus rerum* of Bartholomaeus Anglicus (early thirteenth century).¹⁷

The category of youth seems at first glance to be one clearly defined by schemes of the Ages, in texts which make authoritative statements about the life-course. Latin texts, for example, develop a relatively stable set of terms for the Ages (such as *infantia*, *pueritia*, *adolescentia*, *iuventus*, *senium*), and a corresponding set of terms to denote the individuals passing through these stages of life (*infans*, *puer*, *adolescens*, *iuvenis*, *senex*).⁶ There is, however, little agreement between such schemes as to precisely which periods these terms should denominate. In part, this is because different schemes divide the life-course into different numbers of Ages. Although the seven-Age scheme is perhaps the most widespread, having been popularised through Isidore of Seville's *Etymologiae*, schemes of three, four, five, and six Ages were common, while several other schemes were also in circulation. This variety in structure was dictated by principles other than the empirical description of bodies. Some schemes rely on the principles of numerology or analogy, such as those schemes which draw parallels between the Ages of Man and the canonical hours,

¹⁵Dove, *Perfect Age*, pp.20-25. See Phillips's work on later medieval concepts of the stages of women's lives in Phillips, 'Medieval Maiden'.

¹⁶Nancy G Siraisi, *Medieval and Early Renaissance Medicine: An Introduction to Knowledge and Practice* (Chicago, 1990).

¹⁷Burrow, *Ages of Man*, pp.82, 88.

or the parable of the workers in the vineyard.¹⁸ Four-Age schemes were popular, since this structure allowed links to be made between the Ages of Man, and the four humours, and the seasons of the year.¹⁹ Some six Age schemes, on the other hand, are founded on analogies with the six jars of water turned into wine by Jesus at the wedding at Cana.²⁰ These structural variations mean that it is virtually impossible to reconcile the schemes with each other to produce a unified, universal scheme of the Ages.

Structural variations between schemes of the Ages ensure that individual Ages are defined very differently, comparing scheme with scheme. The two Ages which appear to equate most readily with modern conceptions of youth are *adolescencia* and *iuventus*, which in a seven Age scheme usually form the third and fourth Ages. However, as Trevisa's Middle English translation (1389) of *De Proprietatibus Rerum* shows, schemes developed in different genres produce different kinds of *adolescencia*, even if all a reader considers is the age in years at which it begins or ends:

Hereaftir comþ the age þat hatte *adholoscencia*, þe age of a yonge stripelinge, and dureþ þe þridde seuen zere, þat is to þe ende of on and twenty zere. So it is saide *in viatico*. But Isidir seiþ þat it dureþ to þe ferþe seuen zere, þat is to þe ende of 28 zere. But ficicians Strecchen þis age to þe ente of 30 zere or of 35 zere.²¹

A period of youth which only ends at the age of 28-35 clearly bears very little relation to modern concepts of 'adolescence'.²² But it is also clear that there is no single concept of youth even the Ages of Man tradition. Instead of having absolute meanings, the significance of terms for the Ages, such as *adolescencia* or *iuventus*, is context dependent. In some four-Age schemes, for example, the term *adolescencia* does not appear at all, and *infantia*, *pueritia* and *adolescencia* are subsumed into one long *pueritia*, such as in the scheme described by Constantinus Africanus (d.1087).¹⁰ Other writers denominate the first age of

¹⁸Burrow, *Ages of Man*, pp.59-64; Sears, *Ages of Man*, pp.80-89, 138-9.

¹⁹Burrow, *Ages of Man*, pp.12-36; Sears, *Ages of Man*, pp.9-37.

²⁰Burrow, *Ages of Man*, pp.79-81; Sears, *Ages of Man* pp.54-79

²¹MC Seymour (ed.), *On the Properties of Things, A Critical Text: John Trevisa's Translation of Bartholomaeus Anglicus' De proprietatibus rerum*, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1975), 1:201-92.

²²Twentieth century accounts of adolescence describe it in terms of the achievement of a series of developmental tasks (psychological, social, and physical), usually associated with the teenage years. See Johanna Wyn and Rob White, *Rethinking Youth* (London, 1997), pp.51-71. On the problems of equating modern 'adolescence' with medieval '*adolescencia*', see James A Schultz, 'Medieval Adolescence: The Claims of History and the Silence of German Narrative', *Speculum* 66 (1991): 519-39.

a four age scheme *adolescentia*, as is the case in Johannitius' *Isagoge* or Avicenna's *Canon*.¹¹

When the terms for the Ages are used by medieval writers in Latin in other contexts, the instability of the terms is apparent. Hofmeister, commenting on the use of these terms in medieval historical writing, was surprised to discover that the users of these terms were not really making the precise distinction between Ages that he had supposed:

Schwankend und fließend scheint besonders oft der Gebrauch von *adolescens* und *iuuenis*, die häufig durcheinander verwandt werden, wenigstens was die Erstreckung der *iuventus* nach rückwärts in den eigentlich von der Theorie der *adolescentia* vorbehaltenen Zeitraum zwischen 14 und 28 oder 21 Jahren betrifft...Freilich sind die Fälle auch gewöhnlich, in denen *iuuenis* den >Jüngling< in unserm Sinne bedeutet, der nach der Theorie...wesentlich *adolescens* heißen sollte.²³

As Burrow has concluded, 'anyone who goes to medieval discussions of the Ages of Man with the intention of ascertaining at what age youth was then thought to end, or old age to begin, will find no easy answers'.²⁴ The period of youth has only a tenuous connection to the 'reality' of male lives and male bodies, but is repeatedly re-constructed according to the internal logic of individual schemes.

The attempts of English writers to translate Latin terms for the Ages into Middle English furthermore reveal that this terminology does not equate readily with available English terms. As we have seen above, John Trevisa defines Bartholomaeus Anglicus' '*adholoscencia*' as 'þe age of a yonge stripelinge' in the passage on the Ages from Book Six of *De proprietatibus*.²⁵ In other contexts 'stripling' seems to refer specifically to young males in their mid-teens.²⁶ Confronted with '*iuventus*', Trevisa seems unable to find an equivalent English term, identifying the *iuuenis* simply as 'a man of that age'.²⁷ Trevisa had however already addressed the issue of what *iuventus* means, and how it relates to the English 'youþe', at the end of the previous Book, in a discussion of baldness.²⁸ The text says that if a man's hair falls out 'in zouþe' then it will grow again, but it will not grow if it should fall out after this period. In order to clarify what 'zouþe' means, Trevisa

²³Hofmeister, '*Puer, Iuuenis, Senex*', p.305.

²⁴Burrow, *Ages of Man*, p.34.

²⁵Seymour (ed.), *On the Properties of Things*, 1:291-92.

²⁶Under 'stripling (n.)' The *MED* cites *Mandeville's Travels*: 'He had..the faireste damyseles..vnder the age of xv 3eer And the faireste 3onge striplynges..of þat same age'.

²⁷Seymour (ed.), *On the Properties of Things*, 1:292.

²⁸*Ibid.*, 1:290.

interpolates the following remark *in propria persona*:

Trevisa: here I take þis engelissch for þis latyn *iuuentus*. And *iuuentus* is here opirwise taken þan oure comoun speche vsith. For here it is itake for þe age þat durip from oon and twenty zere opir from eizte and twenty zere, or from þritty or fyue and þritty, to fyue and fourty or fifty zere, as it is playlich saide sone hereaftir in þe bigynnyng of þe sixte book.

Although Trevisa has resorted to using the term 'zouþe' for *iuuentus*, he believes this choice is unsatisfactory, indeed potentially misleading for English readers. He does not directly say what is understood by the word 'zouþe' in 'oure comoun speche', but it must denote an age widely different from the periods of 21/28 /30 /35 years to 45/50 which the Latin term '*iuuentus*' denominates.

Latin-English word-lists suggest that the Middle English terms 'youth' and 'yong' apply more generally than the Latin terms. Where dictionary makers are forced to define *adolescentia / adolescens* and *iuuentus / iuuenis* they do perhaps show a tendency to reserve a 'youth' and young man *iuuentus / iuuenis*. The *Promptorium Parvulorum* (c.1440) defines 'zung' as '*Iuuenis*'; but 'zong man' as '*Adolescens*'.²⁹ It defines '*Adolescentia*' and '*Iuuentus*' under the entry 'Agis seyn' as denoting the period between the age of fifteen and twenty-nine; and the period between the age of thirty and fifty respectively. The *Catholicon Anglicum* (c.1483) defines a 'zouþe' as '*iuuenticulus*'.³⁰ Thomas Elyot's *Dictionary* (1538) gives 'a yonge man' as an equivalent for the Latin '*Iuuenis*', and 'youth' for '*Iuuentus*'.³¹ He defines '*adolescentia*' in terms of years, as 'the age between chyldehode and mannes age, which is between xiiii and xxi'. The *Middle English Dictionary* states that in usage the term 'youth' may apply in general to the 'entire period before the attainment of maturity'.²³ In specific terms, the dictionaries and word-lists cited above seem to indicate that the Middle English 'youth' is a period which is not sharply defined in years, but which may encompass all men from their mid-teens into their twenties. There does not seem to be an English terminology to distinguish between an *adolescens* and a *iuuenis*, as Latin can do.

This variety and uncertainty in defining a period of youth is reflected in the wider

²⁹AL Mayhew (ed.), *Promptorium parvulorum*, EETS, ES 102 (1908).

³⁰Sidney JH Herrtage (ed.), *Catholicon Anglicum: An English-Latin Wordbook*, EETS, OS 75 (1881).

³¹Thomas Elyot, *Dictionary* (Menston, 1970).

English use of the Ages of Man schemes. To begin with, these schemes show great variety in terms of in the numbers of Ages each scheme contains, and their scope in years. The Canterbury window shows six male figures, representing the Ages, while The Longthorpe Tower paintings show seven.³² The lyric 'Of the seuen ages' divides the life of a representative male figure into seven Ages, and uses English terms for each stage of life. In the *Parlement of the Thre Ages* the three Ages of man are shown through three personifications, Youthe, Medill Elde and Elde. The De Lisle wheel of life shows 10 Ages; as does the lyric *The Mirror of the Periods of Man's Life*.

The lyrics, which do use English terminology, also reveal a fluid use of the English terms 'youth'. In 'Of the seuen ages', 'zouthe' is used to label the third Age (*adolescencia* in Isidore's seven Age scheme). However, in the fourth Age the mature man (now called 'Man') is still described as 'zonge'. In *The Parlement of the Thre Ages*, the figure of Youthe is in fact relatively old, 'thritty yere of elde' (l.133). Since in this context youth is only one of three Ages, this usage reflects the long youth discussed above. While *The Mirror of the Periods* does not attempt to give the Ages specific labels after 'childhood', the poem does use the word 'zoupe' liberally, and applies to Mankind in a number of different Ages: while he is a 'child' of seven; when he has passed the age of twenty; and when he is between the ages of forty and fifty.³³ When the aged Mankind, the central figure of the poem, repents of his misspent youth he appears to be referring to more than one Age.³⁴

Early moral plays which follow in this tradition construct their own idiosyncratic schemes of the Ages, and as a result offer markedly different periods of male youth. In *The Castle of Perseverance*, boundaries between Ages of life are marked by Humanum Genus' entry into and exit from the Castle itself, and these are marked with references to Humanum Genus' age in years.³⁵ When he enters the Castle he is 'forty wynter olde'.³⁶ When he emerges, he is an aged and physically decrepit figure.³⁷ The terms of his description tie in

³²See figs.1 and 3.

³³*Mirror of the Periods of Man's Life*, ll.79, 102, 313.

³⁴See for example *ibid.*, ll.361-68.

³⁵For *The Castle of Perseverance* (1400x1425), see Mark Eccles (ed.), *The Macro Plays*, EETS, OS 262 (1969). All subsequent line references are to this edition.

³⁶*Ibid.*, l.1575.

³⁷*Ibid.*, ll.2479-91.

with an earlier comment to suggest that *Humanum Genus* is about sixty.³⁸ This stage of Man's life ends with his death, though the action of the play extends beyond time, as the daughters of God debate the fate of his soul. There is no attempt to label the Ages with English or Latin terminology of the Ages.

Nature is also structured around a double fall and repentance by the central character, as he makes his way from birth to death.³⁹ The vice Sensualyte, engaged in a battle with Reason for influence over Man, describes Man's life-course in terms of that struggle:

And standyng the nonage of thys gentyman,
On my parell take no care therefore.
I shall demean yt as well as I can
Tyll he be passyd forty yerys and more,
And, Reason, then yf ye wyll, undershore
Hys croked old age when lusty youth ys spent;
Than take uppon you.

(*Nature*, I.323-29)⁴⁰

This passage is an ambiguous one. Sensualyte refers first to Man's 'nonage', using the legal term which in common law normally describes the period up to the age of twenty-one.⁴¹ According to Sensualyte, this is a period where he will have untrammelled sway over Man. When he declares his intention to control Man until he is 'passyd forty yerys and more', Sensualyte appears to refer to a second period between the ages of twenty-one and forty. Finally, Sensualyte cedes a period he calls 'croked old age' to Reason's control. This period which begins at about forty, lasts until death, and is constructed in opposition to 'lusty youth'. As we have seen above, youth can be a concept in English which is applied to more than one Age, and which in this case covers the period from birth to the age of forty. This extended 'youth' corresponds to that constructed in *The Castle of Perseverance*.

The Worlde and the Chylde begins in a way which suggests that it is going to feature a standard-seven Age scheme, popularised by Isidore of Seville.⁴² From what the

³⁸Ibid., ll.2480-91; ll.416-419.

³⁹Nelson (ed.), *Plays of Henry Medwall*, pp.23-24.

⁴⁰Line references are to *Nature* in Nelson (ed.), *Plays of Henry Medwall*.

⁴¹See the discussion of this concept above.

⁴²Davidson and Happé (eds.), *Worlde and the Chylde*, p.12.

central character says, it is clear that each of the first three stages lasts seven years.⁴³ Visual cues mark the boundaries of each Age, as the central character returns to The Worlde, who remains seated on his throne in the playing area. With each visit, the mankind figure is given a new name, sometimes new garments, and directions about what he is to do.⁴⁴ Man becomes 'Manhode', after the age of twenty-one, but it is not really clear where this Age ends, in terms of age in years, since this is not stated. If we go by the speech headings in the printed edition of the play, the final stage in man's life is 'Age', and, like *The Castile of Perseverance*, the play engineers man's absence from the stage so that he may return looking like an old man.⁴⁵ This would mean that rather than the seven Age scheme we might have expected, the play only shows five Ages.⁴⁶

However, a closer consideration of the terminology used for the Ages in the play makes the division into Ages more complicated. Apart from the term 'manhode', the play-text itself (as opposed to the speech-headings) does not use age-related terms to describe Man. In his first speech-heading the central figure is referred to as '*Infans*', a term familiar from academic expositions of the Ages. At the end of the play the speeches of the aged man are labelled 'Age'. However, in the text itself the character is never called by these names.⁴⁷ The names which he and other characters use to address him bear little resemblance to Ages of Man terminology. Man tells the Worlde at the beginning of the play that his mother called him 'Dalyaunce', not *Infans*.⁴⁸ In the second Age, the man is called 'Wanton' and in the third 'Loue, Lust and Lykyng'. Even though, in terms of their duration, these three ages tally neatly with the *infantia*, *pueritia* and *adolescencia* of a seven-Age scheme, the names of man refer to moral state rather than age. This is echoed at the end of the play, when Manhode is renamed Shame by Folye and then Repentaunce by Perseverance, terms which clearly refer to spiritual state. In *The Worlde*, it is the moral story, the plot involving fall and repentance which is uppermost, though each of these states is related to age by its position within the life-cycle. As with other Ages of Man schemes

⁴³*Worlde and the Chylde*, ll.69-70, 115-22, 129-30. All line references are to Davidson and Happé (eds.), *Worlde and the Chylde*.

⁴⁴*Ibid.*, ll.67-71, 124-30, 160-67.

⁴⁵Manhode exits at l.716, and re-enters at l.763. Man's aged appearance is described at ll.795-801.

⁴⁶Davidson and Happé (eds.), *Worlde and the Chylde*, pp.14-15.

⁴⁷*Ibid.*, p.14.

⁴⁸*Worlde and the Chylde*, l.55.

in an English context, the texts describe a moral Ages of Man as much as a scientific description of bodily ageing.⁴⁹

The Interlude of Youth does not present an entire life-course, but it does seem designed to illustrate one Age. Apart from the fact that the main character is named 'Youth' the interlude text does not refer directly to of age in terms years. Youth's age may be inferred from his references to his property. He must be over twenty-one since he announces his recent inheritance of his father's lands.⁵⁰ Since Youth not only owns the property but looks forward to spending his inheritance freely, he must be legally of age. This also appears to be the case with Cornelius and Gaius from *Fulgens and Lucrez*, and Calisto of *Calisto and Melebea*, all of whom appear to be in full control of their property, and exempt from the authority of fathers and guardians.

Indeed for all these plays, the age of twenty-one seems particularly significant, because of its associations with the end of legal nonage. Even in *The Worlde and the Chylde*, where the Ages are presented in what seems to be a much more schematic way, the first three Ages, before the protagonist reaches twenty-one, are dealt with perfunctorily, in the space of only 155 lines. Only when the central character has reached twenty-one, has been dubbed a knight and has left household service, is he introduced to the seven deadly sins.⁵¹ *Nature* moves rapidly from the departure of Innocencye, Man's nurse to the setting up of Man's household, where Man appears to be operating independently of any higher authority.⁵² The significance of this age, as discussed above, is related to the control of property, and the stress on the age of twenty-one signals that the interludes are concerned not with universal concepts of youth, but with gendered and status-related ones. The focus of these plays tends to be on not the early stages of life, but young and noble men in their twenties, who can act independently of all restraint. As Grantley has suggested in connection with Youth, what may well be at stake here are aristocratic concerns about property, the preservation and transmission of family estates from one generation to

⁴⁹Sears, *Ages of Man*, pp.134-155.

⁵⁰*Interlude of Youth*, ll.308-13. Line references are to Lancashire (ed.), *Two Tudor Interludes*.

⁵¹See also *The Mirror of the Periods Of Man's Life*, where the battle between the vices and virtues commences when Man is 'xx. wyntir in age' (l.114).

⁵²*Nature*, l.654.

another.⁵³ Under the system of primogeniture, the responsibility for doing this inevitably rests on the shoulders of one man. The young heirs - Youth, Cornelius, and Man from *Nature* - represent every noble father's nightmare: the irresponsible and spendthrift heir.

It may seem redundant to ask why such anxieties are focussed on young men. However, objectively considered, there is no real reason why men in their twenties should be any more or less responsible than older men. By expressing these concerns about property through the depiction of young men these interludes are making a connection between the behaviour and attitudes of young men, and their natural development. They reveal a reliance on a biologically essentialist view of men: that is, that the qualities and characteristics of young men are the product of essential biological facts about them.⁵⁴ This view of men is fundamental to the Ages of Man tradition, and is inherited as principle by the interludes.

Academic Ages of Man schemes depict a process of specifically male development. Texts on the Ages from the disciplines of medicine and natural philosophy locate youth as a stage in the physical development of the male body. In doing so they follow Aristotle who first described male development in *De anima* in terms of periods of growth, stasis and decline, thus creating a three stage model of the life-cycle.⁵⁵ In the middle stage of this scheme, the *acme*, man is at the height of his physical powers. The period of youth which precedes it is a time of developing though incomplete powers, and forms a balance with old age, the final stage in the sequence, where the body is in a process of decline from the optimum point of the *acme*. This model continues to be reflected in the ways *adolescentia* and *iuventus* are characterised in Trevisa's translation of *De Proprietatibus Rerum*. This text describes *adolescentia* (the third Age in a seven Age scheme) as the Age which is 'able to barnische and encrece, and fonge myzt and strengþe'.⁵⁶ The text continues:

Aftir þis *adholescencia* 'striplynges age' comþ þe age þat hatte *iuventus*, and þis age is in þe middil amonges ages, and þerfore it is strengest...Isidir seiþ þat þis age *iuventus* hath þat name of *iuuare*, þat is 'for to helpe', for a man of þat age is isette

⁵³Darryll Grantley, *Wit's Pilgrimage: Drama and the Social Impact of Education in Early Modern England* (Aldershot, 2000), pp.138-40.

⁵⁴On biological essentialism as a mode of conceiving gender, see Toril Moi, *What Is A Woman? And Other Essays* (Oxford, 1999), pp.10-21.

⁵⁵Burrow, *Ages of Man*, p.5-10.

⁵⁶Seymour (ed.), *On the Properties of Things*, 1:292.

in þe ende of his ful encresinge, and þerfore he is strong to helpe at nede.⁵⁷

Having reached *iuventus*, the human body has completed the process of 'encresinge', the main task of *adolescentia*. *Iuventus*, the age of fully realised bodily strength, represents the peak of the human body's achievement.

Some academic texts also identify sexual maturity as a key marker of physical development in *adolescentia*. According to Isidore of Seville this age is '*adolescentia ad gignendum adulta*' (an age mature enough for reproduction).⁵⁸ Trevisa's translation of *De Proprietatibus Rerum* also describes *adolescentia* as 'ful age to gete children'.⁵⁹ Both passages imply the completion of a process; but in the wider context of their respective schemes of the Ages, this is not the pivotal moment in the body's development. Reaching the *acme* of one's physical strength in *iuventus* is the key developmental goal of male bodies.

Medical texts explain the observable and measurable development of the body in terms of natural processes at a more fundamental level. The theoretical basis of the development of the human organism is complexion theory, first outlined by Aristotle and Galen, and then elaborated by medieval writers from the late twelfth century.⁶⁰ The 'complexion' is 'the balance of the qualities of hot, wet, cold and dry resulting from the mixture of the elements in the human body'.⁶¹ Differences in the complexions of young men and old men were used to explain the visible differences between their young and old bodies. Young men were characterised by a preponderance of heat and moisture, which decrease over time as 'innate heat consumes the body's moisture over the lifespan'.⁶² Bartholomaeus Anglicus, for example, draws on these concepts to explain that physical growth is the defining characteristic of (male) *adolescentia* because 'þe membres ben neische and tendre, and abil to strecche and growe by vertu of hete þat hæþ maistrie þerinne

⁵⁷Ibid., 1:292.

⁵⁸Isidore of Seville, *Etymologiae*, II.ii, in Burrow, *Ages of Man*, pp.200-201.

⁵⁹Seymour (ed.), *On the Properties of Things*, 1:292.

⁶⁰Siraisi, *Medieval and Early Renaissance Medicine*, pp.97-101.

⁶¹Ibid., p.101.

⁶²Ibid., p.103. On the medieval development of Aristotle's theories of ageing by academic thinkers see P O Lewry, 'Study of Ageing in the Arts Faculty of the Universities of Paris and Oxford', in Michael M Sheehan (ed.), *Ageing and the Aged in Medieval Europe* (Toronto, 1990), pp.23-38.

anon to be perfeccioun of complement'.⁶³ The outward and observable changes in male bodies are the outcome of an inner and invisible physiological process of change. These bodily changes, both visible and invisible, were conceived as fundamentally different to the development of female bodies. Whereas the male complexion was characterised by heat, women's complexions were generally held to be colder than those of men throughout their life.⁶⁴

Complexion theory also provided a way of grounding characteristics other than the physical in biology. The humours- the bodily fluids of blood, phlegm, bile and black bile - were in this system 'the means whereby an individual's overall complexional balance was maintained or altered'.⁶⁵ However, humoral theory also allowed one to provide a physiological explanation for characteristics of young men other than the purely physical, since 'the balance of the humors was held to be responsible for psychological as well as physical disposition'.⁶⁶ Aristotle's account of the youthful character in *Rhetoric* set a precedent for this practice. Aristotle describes the 'emotions and moral qualities', or 'virtues and vices', which individuals typically display at different stages of the life cycle.⁶⁷ Young men, he claims, show 'absence of self-control' over their sexual desires; they are 'changeable' and 'hot-tempered'; they 'love victory', and are optimistic and trusting; they are courageous, yet shy; idealistic and sociable; prone to overdo everything, but compassionate and fun-loving.⁶⁸ These qualities are linked by Aristotle to the sanguine temperament: they are the outcome of a specific natural process since 'nature warms their blood as though with excess of wine'.⁶⁹ Following in this tradition of thought, Bede in *De Temporum Ratione* (725), draws on humoral theory to show that the preponderance of red choler in *adolescentes* makes them '*malcilentos, multum tamen comedentes, veloces, audaces, iracundos, agiles*' (lean, even though they eat heartily, swift-footed, bold irritable

⁶³Seymour (ed.), *On the Properties of Things*, 1:292.

⁶⁴Joan Cadden, *The Meanings of Sex Difference in the Middle Ages: Medicine, Science and Culture* (Cambridge, 1993), pp.170-77, 183-86.

⁶⁵Siraisi, *Medieval and Early Renaissance Medicine*, p.106.

⁶⁶Ibid., p.106. See also Cadden, *Meanings of Sex Difference*, pp.183-86.

⁶⁷Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, II, chs. 12-14, trans. W.Rhys Roberts, in Burrow, *Ages of Man*, pp. 191-194. Aristotle describes three Ages, as potential audiences for public speakers. The 'moral superiority' of the middle Age reflects its physical superiority: *ibid.*, p.8.

⁶⁸Ibid., p.192-193. Horace attributes a similar set of moral characteristics to the *iuvenis*: Horace, *Ars Poetica*, ll.161-175, in *ibid.*, pp.194-195.

⁶⁹Ibid., p.192.

and active).⁷⁰ Academic texts used their gendered model of the complexions to justify the association of women with personal qualities widely different to those of men. Women were associated with phlegm, which is both cold and moist, and hence by extension with character traits like inactivity and inconstancy.⁷¹

The physical development of male bodies also affects their gradual development of reason, understood not only as a cognitive facility, but as the capacity to make moral judgements. The idea that humans possessed reason, a faculty capable of exercising control over man's competing desires, was one first established by Aristotle, and elaborated by medieval thinkers such as Thomas Aquinas.⁷² The idea that intellectual and moral capacities developed slowly was part of the basis of canon law on marriage. Seven seems to have been regarded as an age of reason to a limited extent. It was therefore possible to contract a marriage (though not it was not permitted to consummate the marriage) at the age of seven.⁷³ The marriage might be consummated at the age of twelve for girls and the age of fourteen for boys, as much because the parties were deemed capable of giving their intellectual consent to the union, as that they were sexually mature.⁷⁴ Over the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, the sacraments of the eucharist, confession and extreme unction gradually became restricted to those of similar ages, which were associated with the development of discernment.⁷⁵ Trevisa's translation of *De regimine principum* (1270s), a work which relies heavily on Aristotelian thought, sees the young man's characteristics as determined, not only by the influence of the humours and the workings of the physical body, but by his capacity for reason. It describes the young man as 'inclyned to folwe passions' as a result of his lack of reason, so that he is naturally 'inclyned to euell maneres

⁷⁰Bede, *De Temporum Ratione*, ch.xxxv, ed. CW Jones, trans. JA Burrow, in *ibid.*, pp.201-202. See also *ibid.*, pp.12-13. Bede's *adolescentia* is the second age of four.

⁷¹Cadden, *Meanings of Sex Difference*, pp.184-85.

⁷²On Aquinas's theories of the mind, see Anthony Kenny, *Aquinas on Mind* (London and New York, 1993), pp.71-88; and Norman Kretzmann, 'Philosophy of Mind', in N Kretzman and E Stump (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Aquinas* (Cambridge, 1993), pp.128-152.

⁷³Richard H Helmholtz, *Marriage Litigation in Medieval England* (Cambridge, 1974), pp.98-99. Phillips discusses these concepts in detail: Phillips, 'The Medieval Maiden', pp.31-41.

⁷⁴Pollock and Maitland, *History of English Law*, 2:390-92.

⁷⁵Nicholas Orme, 'Children and the Church in Medieval England', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 45 (1994): 563-87 (pp.573-76). See also *idem*, *Medieval Children* (New Haven and London, 2001), pp.214-216.

and outrage and moost passionat' and to 'lecherie'.⁷⁶ The text identifies three phases in early life: the first from birth to seven years; from seven to fourteen years; and the third from fourteen to twenty-one years.⁷⁷ It sets out the physical training of the young nobleman, and how he should gradually be accustomed to the cold and to exercise, as preparation for the rigours of warfare, but also as a way of tempering the natural heat of children.⁷⁸ However, it also views the discipline of other faculties of the soul as a key activity, and advises how they should be developed throughout the three stages of youth. The crucial task of the second phase is the development of an 'ordinat wille', - a will directed at the proper objects, but also characterised by order and self-control - rather than 'parfit vnderstondyng'.⁷⁹ This self-discipline is necessary to moderate the great 'lust and likinge' which young men feel in this Age.⁸⁰ Boys in the second phase are not credited with the intellectual powers to do justice to the higher branches of learning so their learning should be focussed on grammar, logic and music.⁸¹ In fact, it is only in the third phase of childhood, between fourteen and twenty-one, that the young nobleman is considered to have the 'vse of resoun' sufficient for the more demanding areas of study including the moral sciences important for the ruler.⁸² As far as the will is concerned, the text warns fathers to be on their guard for the pride and lechery characteristic of this phase, and to make sure that young men are obedient to their elders.⁸³

⁷⁶References are to John Trevisa's early fourteenth-century English translation. See DC Fowler et al (eds.), *The Governance of Kings and Princes* (New York, 1997), p.219, ll.33-40. See also p.228, ll.5-9.

⁷⁷Ibid., pp.237-43.

⁷⁸Ibid., pp.238, 239, 242.

⁷⁹Ibid., p.240, ll.9-35. The will is one of the powers of the soul. Aquinas understands the will as to do with appetites, as the power of wanting (rather than the power of knowing). The human will distinguishes humans from animals: though humans share with animals basic appetites (e.g. for food and water), and even sensory appetites which allow beings to express preferences, unlike animals they have rational appetites (or volition), controlled and determined by the intellect. See Kenny, *Aquinas on Mind*, p.71; and Kretzmann, 'Philosophy of mind', pp.144-145. Giles sees a key task of growing up as the training of the will and its appetites, rendering them fully under rational control, as well as the power of knowing. See also the introductory speeches of the personified powers of the soul, Mind, Will and Understanding, in the moral play *Wisdom* (1465x1470), ll.181-308, in Eccles (ed.), *The Macro Plays*.

⁸⁰Fowler et al (eds.), *Governance of Kings*, p.240, ll.9-35.

⁸¹Ibid., pp.240-241.

⁸²Ibid., p.241, ll.23-24.

⁸³Ibid., p.242, ll.34-37.

This biologically essentialist view of men is also evident in medieval English depictions of the ages. In pictorial versions of the Ages, each stage of life is indicated by the depiction of the aging male body. These depictions distinguish between the Ages at the beginning of the sequence by emphasising the small size of babies and children.⁸⁴ They may indicate physical maturity by showing the figure as wearing a beard.⁸⁵ Towards the end of life, old age is indicated through physical weakness: the old men are shown with crooked backs and as leaning on sticks for support.⁸⁶ Textual versions of the Ages also refer to the physical appearance of the male body to indicate age. They associate periods of childhood and youth with bodily perfection in terms of health, strength and beauty. In *The Mirror of the Periods of Man's Life*, 'Liztnesse, strenþe, corage & bewte' all offer their service to the child in the first stage of life.⁸⁷ The description of the thirty-year-old Youthe in *The Parlement* stresses similar physical characteristics:

The firste was a ferse freke, fayrere than thies othire...
 He was balghe in the breste and brode in the scholdirs,
 His axles and his armes were iliche longe,
 And in the medill als a mayden menskfully schapen;
 Longe legges and large, and lele for to schewe. (ll.109-115)

In *The Parlement of the Thre Ages*, the *acme* of physical health and strength is located in first period of life, not as we might expect from Aristotle's scheme, in a middle Age. The effect of this arrangement in *The Parlement* is to create a greater contrast between Youthe and Elde, as the physical benefits which are enjoyed in youth disappear in age. This opposition between youth and age is echoed in other English version of the Ages, where aged men are left to bewail the passing of the 'strenþe, bewte & heele' of their youth.⁸⁸ Mankind in *The Mirror* is characterised by failing sight and hearing, and by his crooked back.⁸⁹ Elde in *The Parlement* shares these characteristics and his aged state is further indicated by his white beard and eyebrows, his baldness and toothlessness.⁹⁰

As well as referring to the visible changes of the male body, texts also refer to the

⁸⁴See pls. 1, 2, 4.

⁸⁵See pls. 1 and 4. See Sears, *Ages of Man*, p.73.

⁸⁶See pls. 2, 3, 4. See also Sears, *Ages of Man*, p.147.

⁸⁷*Mirror of the Periods of Man's Life*, l.33.

⁸⁸*Ibid.*, ll.433-48.

⁸⁹*Ibid.*, ll.411, 470.

⁹⁰*Parlement of the Thre Ages*, ll.152-65.

unseen physiological changes in the male complexion as the body ages, and to other aspects of medical theory. In *The Mirror of the Periods of Man's Life*, for example, Lechery warns Mankind of the medical dangers to men of abstaining from sex:

For if pou in zouþe sparist þanne þee,
 Pou maist falle in greet perille.
 Youþe ful of corage wole be;
 Pou must haue helpe or ellis spille. (ll.227-30)

This is a direct reference to a substantial body of medical theory which argued that a moderate level of sexual activity was actually necessary for males to maintain good health.⁹¹ While Lechery exploits medical theory to support his case for indulging in sex, Conscience refers to humoral theory to persuade Mankind at the age of thirty against lechery. He explains that:

Leccherie axiþ great dispense,
 It distroiþe mannis kineli heete... (ll.261-62)

Conscience explains that the excess of heat which is a characteristic of the physical make-up of the young has begun to decline with age: he argues that uncontrolled sexual activity will consume that natural heat more quickly. Mankind himself is aware of this process as he reaches the age of eighty, and declares that 'Myn hote blood is kelid coolde' (l.470).

Early plays also depict a male life-cycle based on a theory of male physical development. *The Castle of Perseverance*, *Nature* and *The Worlde and the Chylde* use descriptions of male bodies, in order to indicate physical processes inherent in ageing, particularly the onset of old age. When Humanum Genus emerges from the Castle in *The Castle of Perseverance*, the passage of time is conveyed through his aged body: his hair is white, his back bent, and his bones feeble and sore.⁹² Like Mankind in *The Mirror of the Periods of Man's Life*, the old Human Genus of *The Castle of Perseverance* is aware of his changing complexion:

I crulle and crepe and wax al colde....
 My nose is colde and gynneth to droppe... (ll.2484, 2490)

Nature includes a similar description of the ageing Man, which also shows how Man's

⁹¹Cadden, *Meanings of Sex Difference*, pp.273-75.

⁹²*Castle of Perseverance*, ll.2482-91.

body is becoming cool and moist ('Hys nose droppeth...').⁹³ *The Worlde and the Chylde* alludes to the physical frailty of the infant body, and the vitality of the young man's body, and describes the physical decrepitude of the ageing Man.⁹⁴ Youth of *The Interlude of Youth* introduces himself to the audience with a catalogue of his young body, pointing out his bushy hair, his strong and well-shaped arms and legs.⁹⁵

The early plays adopt some of the structuring principles of the Ages of Man tradition. They map the course of a life from birth to death, and mark off different stages in that progress. Like the Ages of Man tradition, they focus on the development of male bodies. These life-cycles make the characteristics of a sexed body into the markers of the stages of life they describe. Such characteristics may be visible ones, so that bushy hair or grey hair, strong limbs or bent backs come to stand for vigorous young male bodies and decaying, ageing male bodies. But the plays also allude to the invisible processes underlying and specific to the growth and decay of male bodies: the changing complexion and interplay of humours as the male body ages. As such we can see that these male bodies are discursively constructed: they are the product of a long tradition of thought

However, the application of this scientific knowledge is different in the interludes. These do follow the Aristotelian principle of referring to biological characteristics in order to explain the behavioural and psychological characteristics of men. These plays however proceed to ground other kinds of norms in the biological facts, in that they relate the biological phenomena of maleness to the social and political phenomena of masculinity. These texts consistently relate undesirable male behaviour and attitudes - undesirable masculinities - to the period of youth. But they do not do so in a vacuum, rather they draw on the images of young men available from a range of fifteenth-century sources. These images are the subject of the following chapter.

⁹³*Nature*, II.941-51.

⁹⁴*Worlde and the Chylde*, II.32-35, 131-34, 271, 795-801.

⁹⁵*Interlude of Youth*, II.42-54.

Chapter Two. Young Masculinity and the Wider Discourses of Youth.

The early interludes *Nature, Fulgens and Lucrez, The Worlde and the Chylde, The Interlude of Youth, and Calisto and Melebea* are texts which draw on and contribute to a number of different discourses. *Nature, The Worlde and the Chylde, and The Interlude of Youth* have been readily categorised as morally didactic works, following later medieval traditions.¹ The later medieval period saw a proliferation of devotional texts for lay people whose aim was to promote self-examination and regular religious practice.² Much of the extant verse of the period is on religious and devotional themes, and encourages readers to consider their own mortality as a spur to repentance.³ Sears and Burrow have demonstrated that later medieval English versions of the Ages of Man tend to be found in exegetical, morally didactic and devotional genres.⁴ The interludes act in a similar way to other moral plays, like *The Castle of Perseverance, Everyman, and Mankind*, and moral verse, like *The Mirror of the Periods of Man's Life, and The Parlement of the Thre Ages*. They present the experiences of a central character who is meant to be viewed as a universal figure, as a way to encourage the audience to reflect on their own lives. As *The Mirror* and *The Parlement* put it these texts are 'mirrors', texts which promote spiritual self-examination.⁵ The interlude texts rehearse

¹Robert Potter, *The English Morality Play: Origins, History and Influence of a Dramatic Tradition* (London and Boston, 1975); Marion Jones, 'Early Moral Plays and the Earliest Secular Drama', in AC Cawley (ed.), *The Revels History of Drama in English: Vol. I, Medieval Drama* (London and New York, 1983), pp.213-91.

²On later medieval texts produced for preachers see: GR Owst, *Preaching in Medieval England: An Introduction to Sermon Manuscripts of the Period c.1350-1450* (Cambridge, 1926); idem, *Literature and Pulpit in Medieval England* (Cambridge, 1933); H Leith Spencer, *English Preaching in the Late Middle Ages* (Oxford, 1993). On penitential handbooks for the lay, and confessors' manuals, see: Mary Flowers Braswell, *The Medieval Sinner: Characterization and Confession in the Literature of the English Middle Ages* (East Brunswick, NJ, 1983); Peter Biller and AJ Minnis (eds.), *Handling Sin: Confession in the Middle Ages* (York, 1998); Marjorie Curry Woods and Rita Copeland, 'Classroom and Confession', in D Lawton (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Medieval Literature* (Cambridge, 1999), pp.376-401.

³Rosemary Woolf, *English Religious Lyrics in the Middle Ages* (Oxford, 1968), pp.330-36; Douglas Gray, *Themes and Images in the Medieval English Religious Lyric* (London, 1972); Philippa Tristram, *Figures of Life and Death in Medieval English Literature* (London, 1976), pp.62-94.

⁴JA Burrow, *The Ages of Man: A Study in Medieval Writing and Thought* (Oxford, 1986), pp.55-92; Elizabeth Sears, *The Ages of Man: Medieval Interpretations of the Life Cycle* (Princeton, 1986), pp.134-51.

⁵*Mirror of the Periods of Man's Life*, ll.638-40; *The Parlement of the Thre Ages*, ll.290-91. Line references are to FJ Furnivall (ed.), *Hymns to the Virgin and Christ*, EETS, OS 24 (1868), pp.58-78;

religious doctrine, on topics such as the deadly sins, and the cardinal virtues, and model the processes of repentance, which spectators are encouraged to imitate.⁶

Even *Fulgens and Lucrez* and *Calisto and Melebea* - often described as secular plays, because they depict individuals rather than personified vices, and deal with secular themes like love and marriage⁷ have a strong morally didactic emphasis in their concluding scenes. At the end of *Fulgens and Lucrez*, the servant B declares that the aim of the interlude was that 'gentilmen of name / May be somewhat movyd / By this example for to eschew / The wey of vyce and favour vertue'.⁸ The conclusion of *Calisto and Melebea* illustrates the efficacy of prayer, and of a sound religious upbringing, as Melebea's father Danio ascribes the fact that she did not succumb to Calisto's attempted seduction to the devotional habits he inculcated in her as a child.⁹

Unlike *The Castle of Perseverance*, *Everyman*, and *Mankind*, however, the interludes were intended for an household context.¹⁰ They were written for performance in great households: that is, both in household space, in the great hall of the castle or manor; and before a household audience, the servants, family members and others who lived under the same roof as the noble at the centre of the household. Writers used the human and material resources available in great households in these performances. In this context they had a specific educational function, as texts designed to instruct noble heirs and other young noblemen residing in the great household.¹¹ Interludes are also a household genre in that

and to Warren Ginsberg (ed.), *Wynmere and Wastoure and The Parlement of the Thre Ages* (Kalamazoo, MI, 1992).

⁶Potter, *English Morality Play*, pp.6-29. See also Charles W Crupi, 'Christian Doctrine in Henry Medwall's *Nature*', *Renascence* 34 (1982): 100-12.

⁷FS Boas and AW Reed (eds.), *Fulgens & Lucrez: A Fifteenth-Century Secular Play* (Oxford, 1926), p.ix; Alan H Nelson (ed.), *The Plays of Henry Medwall* (Cambridge, 1980), p.1.

⁸*Fulgens and Lucrez*, II.891-94. All line references are to Nelson (ed.), *Plays of Henry Medwall*. See also ME Moeslein (ed.), *The Plays of Henry Medwall: A Critical Edition* (New York and London, 1981), p.5.

⁹*Calisto and Melebea*, II.1004-17. All line references are to Richard Axton (ed.), *Three Rastell Plays* (Cambridge, 1979). See also *ibid.*, p.18; Richard Southern, 'The Technique of Play Presentation', in N Sanders et al, *The Revels History of Drama in English, Vol.II: 1500-1576* (London and New York, 1980), p.14.

¹⁰Suzanne Westfall, *Patrons and Performance: Early Tudor Household Revels* (Oxford, 1990). See the discussion of the auspices of the plays in the introduction, above.

¹¹On noble and royal households as a place for the education of nobles, see Nicholas Orme, *From Childhood to Chivalry: The Education of the English Kings and Aristocracy, 1066-1530* (London and New York, 1984), pp.48-59. See also CM Woolgar, *The Great Household in Late Medieval England*

they depict households, by presenting their noble central characters in relation to their own household servants.

In examining the ways in which young masculinities are constructed in these interludes, it makes sense to compare the presentation of young men in the interludes with that of young men in moral and devotional works, in order to ascertain in what ways their presentation is influenced by this tradition and in what ways it may be considered innovative. However, if we regard interludes as educational texts aimed at young men in households, it also makes sense to set the young masculinities of the interludes in the context other genres which discuss young men and households. Later medieval courtesy texts, for example, are didactic texts in many cases addressed to young men in household service, giving practical advice about how they should fulfil their duties, and conduct themselves in social interaction.¹² The texts tend to focus on young men's behaviour in the household space of the great hall, in the presence of the lord and all the other members of the household. Courtesy texts were used in great households for the instruction of the young noblemen who were in service there.¹³ The ordinances of Edward IV's household, for example, stipulate that the master of the henchmen should 'show the scoolez of vrbantie and nourture of Ingland' and that he should instruct his charges 'after the booke or vrbantie'.¹⁴ The tutor whom Edward Stafford, third duke of Buckingham employed to teach his son and noble wards purchased courtesy books amongst other educational materials in 1503-04.¹⁵ Of the surviving texts, some assume a noble readership. *The Babees Book*, for

(New Haven and London, 1999), p.102; Kate Mertes, *The English Noble Household, 1250-1600* (Oxford, 1988), pp.30-31, 60.

¹²On later medieval courtesy literature in England, see Jonathan Nicholls, *The Matter of Courtesy: Medieval Courtesy Books and the Gawain-Poet* (Cambridge, 1985); Orme, *From Childhood to Chivalry*, pp.133-41; Nancy Armstrong and Leonard Tennenhouse (eds.), *The Ideology of Conduct: Essays on Literature and the History of Sexuality* (New York, 1987); Felicity Riddy, 'Mother Knows Best: Reading Social Change in a Courtesy Text', *Speculum* 71 (1996): 66-86; Claire Sponsler, 'Conduct Books and Good Governance', in eadem, *Drama and Resistance: Bodies, Goods and Theatricality in Late Medieval England* (Minneapolis and London, 1997), pp.50-74; Kathleen Ashley and Robert L Clark (eds.), *Medieval Conduct* (Minneapolis, 2001).

¹³Orme, *From Childhood to Chivalry*, p.139. See also RF Green, *Poets and Princepleasers: Literature and the English Court in the Late Middle Ages* (Toronto, 1980), p.73.

¹⁴AR Myers (ed.), *The Household of Edward IV: The Black Book and the Ordinance of 1478* (Manchester, 1959), pp.126-27.

¹⁵Mertes, *English Noble Household*, p.172.

example, is addressed to those of the 'bloode Royalle'.¹⁶ However, manuscript evidence also suggests that courtesy texts were read within mercantile households, alongside moral and didactic pieces. The manuscript London, Lambeth Palace Library MS 853 (c.1400) contains four courtesy texts (three directed at young men and one at young women), alongside devotional and instructional material, and appears to be a 'household manager's book'.¹⁷ The commonplace book compiled in the early sixteenth century by Richard Hill, a London grocer, incorporates material from two courtesy texts, including Caxton's *Book of Curtesye*.¹⁸ Internal evidence in many surviving texts suggests that they were intended for those not of noble birth, who were ambitious to make a career in household service. For these young men, the texts are a guide to self-improvement, in the sense of acquainting them with the manners and habits of aristocratic life, and in providing a means for ensuring career success. As one text puts it, 'by fayre manerys men may þee a-vaunce'.¹⁹

Other forms of educational literature also depict young men in relation to households and householding. Mirrors for princes circulating in later medieval England were also pragmatic didactic texts, used to teach young noblemen about the ways in which they should conduct themselves and their households.²⁰ This genre suggests that households and householding were important to noble masculinity by giving detailed advice on how to conduct household relationships with servants and counsellors. The texts also makes householding into a politically significant activity. Mirrors for princes are also concerned with teaching the principles of political theory, in order to prepare young nobles not only to be governors of households, but to exercise political power. Walker and Scattergood have discussed the political significance of householding in relation to the royal household

¹⁶*The Babees Book*, l.15, in FJ Furnivall (ed.), *The Babees Book*, EETS, OS 32 (1868) pp.1-9.

¹⁷Riddy, 'Mother Knows Best', pp.83-84.

¹⁸The ms. - Oxford, Balliol College Library MS 354 - is described in RAB Mynors, *Catalogue of the Manuscripts of Balliol College, Oxford* (Oxford, 1963), pp.252-54. See also Heather Collier, 'Richard Hill - a London Compiler', in E Mullally and J Thompson (eds.), *The Court and Cultural Diversity* (Cambridge, 1997), pp.319-29.

¹⁹*Symon's Lesson of Wysdome for all Maner Chyldryn*, l.68, in Furnivall (ed.), *Babees Book*, pp.399-402.

²⁰On princely mirrors and the literature of politics in later medieval and Tudor England, see Orme, *From Childhood to Chivalry*, pp.86-106; Green, *Poets and Princepleasers*, pp.135-67; JA Guy, 'The Rhetoric of Counsel in Early Modern England', in Dale Hoak (ed.), *Tudor Political Culture* (Cambridge, 1995), pp.292-310; and Judith Ferster, *Fictions of Advice: The Literature and Politics of Counsel in Late Medieval England* (Philadelphia, 1996).

depicted in *Magnyfycence*.²¹ Later medieval traditions also suggest that young men also have a political significance as kings as householders, which informs early interludes.

This chapter discusses the way in which these different genres construct young masculinities, and the ends for which these masculinities are constructed, in order to indicate some ways in which the construction of young masculinities in the interludes shows continuities with the medieval past, and suggest other ways in which the presentation of young noblemen might be considered innovative. These genres are of interest, not only because they reveal what values are associated with young men in different genres, but because they reveal the first principles on which those values are founded.

²¹Greg Walker, 'A Domestic Drama: John Skelton's *Magnyfycence* and the Royal Household', in idem, *Plays of Persuasion* (Cambridge, 1991), pp.60-101; John Scattergood, 'Skelton's *Magnyfycence* and the Tudor Royal Housheold', *METH* 15 (1993): 21-48.

Young men and sinfulness

Later medieval devotional texts and morally didactic works tend to associate young men with a state of sinfulness. Young men frequently represent the fallen state of man and are depicted as devoted, not to the life of prayer and self-examination in preparation for the eternal life to come, but to the pleasures of this world. This association is the product of a moral discourse which uses male bodies as a didactic tool, and which refers to male bodies as an explanation for the essential human nature. Though the texts ostensibly present universal truths about the spiritual state of human beings in general, they frequently relate spiritual state to the physical nature of men, so that the spiritual lives they describe are thoroughly gendered.

Depicting male bodies at different points in the life-cycle is on one level a convenient way of indicating the passing of time, and perhaps more importantly that time is running out or counting down. These narratives are conscious of the end of time: in terms of the death of individuals, and in terms of the end of the world and the judgement to come.²² The appearance of male bodies is often used to mark the passing of the years, and to mark the stages in man's life in morally didactic works. For example, the Ages of Man window in Canterbury cathedral (c.1180) shows the six Ages by depicting six male figures, whose relative size, dress and attributes indicate their relative age.²³ The scheme of the Ages originally formed part of a larger programme in glass, illustrating the biblical story of the Marriage at Cana, in relation to its types derived from exegetical traditions. In the Ages of Man window, the depiction of the Ages represents the moral level of interpretation of the passage. The six jars of water are taken to represent the six Ages of Man's life, in order to illustrate the possibility of repentance at any stage of life, just as the contents of the jars were transformed from water into wine. The Ages of Man window is associated with an Ages of the World window, where the six water jars represent six historical periods, up to and including the end of time. While the transformation of the water into wine is read as a metaphor for spiritual renewal,²⁴ these two windows also remind viewers that there is a date

²²On the preoccupation of Ages of Man texts with time, see Burrow, *Ages of Man*, pp.55-94.

²³*Ibid.*, pp.90-92; Sears, *Ages of Man*, pp.69-74. See also pl. 1.

²⁴Burrow, *Ages of Man*, p.92; Sears, *Ages of Man*, p.74.

after which such renewal will no longer be possible. Death and judgement are both on the horizon.

The ageing processes which male bodies undergo also give moral writers an opportunity to expound the transience of human life. The devotional text *The Pricke of Conscience* (first half of the fourteenth century) emphasises the attractiveness of young bodies:

A man þat es yhung and light,
 Be he never swa stalworth and wyght,
 And comly of shap, luffly and fayre,
 Angers and yvels may hym appayre,
 And his beuté and his strength abate,
 And mak hym in ful wayk state,
 And change alle fayre colour,
 Þat son fayles and fades, as dos þe flour.²⁵

The image of the healthy and strong young body is deployed as a rhetorical strategy, in order to render all the more poignant the effects of disease and the passing of time on that beauty and strength. In this context, the reference to the young body is intended to encourage the reader to meditate on 'þe wrechednes of mans kynde' (l.351). In a world subject to decay and death, the message is to turn one's thoughts to eternal matters.

Images of old men's bodies are used for similar purposes, particularly in texts where old men reflect on their past youth, and compare their young bodies with their present aged ones.²⁶ In the moral lyric *The Mirror of the Periods of Man's Life* (c.1400), the text notes the passing of the bodily 'strengeþe, bewte, & heele' which Mankind enjoyed as a young man.²⁷ The speaker in the lyric 'O Vanyte off vanytes' reflects on his aged state and declares that the young man:

...lytell remembyrs his awne febulnys
 ho 3outh schall pas & departe a-wey,

²⁵Richard Morris (ed.), *The Pricke of Conscience: A Northumbrian Poem by Richard Rolle de Hampole* (Berlin, 1863), ll.688-95. The text, not now usually attributed to Rolle, is extant in 115 fourteenth- and fifteenth-century manuscripts. See RE Lewis and A McIntosh, *A Descriptive Guide to the Manuscripts of The Pricke of Conscience* (Oxford, 1982).

²⁶Shulamith Shahar, 'The Old Body in Medieval Culture', in S Kay and M Rubin (eds.), *Framing Medieval Bodies* (Manchester and New York, 1994), pp.160-86 (pp.164-70). On lyrics which adopt the voice of old men, see Woolf, *English Religious Lyrics*, pp.330-36; Tristram, *Figures of Life and Death*, pp.62-94.

²⁷*Mirror of the Periods of Man's Life*, l.435. See also ll.457-64. Line references are to FJ Furnival (ed.), *Hymns to the Virgin and Christ*, EETS, OS 24 (1867).

And deth schall come, þat is none ney.²⁸

The transience of mortal and male bodies is also an important theme of the moral play *Everyman* (printed 1509-19). The Messenger who introduces the play explains to the audience that the aim of the play is to remind them 'How transytory we be all daie'.²⁹ He continues:

Here shall you se how Felawshyp/and Iolyte,
Bothe/Strength/Pleasure/and Beaute,
Wyll fade from the as floure in Maye (ll.16-18)

Many texts exploit the visual distinctions between healthy and beautiful young bodies and decrepit old ones in order to make this point. The old men of *The Parlement of the Thre Ages* and *The Mirror of the Periods of Man's Life*, for example, both paint graphic pictures of their infirm and bent old bodies.³⁰ Similar descriptions of aged men are included in the moral plays *The Castle of Perseverance*, *Nature*, and *The Worlde and the Chylde*.³¹ It is likely that these descriptions were reinforced through the costume, make-up and gestures of the actors playing these roles. Stark contrasts between young and old bodies are intended to shock the spectator into a contemplation of their own mortality.

The artistic motif of the Three Living and the Three Dead has a similar function.³² These images appear to have been fairly widespread in later medieval England, and survive as wall paintings in parish churches and manors, and in manuscripts containing religious material. The 'three living' in the images are always three young men, usually depicted as kings, who, while out hawking, encounter three mouldering corpses (the 'three dead'). The corpses remind the young men that they too will soon be corpses

²⁸'O Vanyte off vanytes', ll.59-61, in Carleton Brown (ed.), *Religious Lyrics of the XVth Century* (Oxford, 1939), pp.238-40.

²⁹AC Cawley (ed.), *Everyman* (Manchester, 1961), l.6.

³⁰*Mirror of the Periods of Man's Life*, ll.485-92; *Parlement of the Thre Ages*, ll.283-89.

³¹*The Castle of Perseverance*, ll.2482-90; *Nature*, ll.941-951; *The Worlde and the Chylde*, ll.795-801. Line references are to the following editions: Mark Eccles (ed.) *The Macro Plays: The Castle of Perseverance, Wisdom, Mankind*, EETS, OS 262 (1969); Nelson (ed.), *Plays of Henry Medwall*; Clifford Davis and Peter Happé (eds.), *The Worlde and the Chylde* (Kalamazoo, MI, 1999).

³²Woolf, *English Religious Lyrics*, pp.344-47; Tristram, *Figures of Life and Death*, pp.162-67. See pl. 5.

themselves. The images carefully delineate the contrast between the healthy and richly attired young kings, and the decaying bodies of the dead, dressed in rags, and this contrast is meant to highlight the common fate that all men will share, and against which youthful health and aristocratic wealth may not avail.

In a sense, these morally didactic texts ascribe a positive value to young male bodies. Beauty, health and strength are not qualities that they despise. However, the transitory nature of these physical attributes does make them rather insubstantial, in comparison with the solid joys and lasting treasure of the eternal life, which the texts hold out as altogether better. At the same time, the texts are rather distrustful of young male bodies, not only because they are subject to decay and death, but also because the physical attributes of the young body are represented as a potential ground of sinfulness.³³ The very health and strength of young men, for example, is shown to lead them into the sin of the pride of life, an attitude of arrogant self-sufficiency.³⁴ Because young men enjoy health and strength they are lulled into a false sense of spiritual security, believing that death and judgement will not affect them, or at least are far enough away that they need not be concerned with their spiritual state. This overconfidence in the flesh is illustrated in the early, fragmentary, moral play which has come to be known as *The Pride of Life* (c.1350).³⁵ The central character of this play, the King of Life, is at the height of his physical powers. His implicit reliance on his bodily condition to keep him from death is symbolised by his reliance on his two knights Streinth or Fortitudo (strength), and Hele or Sanitas (health):

3e, þes be knightis of curteisye
 And doghti men of dede;
 Of Deth ne of his maistrie
 Ne have I no drede. (ll.259-62)

³³Tristram, *Figures of Life and Death*, p.21.

³⁴Ibid., pp.34-47.

³⁵The surviving text has been printed in Norman Davis (ed.), *Non-Cycle Plays and Fragments*, EETS, SS 1 (1970). All line references are to this edition.

So strong is his confidence in his body that he refuses to listen to the advice of the Queen and Bishop to repent,³⁶ and this confidence is only destroyed in a direct encounter with death himself.³⁷

The Interlude of Youth draws on this long tradition linking the spiritual condition of young men to their physical characteristics.³⁸ When Youth first enters he begins by cataloguing for the benefit of the audience the features of his youthful body: his 'royal' and 'thick' hair; his 'pliant' body; his 'big and strong' arms, and so on.³⁹ Youth describes himself with considerable relish, but the extent of his confidence in the body he describes becomes apparent in his exchanges with Charity, the representative of good in the play. Charity immediately remonstrates with Youth about his praise of the body and, just like the Queen and the Bishop in *The Pride of Life*, urges Youth to consider instead the prospect of his death and the judgement to come.⁴⁰ Youth's contemptuous dismissal of both Charity and his counsel confirms his pride of life.⁴¹

Moral texts which depict the whole life-cycle of man, whether lyrics or plays, do tend to divide the life-cycle into stages of life, in the tradition of the Ages of Man.⁴² However, these English Ages of Man schemes also incorporate narratives of fall and repentance into the narrative of the male life, and this has the effect of making the beginning of man's life invariably into a period of sinfulness. The protagonists of the lyrics and plays fall from grace in their infancy, a fall usually represented by the child's choice of an evil counsellor rather than a good counsellor as his guide for the life ahead. The young Humanum Genus of *The Castle of Perseverance*, the young man of the lyric 'Of the seven ages', and the young Mankind of *The Mirror of the Periods of Man's Life* all have to choose between a Good Angel and a Bad Angel and each selects the Bad

³⁶*Pride of Life*, ll.179-90, 199-238, 391-406.

³⁷*Ibid.*, ll.81-112.

³⁸Tony Davenport, "Lusty Fresch Galaunts", in P Neuss (ed.), *Aspects of Early English Drama* (Cambridge and Totowa, NJ, 1983), pp.111-28 (p.125).

³⁹*Interlude of Youth*, ll.45-54. All line references are to Ian Lancashire (ed.), *Two Tudor Interludes: Youth and Hick Scornor* (Manchester, 1980).

⁴⁰*Ibid.*, ll.65-66, 71-80.

⁴¹*Ibid.*, ll.67-70.

⁴²Burrow, *Ages of Man*, pp.47-48.

Angel as their guide.⁴³ The young Man of *Nature* chooses Sensualyte over Reason as his chief counsellor for life. After a long debate between Reason and Sensualyte, Man accepts the advice of the Worlde to reject Reason and Innocenye and to follow the counsel of Sensualyte and his own servant, Worldly Affeccyon.⁴⁴ Both Man in *Nature* and Infans in *The Worlde and the Chylde* are under the sway of The Worlde, the character who represents the sinful aspects of temporal existence, particularly those sins which follow from conforming to the habits of worldly life. In *The Worlde and the Chylde*, the Worlde is much more influential over the main character, as the protagonist is in his household service from the age of seven until the age of twenty-one. Infans must promise to obey The Worlde, as his servant, so that he may obtain what he needs to live.⁴⁵ Through the agency of the Worlde, the protagonist enters the service of the seven kings, the seven deadly sins.⁴⁶ After the age of twenty-one, the protagonist, now called Manhode, must choose between the advice of Folye (who also represents the deadly sins) and the advice of Conscyence.⁴⁷ *Nature* and *The Worlde and the Chylde* represent the inevitable spiritual compromises which follow from living the secular life, as well as the promptings of the flesh.⁴⁸ In each of these texts, the period of youth is inevitably sinful, because of the structural demands of the narratives.

The texts present young men as performing sins specific to their stage of life. In some texts these are distinct from the sins which the men commit in their mature years. In *The Parlement of the Thre Ages*, Youthe (presented as a man of thirty) is characterised by his extravagant expenditure and the pursuit of love, battles, hunting and hawking, whereas Medil Age (a man of sixty) is preoccupied by his business dealings and the acquisition of property.⁴⁹ In *The Castle of Perseverance*, Humanum Genus's youthful

⁴³*Castle of Perseverance*, ll.393-401; *Mirror of the Periods of Man's Life*, ll.65-82. For 'Of the seuen ages', see Alan H Nelson, ' "Of the seuen ages": An Unknown Analogue of *The Castle of Perseverance*', *Comparative Drama* 8 (1974): 125-38.

⁴⁴*Nature*, I.581-654.

⁴⁵*Worlde and the Chylde*, ll.61-66.

⁴⁶*Ibid.*, ll.168-83.

⁴⁷*Ibid.*, ll.699-708.

⁴⁸Potter, *English Morality Play*, p.61; Moeslein (ed.), *Plays of Henry Medwall*, p.257; Suzanne Westfall, *Patrons and Performance* (Oxford, 1990), p.160; Davidson and Happé (eds.), *The Worlde and the Chylde*, pp.8-9; Peter Happé, *English Drama Before Shakespeare* (London, 1999), p.85.

⁴⁹Burrow, *Ages of Man*, p.71. On Youthe's rich dress see *Parlement of the Thre Ages*, ll.122-135; on his characteristic activities, ll.194-260. Medil Age's preoccupation with business is established

sinfulness is symbolised through his attendants Lust and Lykyngge, and Folye. These companions lead him into the pursuit of worldly and sensual pleasure, to the exclusion of thoughts of repentance.⁵⁰ *Humanum Genus* repents at the age of forty and spends the next twenty years of his life protected from attack by the sins inside the Castle of Perseverance.⁵¹ When he falls for a second time, he is enticed from its protection, not by his former companions, but by the sin Covetyse, or covetousness, alone.⁵² Covetyse plays on his fears as an old man of suffering a poverty-stricken old age, in order to inspire him with the desire to amass money. Covetyse is the only deadly sin to appear in this section of the play, in contrast to the beginning of the play, where *Humanum Genus*'s life was characterised by indulgence in all the deadly sins.

The interludes *Nature*, *The Worlde and the Chylde* and *The Interlude of Youth* take a rather different approach to the depiction of sinfulness. The young men of these plays are still intended to be viewed as sinful, and indeed the forms of their sinfulness are strikingly similar, as the young protagonists in each make their way into a rather seedy and specifically urban underworld of taverns and prostitutes, eating, drinking, and gambling, which allows them full reign for their sins.⁵³ Few other moral plays and verses discussed in this chapter invoke scenes of town life with such verisimilitude, although the idea of the tavern as the devil's school or the devil's church was familiar from sermon literature.⁵⁴ *Mankind* includes a tavern scene which is used to develop the extent of *Mankind*'s fall from grace, though this tavern is in a rural setting.⁵⁵ Hoccleve makes

in his description: see ll.136-51.

⁵⁰*Castle of Perseverance*, ll.550-65.

⁵¹*Ibid.*, l.1575.

⁵²*Ibid.*, ll.2479-543. *Humanum Genus* has been covetous in his youth. As Lust and Lykyngge points out, anyone who wants to live a lavish, noble lifestyle has to be covetous in order to fund it (ll.500-03).

⁵³In *Nature*, Sensualyte describes Man's encounter with the prostitute Margery at the tavern, and his attack of Reason at I.1112-179. When he falls back into sin in the second part of the play, he returns to his old courses (II.165-301). In *The Worlde and the Chylde*, Folye leads Manhode to the London stews, which he describes at ll.566-97, 647-74. In *The Interlude of Youth*, Youth departs for the tavern with Riot, Pride and lady Lechery, after various delays including the vices' stocking of Charity (ll.390-546). See David Bevington, *Tudor Drama and Politics* (Cambridge, MA, 1968), pp.40-41; Potter, *English Morality Play*, p.64; Southern, 'Technique of Play Presentation', p.153.

⁵⁴GR Owst, *Literature and Pulpit in Medieval England* (Cambridge, 1933) pp.438-41. See also Wells, 'Food in the City', pp.123-30.

⁵⁵*Mankind*, ll.607-733. Line references are to Eccles (ed.), *Macro Plays*.

comparable use of London settings to establish his youthful sinfulness, for example in *La Male Regle* (c. 1407), where he describes his youthful prodigality at the Paul's Head tavern, and the inns of Westminster.⁵⁶ However, while *Nature*, *The Worlde and the Chylde* and *The Interlude of Youth* have much to say about the sins of youth, none of the plays has much time for the sins of old age. In *The Interlude of Youth*, the repentance of the protagonist means that his old age is not sinful at all. The protagonists of *The Worlde and the Chylde* and *Nature* repent while young, only to fall again, like Humanum Genus in *The Castle of Perseverance*.⁵⁷ But unlike Humanum Genus, they do not seem to be afflicted by sins specific to old age. In *The Worlde and the Chylde*, when Manhode falls for a second time, he is led off to the London stews by Folye. When the audience next sees him, he is an old man already chastened by his experiences, and is only too ready to receive Conscience's advice to repent.⁵⁸ In *Nature*, when Man falls for a second time, he returns immediately to the old companions and the old sins of his youth, rather than sins associated with mature or old men.⁵⁹ It may be that Man is still intended to be viewed as relatively young, at this point. When Man reaches old age proper, there is a reference to covetousness as the sin of old age. Sensualyte reports that Man will be attended by covetousness for 'a yere or twayn', but this reference to the characteristic sin of old age is very brief and rather dismissive.⁶⁰ Of all the deadly sins, covetousness is the only sin not to be presented as a major speaking role in the play. The absence of covetousness from the stage, and the relegation of the sin to a brief reference in a few lines contrasts strongly with *The Castle of Perseverance*, where Covetyse is a major speaking role, and a character who dominates the final section of Humanum Genus's earthly life.⁶¹ All three plays deliberately minimize the role of the sins of old age, or even excise all reference to them. This has the effect of presenting youth as the period of sinfulness *per se*, rather than just one period amongst many, where each period is associated with its typical sins. Instead there is a striking contrast between youth, as a period of sinfulness, and old age

⁵⁶*La Male Regle*, ll. 105-84.

⁵⁷Nelson (ed.), *Plays of Henry Medwall*, pp. 23-24; Davidson and Happé (eds.), *Worlde and the Chylde*, p. 10.

⁵⁸*Worlde and the Chylde*, ll. 763-806.

⁵⁹*Nature*, II. 82ff.

⁶⁰*Ibid.*, II. 976-82.

⁶¹*Castle of Perseverance*, ll. 2415-777. See also Davidson and Happé (eds.), *Worlde and the Chylde*, p. 10.

as a period of repentance and holiness. The plays appear to imply that the sinful state is natural and unavoidable for young men, and that the holiness of the old is equally natural, and virtually inevitable.⁶²

The reason for the sharp distinction between youth as a period of sinfulness, and old age as a period of holiness lies in part in a correlation texts make between the physical development of male bodies and a man's spiritual state. *Nature* makes the most explicit connection between a young man's physical development and his tendency to sin. *Nature* is constructed to show the ways in which male bodies determine men's sinfulness, and specifically, how young male bodies produce sinfulness, while old male bodies produce holiness. The biological determinism of the play is clear from the beginning of the play, where Man has to choose between Reason and Sensualyte as his guides for life. This moment has sometimes been described as a bold break with 'medieval' notions of good and evil, in that, rather than depicting a battle by supernatural agents such as Good or Bad Angel for the soul of man, the play shows the different parts of Man's nature in conflict.⁶³ As others have pointed out, the idea of this kind of internal struggle was a thoroughly medieval one,⁶⁴ and theologians such as Aquinas had carefully debated the precise nature and function of a man's intellectual powers, versus the dictates of his physical desires. In *Nature*, the protagonist Man is however no more free to direct his own fate than Humanum Genus in *The Castle of Perseverance*. It is inevitable that Man will fall into sin at the promptings of sensual desires. For this reason, the character Sensualyte, who represents the body's capacity to feel such desires, is able confidently to predict the action of the play with regard to Man's soul from the beginning. While arguing with Reason about which of them should rule Man, Sensualyte declares:

And standyng the nonage of thys gentylman [Man],
On my parell take no care therfore.
I shall demean yt as well as I can
Tyll he be passyd forty yerys and more,

⁶²Potter, *English Morality Play*, pp.48, 51, 61; Joel B Altman, *The Tudor Play of Mind Rhetorical Inquiry and the Development of Elizabethan Drama* (Berkeley, 1978), pp.16-17.

⁶³AP Rossiter, *English Drama From Early Times to the Elizabethans* (London, 1950), p.104; Potter, *English Morality Play*, p.60; Jones, 'Early Moral Plays', pp.258-61; Lancashire (ed.), *Two Tudor Interludes*, p.38.

⁶⁴W Roy MacKenzie 'A Source for Medwall's *Nature*', *PMLA* 29 (1914): 189-99; Nelson (ed.), *Plays of Henry Medwall*, p.24; Crupi, 'Christian Doctrine'; JA Alford, ' "My Name is Worship: Masquerading Vice in Medwall's *Nature* ', in idem (ed.), *From Page to Performance Essays in Early English Drama* (East Lansing, MI, 1995), pp.151-77 (p.160).

And, Reason, then yf ye wyll, undershore
 Hys croked old age when lusty youth ys spent;
 Than take uppon you. (I.323-29)

Sensualityte parcels out Man's life into three periods here. First he refers to Man's 'nonage', a legal term for the period until the age of twenty-one, when young men regarded as legal 'infants'. This period is one during which, Sensualityte implies, Reason has no chance of exerting any influence over Man. Sensualityte also intends to rule Man up until the age of forty, 'as well as I can', which may imply that Sensualityte's influence is less certain in this period. Sensualityte cedes the period of old age to Reason, because this is the period when youth is 'spent'. He may be alluding to the scientific theory which described ageing as the consumption of the young body's moisture by its hot complexion.⁶⁵ When 'spent', this precipitated ageing, and the natural dying away of physical desires which make the period of youth 'lusty'. However, even if Sensualityte is referring in more general terms to the ending of the period of youth, this passage shows that Sensualityte is sure that he *will* control Man's youth, and that Reason *will* control Man's old Age, as an inevitable outcome of Man's natural development.

The extent to which the body determines Man's ability to be sinful or holy is revealed when old age begins to come upon Man. Up until this point Man has been under the sway of Sensualityte and the seven deadly sins. Sensualityte's influence over Man is broken when Man's body begins to age. As Sensualityte himself explains, the advent of the new character Age is clear from Man's appearance, and from an abrupt change in the forces governing Man's nature. Age:

...has brought in Reason
 In such wyse that at no season
 Nothyng can be wrought

But Reason must be called therto! (II.952-55)

With Reason in charge of Man, the sins realise that they no longer have any power over him, and leave Man. Glutony and Bodyly Lust are the first to depart⁶⁶ Men, the play

⁶⁵On the theory of radical moisture, see P Osmund Lewry, 'Study of Aging in the Arts Faculty of the Universities of Paris and Oxford', in MM Sheehan (ed.), *Aging and the Aged in Medieval Europe* (Toronto, 1990), pp.23-38.

⁶⁶*Nature*, II.958-72. See also ME Moeslein (ed.), *The Plays of Henry Medwall: A Critical Edition* (New York and London, 1981), p.263.

implies, are simply not prone to the same sins as they were in youth, because the changes to their bodies take away their old physical desires.⁶⁷ In old age, they are governed solely by their intellectual powers, which, unassailed by the body, are free to direct men to repentance and holiness. The minimizing of the covetousness as the sin of old age is effected in this context, and it is at this point that Sensualyte casually mentions that Man will be attended by covetousness 'for a yere or twayn' (II.981). This sin apparently represents no substantive threat to Man's repentant state, and certainly not the dominant sin which Covetyse is in *The Castle of Perseverance*. In *Nature*, covetousness is an inevitable sin of old age, but something which Man will simply brush off in the fulness of time.

This strongly deterministic model of male sinfulness suggests that the spiritual state of men is almost wholly decided by their physical state. In turn it implies that youthful sin is inevitable, even natural; while holiness is the direct consequence of physical change in old age.⁶⁸ The deterministic model helps to make the text reassuring, since salvation is a corollary to the process of ageing. Indeed, *Nature* goes out of its way to allay any lingering worries about youthful sin. At the end of the play, Reason assures Man that, as long as Man perseveres in his repentance, 'greter reward thou shalt therfore wyn / Than he that never in hys lyfe dyd syn' (II.1404-05). The text actually ascribes a kind of positive value to youthful sinfulness, since it is through the overcoming of such sin that old men attain a better kind of holiness, superior even to the innocence that Man enjoyed at the opening of the play.

While *The Worlde and the Chylde* also seems to endorse this kind of biological determinism, by presenting old age as the solution to youthful sinfulness, this view that sinfulness is natural to young men is attacked in a number of other texts, including *The Castle of Perseverance*, *The Mirror of the Periods of Man's Life*, 'Of the seven ages', and *The Interlude of Youth*. These texts counter the idea that young men cannot or need not repent, but may safely put off repentance to the more convenient season of old age. In each, debate about the nature of young men, and its relation to their spiritual state, is articulated in the debates between the representatives of good and evil (good angels and bad angels, and sins and virtues) concerning the fate of the male character. Each

⁶⁷Nelson (ed.), *Plays of Henry Medwall*, p.24; Davidson and Happé (eds.), *Worlde and the Chylde*, p.10.

⁶⁸Potter, *English Morality Play*, pp.64-65.

attempts to persuade the man to embrace vice or virtue, and in doing so several refer to different kinds of knowledge about young male bodies in order to strengthen their case. In *The Mirror of the Periods of Man's Life*, for example, Lust argues that Mankind can safely allow himself to indulge in sex since “3ouþe so muste; / 3ouþe can not kepe him chast” (ll.101-02). Lust may be referring specifically to scientific knowledge about the sanguine complexions of young men which incline them to love and lust; but in any case his authoritative tone suggests that he is referring to a commonly held belief about the nature of young men. Similar pronouncements can be seen in other moral texts, for example in a fifteenth century sermon which declares that:

...3onge men spare not for no drede of God, noþur þei leue not for no shame of þe world, to renne to here lechery with a like desire as a bere renneþ to ete hony.⁶⁹

In *The Mirror of the Periods of Man's Life*, the figure of Lechery further advocates sex by referring to medical knowledge:

“For if þou in 3ouþe sparist þanne þee,
 Þou maist falle in greet perille.
 3ouþe ful of corage wole be;
 Þou muste haue helpe or ellis spille.” (ll.227-30)

He alludes to medical theory which advocated a moderate level of sexual activity for men in order to maintain the health of the body as a whole.⁷⁰ Conscience is quick to counter Lechery's arguments by deploying his own scientific knowledge about male bodies. He reminds Mankind that excessive sexual activity ““distroieþe mannis kindeli heete”” (l.262). Sexual activity hastens the consumption of the body's moisture by the hot complexion of the young, and this will lead to the premature cooling and ageing of the body.⁷¹ Mankind himself declares his allegiance to age-related norms which justify his pleasures:

“3outhe axiþ delice;
 For 3outhe þe course of kinde wole holde;
 But 3outhe were a fole and nyce,

⁶⁹Woodburn O Ross (ed.), *Middle English Sermons*, EETS, OS 209 (1940), p.236, ll.18-21. See also Owst, *Literature and Pulpit*, p.461.

⁷⁰Joan Cadden, *The Meanings of Sex Difference in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 1993), pp.273-75.

⁷¹Lewry, ‘Study of Aging’, p.26.

How schulde wijsdom be founde in oolde” (ll.373-76)⁷²

Mankind declares that sinfulness is natural to young men, and holiness to old age, these spiritual states being produced by the ‘course of kinde’, the natural process of ageing. This is an echo of the bad angel’s earlier assertion that ‘ “Course of kynde is for zoupe to be wilde”’ (l.79), in order to justify the child’s quarrels with his peers.⁷³ However, Mankind further implies that the wisdom of the old somehow *depends* on having behaved foolishly in one’s youth; and that it would be impossible to attain holiness in old age without having been sinful in youth.

The Bad Angel in *The Castle of Perseverance* makes a similar appeal to the idea that old age is the natural period for holiness, as he argues that Humanum Genus can afford to postpone thoughts of repentance:

Wyth þe Werld þou mayst be bold
Tyl þou be sixty wyntyre hold.
Wanne þi nose waxit cold,
Panne mayst þou drawe to goode. (ll.416-19)⁷⁴

The Bad Angel links goodness with the physiology of the aged male body. The cooling process, he implies, makes it possible to be holy, and more importantly natural to be holy, in old age. Conversely, the passage suggests that it is somehow unnatural for young bodies to produce holiness. The vices in *The Interlude of Youth* deploy assumptions about youth and age in a similar way. Pride encourages Youth ignore Charity’s appeals for repentance:

Youth, I trow that he would
Make you holy or ye be old,
And I swear by the rood
It is time enough to be good
When that ye be old. (ll.642-46)

Pride supports Youth in procrastination not only by claiming that Youth has plenty of time left in which to turn his thoughts to religion, and by implying that being holy is appropriate to the old man, not to the young man. Pride reinforces earlier remarks by Riot, which refer to proverbial knowledge about the young:

⁷²Burrow, *Ages of Man*, p.148.

⁷³Ibid.

⁷⁴Ibid., p.149.

Hark, Youth, for God avow,
 He [Charity] would have thee a saint now!
 But Youth, I shall you tell,
 A young saint, an old devil. (ll.612-15)

As Burrow has observed in his study of this proverb, it implies powerful 'age-related norms' about what is natural to the old and the young.⁷⁵ So firmly fixed is the association between youth and sinfulness, old age and holiness in the proverb, that it represents youthful holiness as something deeply unnatural, an inversion of the natural order of things as far as young men are concerned.⁷⁶ Youthful holiness, unnatural in and of itself, will, it is implied, produce a further inversion of the natural order in the form of unnatural sinfulness in old age.

The Castle of Perseverance, *The Mirror of the Periods of Man's Life*, 'Of the seven ages', and *The Interlude of Youth* cite these age-related norms so explicitly, not to endorse them, but to discredit them.⁷⁷ These texts all attempt to combat the spiritual complacency which biologically deterministic views of men and their spiritual states threaten to engender. They do so by putting arguments for postponing repentance, based on biological determinism, into the mouths of the representatives of evil:⁷⁸ the bad angels of 'Of the seven ages' and *The Castle of Perseverance*; Lechery/Lust from *The Mirror of the Periods of Man's Life*; and Riot and Pride from *The Interlude of Youth*. In addition *The Interlude of Youth* presents the repentance of the young man Youth, in a way which carefully distinguishes his repentance from those in the other early interludes of *Nature* and *The Worlde and the Chylde*. Man in *Nature* and Manhode in *The Worlde and the Chylde* both repent while they are still young; but these repentances are insubstantial affairs, with the young characters quickly drawn back into sinful lifestyles. Both Men must undergo a second repentance in old age, and this is the true and lasting repentance. *The Interlude of Youth*, in contrast, establishes Youth's repentance as the true and lasting one. It is clear that Youth will not fall again, from Charity and Humility's comments at the conclusion of the play. Charity equips Youth with a garment

⁷⁵JA Burrow, '“Young Saint, Old Devil”: Reflections on a Medieval Proverb', *Review of English Studies* 30 (1979): 385-96. See also idem, *Ages of Man*, pp.149-50.

⁷⁶Burrow, *Ages of Man*, p.149.

⁷⁷Ibid., p.148; Burrow, '“Young saint”', p.390.

⁷⁸Burrow, *Ages of Man*, pp.149-50.

symbolising repentance, and Humility with rosary beads for his devotions.⁷⁹ Humility also looks forward into Youth's future and advocates a life of prayer and the instruction of other 'misdoing men', which Youth affirms he will follow.⁸⁰ As with all early moral plays, *The Interlude of Youth* is governed by a convention whereby saying is the equivalent of doing.⁸¹ Youth's words constitute a kind of speech act, and therefore tell the audience not only what he intends, but what he actually does. *The Interlude of Youth* short-circuits the pattern of the double fall and repentance, which associates true repentance with old age. The play does not deny that young men are naturally inclined to sinfulness: on the contrary, it shows a young man applying himself to pride and lechery and wrath with a will. It does, however, refute the suggestion that young men are incapable of repentance on the grounds of their physical development, or that the repentance of young men is somehow unnatural, by modelling a lasting repentance by a young man.

The interludes show considerable tension, derived from a wider medieval debate, between ideas about young men which pull in opposite directions, and give the texts rather ambivalent attitudes to young men, as beings who theoretically ought to repent, but who will not, and perhaps need not, repent while they are young. The presentation of the young men in *Nature*, *The Worlde and the Chylde* and *The Interlude of Youth* is determined by the texts' stance on the extent to which young men's spiritual state is related to their biology. This is dictated the extent to which male life-cycles are yoked with narratives of fall and repentance.

The constraints of structure mean that the interludes do not have much room for other views of the nature of young men, also current in later medieval morally didactic literature. Devotional texts frequently encourage parents to apply themselves to the education of their children by presenting the young as peculiarly fitted by nature to education and training. Such texts often mention this trait as they advocate strict discipline and express disapproval of indulgence and the setting of bad examples by

⁷⁹*Interlude of Youth*, ll. 767-71.

⁸⁰*Ibid.*, ll. 772-82.

⁸¹Joerg O Fichte, 'The Presentation of Sin as Verbal Action in the Moral Interludes', *Anglia* 103 (1985): 26-47.

parents.⁸² The penitential handbook *Ayenbite of Inwyrt* (1340), for example, compares children to a horse which must be tamed while it is a colt, if it is to be tamed at all; and to a new shoe which moulds itself to the wearer's foot, and then may not be reshaped.⁸³

Fasciculus morum, a fourteenth-century Latin manual on the vices and virtues, probably intended for preachers as an aid to sermon-writing, quotes a Middle English proverb:

Woso woneþ hym noȝt to goude furst in hys youth,
Unthewes to leve were to hym in his elde wel uncoupe.⁸⁴

The Latin text develops the theme by referring to a long-established image of children as comparable to soft wax, upon which it is easy to make an impression.⁸⁵ Adults, in contrast, are like hardened wax which will not readily take an impression. The writer extends the idea in the image of a sapling which bends easily, unlike the mature tree.⁸⁶ The point of these images is that the young are particularly malleable. In part this also goes back to biological determinism. Scientific thought held that the preponderance of heat in the very young rendered them physically soft and malleable. Trevisa's translation of the *De proprietatibus rerum* describes children as 'tendre and neische, quabby and gleymy', for example.⁸⁷ This means that the limbs of infants may be shaped and trained while they are young.⁸⁸ The characters of the young are equally plastic. Adults with their cooler complexions are less malleable, both in body and in character. The images warn that once character is set, it is set for life.

This means that parents bear a heavy responsibility, since they are held responsible for the way they make their children into adults. Some *exempla* present the dreadful consequences of the parental negligence, in the shape of children who become

⁸²Owst, *Literature and Pulpit*, pp.460-68. See also Nicholas Orme, *Medieval Children* (New Haven and London, 2001), pp.84-85.

⁸³R Morris and P Gradon (eds.), *Dan Michel's Ayenbite of Inwyrt, or Remorse of Conscience*, 2 vols., EETS, OS 23, 278 (1965, 1979), 1:220.

⁸⁴Siegfried Wenzel (ed. and trans.), *Fasciculus morum: A Fourteenth-Century Preacher's Handbook* (University Park, PA, 1989), p.90, ll.68-69. See also idem, *Verses in Sermons: Fasciculus morum and its Middle English Poems* (Cambridge, MA, 1978).

⁸⁵Wenzel (ed. and trans.), *Fasciculus morum*, p.90, ll.71-72.

⁸⁶Ibid., ll.72-73.

⁸⁷M Seymour (ed.), *On the Properties of Things, A Critical Text: John Trevisa's Translation of Bartholomaeus Anglicus, De proprietatibus rerum*, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1975), 1:299, ll.18-19. See also ibid, 1:298, ll.24-25.

⁸⁸Ibid., 1:299, ll.21-25. See also Orme, *Medieval Children*, p.62.

fixed in their naturally wicked ways, and so come to an evil end. *The Pricke of Conscience* imagines children rising up to testify against their parents on the Day of Judgement.⁸⁹ The fourteenth-century *Alphabet of Tales* introduces us to Thaysis whose mother indulged her and who consequently becomes ‘þe moste common strompyd in all þe land’.⁹⁰ Another *exemplum* in the collection features a young man who: ‘was tenderlie broght vp & noþing correcte nowder of fadur nor moder when he did wrong’.⁹¹ About to be hanged as a thief, he takes the opportunity of a last embrace with his father to bite off the father’s nose, and to blame his faulty education for his present straits. A version of this tale also appears in the *Fasciculus morum*, where the son uses the image of flexible and inflexible rods to show his father how easy it would have been to bring him up in the right way as a young boy.⁹²

The absence of this kind of rhetoric from the interludes *Nature*, *The Worlde and the Chylde* and *The Interlude of Youth* may well be connected to the absence of parents from these texts. In *Calisto and Melebea*, there is for example much more reference to the efficacy of education, because Melebea’s father Danio is featured in the play, and ascribes Melebea’s resistance to the temptation of Calisto’s love to his upbringing of his daughter.⁹³ Melebea’s virtue is presented as the by-product of effective paternal governance, which in turn gives Danio the authority to discourse on the role of parents and masters in maintaining good order in society as a whole. Yet Calisto in the same play is not provided with a father, nor is Man in *Nature*. Infans in *The Worlde and the Chylde* makes a brief mention of the pains of his mother in childbirth, but is shown growing up not in his natal household, but in service with The Worlde. In *The Interlude of Youth*, Youth mentions his father only in the context of his inheritance of lands upon his father’s death. Cornelius and Gaius of *Fulgens and Lucre*s appear to be fatherless and motherless, though Lucre is like Melebea shown as being deferentially reliant on her father’s counsel. These texts have no interest in presenting young men under the authority of their fathers - and as the product of their fathers’ education - but as

⁸⁹*Pricke of Conscience*, ll.5424-36, 5544-59, 5866-69.

⁹⁰Mary MacLeod Banks (ed.), *An Alphabet of Tales*, 2 vols, EETS, OS 126, 127 (1904, 1905), 1:2-4.

⁹¹*Ibid.*, 1:152, ll.11-12. See also Owst, *Literature and Pulpit*, pp.467-68.

⁹²Wenzel (ed.), *Fasciculus morum*, p.90, ll.84-93.

⁹³*Calisto and Melebea*, ll.1025-87.

autonomous beings, and as those in positions of authority over others. This enables a different kind of discussion rule and governance, from the point of view of the ruler, rather than the ruled.

Setting the early interludes *Nature*, *The Worlde and the Chylde* and *The Interlude of Youth* in the context of later medieval moral literature indicates that these texts construct young masculinities in similar ways. The interludes, like other moral works, present young men as essentially sinful. By presenting their subjects as embodied, the texts unequivocally link the spiritual states they describe with the biological and developmental characteristics of young male bodies. The interludes can also be seen as exploring the implications of this biologically essentialist view of men. *Nature* takes biological essentialism to its logical conclusion, by implying that both sin and repentance are indissolubly tied to physical processes of ageing, so that old age produces true repentance in a way that youth cannot. *The Worlde and the Chylde* also appears to privilege old age, in that, like *Nature*, it makes no reference to the typical sins of old age, but presents this period as the period of regret for past sins, leading to a final repentance. While the texts do not exactly approve of youthful sinfulness, they appear to tolerate it as a necessary stage of existence, and even in the case of *Nature*, make youthful sinfulness into the basis for a superior kind of holiness for old men.

The Interlude of Youth takes issue with this kind of attitude to young men. Like some other moral texts, it seeks to discredit the view that sin is natural, even necessary, for young men, whereas holiness is natural only to old men. It represents such views as leading to spiritual complacency, and as ascribable to one's sinful desires. They are in short, a way in which young men justify their sinful behaviour. *Youth* instead seeks to illustrate that a true and lasting repentance is possible to young men.

In general terms, essentialism - where character traits and behaviours are held to be produced by the male body - is a habit of thought which tends to efface distinctions between men of different status groups, ethnicities and cultures.⁹⁴ It constructs a universal masculinity, based on a body which seems to exist outside society and culture. Yet it would not be true to say that biological essentialism alone explains the presentation of young men in the interludes, since these men firmly located in social terms, as young noblemen, and in terms of their relationships with households. Courtesy

⁹⁴Shahar, 'Old Body', p.161.

texts offer a different model of masculinity for young men, specifically to those within households, where young men are encouraged to construct their own masculinities for this social context.

Young men and incivility

Late medieval courtesy literature appears to construct a very different image of young masculinity, compared to the biologically essentialist model implied in morally didactic and devotional material discussed above. Courtesy literature is also a didactic genre, one which instructs young men in household service about the manners and social conventions of household life. In this sense, it is an intensely practical genre, and texts focus on the minutiae of social behaviour in very specific social situations in which young men will find themselves. The focus of many texts is formal dining in the great hall of a noble household, where young men served diners, or dined themselves.⁹⁵ Some courtesy texts also deal with entering households,⁹⁶ going to church,⁹⁷ walking in the streets,⁹⁸ and even behaviour when rising in the morning and going to bed at night.⁹⁹ Texts stipulate in great detail how the young man should stand, sit, speak, and deal with food and tableware.

The texts have, on one level, very pragmatic goals. They teach young men appropriate forms of social behaviour which will help them to get and keep jobs in household service. This is the whole thrust of sir John Russell's *Boke of Nurture*, which

⁹⁵Nicholls, *Matter of Courtesy*, p. 14. On dining practices in later medieval noble households, see Woolgar, *Great Household*, pp.136-65. See also Wells, 'Food in the City', pp.137-83, on urban practices.

⁹⁶*The Young Children's Book*, ll.85-92, in Furnivall (ed.), *Babees Book*, pp.17-25; *The Boke of Curtasye* (mid fifteenth century), ll.5-31, in *ibid.*, pp.299-327.

⁹⁷FJ Furnivall (ed.), *Caxton's Book of Curtesye*, EETS, ES 3 (1868), ll.71-84.

⁹⁸*Symon's Lesson of Wysdome for all Maner Chyldryn*, ll.69-76, in Furnivall (ed.), *Babees Book*, pp.399-402; Furnivall (ed.), *Caxton's Book of Curtesye*, ll.57-70; *Stans Puer Ad Mensam* (Oxford, Bodleian Library, Ashmole MS 61), ll.195-206, in FJ Furnivall (ed.), *Queene Elizabeths Achademy*, EETS, ES 8 (1869), pp.56-64.

⁹⁹Furnivall (ed.), *Caxton's Book of Curtesye*, ll.22-56; *Ashmole Stans Puer Ad Mensam*, ll.215-

begins with a narrative purporting to explain the genesis of the work.¹⁰⁰ Russell describes meeting a young man who laments his inability to obtain a job in household service. Russell obligingly draws on his experience as a household officer in elevated circles in order to provide the young man with the expertise he needs. Although some texts assume a noble audience – *The Babees Book* addresses young men of the ‘bloode Royalle’, for example –¹⁰¹ most courtesy texts in practice assume an audience of young men who are not noble by birth, young men unfamiliar with the manners and habits of the aristocratic milieu, who, as strangers to this context, need the practical advice of those who are familiar with it to be able to acquit themselves well.¹⁰² On a day-to-day basis they teach young men the kinds of behaviour which will ensure they will avoid the kind of ridicule and scorn which will arise from doing or saying the wrong thing.¹⁰³ Other texts emphasise that adopting codes of behaviour not only helps one to fit into household life, but also helps one in a practical way to build a career in service. As one text bluntly puts it ‘by fayre manerys men may pee a-vauce’.¹⁰⁴ Service in a great household offered a career structure to young men, who could legitimately aspire to work their way up to being one of the officers of the household, like the steward or treasurer, and so to attain the status of a gentleman.¹⁰⁵ Courtesy texts may be described as aspirational, in that they teach young men ‘the manners of the class to which they aspire’, as a way of furthering such ambitions.¹⁰⁶

Courtesy texts express a supreme confidence in the power of behaviour, on the basis of the assumption that, as the late medieval proverb puts it, ‘manners maketh man’.¹⁰⁷ On one level, courtesy texts present themselves as vocational literature which

¹⁰⁰John Russell, *The Boke of Nurture*, ll.1-44, in Furnivall (ed.), *Babees Book*, pp.117-239.

¹⁰¹*The Babees Book*, l.15.

¹⁰²Mark Addison Amos, ‘“For Manners Make Man”: Bourdieu, De Certeau, and the Common Appropriation of Noble Manners in the *Book of Courtesy*’, in Ashley and Clark (eds.), *Medieval Conduct*, pp.23-48 (pp.32-33). See also Sponsler, ‘Conduct Books’, p.54.

¹⁰³The avoidance of shame is discussed in more detail below.

¹⁰⁴*Symon’s Lesson of Wysdome*, l.68.

¹⁰⁵Mertes, *English Noble Household*, p.71; Rosemary Horrox, ‘Service’, in Horrox (ed.), *Fifteenth-Century Attitudes*, pp.61-78 (p.67).

¹⁰⁶Riddy, ‘Mother Knows Best’, p.77. On the emulation of aristocratic practices by later medieval urban elites, see Amos, ‘“For Manners Make Man”’, pp.25-28.

¹⁰⁷*Urbanitas*, ll.33-34, in Furnivall (ed.), *Babees Book*, pp.13-15. On young bodies as ‘products’, see Sponsler, ‘Conduct Books’, pp.57-61.

promises to ease a young man's way in his chosen career path, to make him into a man of consequence. It is indeed tempting to assume that William Wykeham, who rose from humble beginnings to be the bishop of Winchester, was crediting career success to his cultivation of good manners, when he adopted 'manners maketh man' as his motto.¹⁰⁸ In a more general sense, courtesy texts are concerned with making men, in the sense of constructing an adult masculinity for young men, and helping them to make the transition to being a fully socialised adult in a household milieu.

Courtesy texts are not only concerned with equipping young men with the appropriate things to say and do in specific social situations, that is with teaching young men how to adopt a social persona for times and places, which can be put on and off at will. Courtesy texts aim to discipline the gestures of young men, because their gestures proceed naturally from their essentially uncivilized natures, and so exclude them from the civilized domain of the household. A gesture has been defined by Keith Thomas as 'any kind of bodily movement or posture (including facial expression) which transmits a message to the observer'.¹⁰⁹ Later medieval theories of gesture, developed in monastic rules governing behaviour in houses of religious, proposed that gestures transmitted messages about one's essential nature, rather than a superficial social competence.¹¹⁰ In effect, this theory asserts, it is possible to read a person's invisible self from his manners, posture and habitual gestures. So in courtesy texts talking in church is not just a breach of social convention, but is a 'token of suche as lackyth grace'.¹¹¹

Young men's behaviour is, in this system of thought, determined by their essential inner state. The significance the bad manners of the young is made clear in Lydgate's *Testament* (c.1448).¹¹² In this verse text, Lydgate speaks of himself as old and

¹⁰⁸Horrox, 'Service', p.62. On William of Wykeham's life and career, see *DNB*, 21:1140-46.

¹⁰⁹Keith Thomas, 'Introduction', in J Bremmer and H Roodenburg (eds.), *A Cultural History of Gesture: From Antiquity to the Present Day* (Oxford, 1991), pp.1-14 (p.1).

¹¹⁰Nicholls has suggested that later medieval courtesy texts developed out of these rules: see Nicholls, *Matter of Courtesy*, pp.22-44. On the medieval theory of the 'expressivity' of gestures, see Jean-Claude Schmitt, 'Introduction and General Introduction', in idem (ed.), *Gestures, History and Anthropology* 1 (1984), pp.1-23; idem, 'The Rationale of Gestures in the West: Third to Thirteenth Centuries', in Thomas (ed.), *Cultural History of Gesture*, pp.59-70.

¹¹¹Furnivall (ed.), *Caxton's Book of Curtesye*, 1.82.

¹¹²John Lydgate, *The Testament of Dan John Lydgate*, in HN MacCracken (ed.), *The Minor Poems of John Lydgate*, 2 vols, EETS, ES 107 (1911) and OS 192 (1934), 1:329-62. On the testament as a literary genre, see Julia Boffey, 'Lydgate, Henryson, and the Literary Testament', *MLQ* 53 (1992): 41-56.

ill, and conscious of the approach of death.¹¹³ Like the old men in the moral texts discussed above, Lydgate feels impelled to review his young life, and, like *Everyman*, to give a 'rekening' for what he has done: literally, to present accounts of his life, as an officer presents his financial accounts to an auditor.¹¹⁴ Lydgate gives a detailed account of his 'myspent time' (l.248) as a novice in the Benedictine order, before his dramatic religious experience at the age of fifteen. Lydgate intends his youthful misdemeanours to be understood as determined by his young masculine nature. He explicitly refers to complexion theory as a biological explanation for his behaviour, so that he relates his instability and changeableness of character to the volatile hot complexion of the young male body.¹¹⁵ Like the moral and devotional texts discussed above, Lydgate's *Testament* characterises his youth as a period of sinfulness determined by his physical nature. He illustrates his sinful nature by referring to his actions as a young man. Some of his actions are marked as undesirable by their association with deadly sins, such as his wrathful behaviour towards his companions.¹¹⁶ Alongside these obviously sinful behaviours, Lydgate lists apparently trivial breaches of etiquette familiar from courtesy literature, like failing to wash before dinner, talking wildly, looking round him.¹¹⁷ For Lydgate, bad table manners and bad habits are much more than social *faux pas*. They, as much as overt displays of pride, wrath, envy and so on, indicate the youthful and sinful nature within. Listing every uncouth gesture is Lydgate's way of disclosing his secret and invisible self in his confessional text.

Courtesy texts, like monastic rules, assume that young men are naturally uncontrolled, and that their gestures reflect this aspect of the young character. This is reflected, for example, in the way in which the young man in John Russell's *Boke of Nurture* describes himself as 'wantoun & nyce, recheless & lewde as / Iangelynge as a Iay'.¹¹⁸ 'Wantoun' connotes a moral lack of self-control, and a resistance to control by others, while 'iangelynge' is used to designate the uncontrolled talk which proceeds from

¹¹³Ibid., ll.193-240.

¹¹⁴Ibid., l.218; Cawley (ed.), *Everyman*, ll.66-71.

¹¹⁵Lydgate, *Testament*, ll.290-422.

¹¹⁶Ibid., ll.621-22.

¹¹⁷Ibid., ll.631, 650, 664.

¹¹⁸Russell, *Boke of Nurture*, ll.35-36.

this trait.¹¹⁹ It is no coincidence that Russell encounters the young man on his own in a wilderness for the young man is still in a kind of natural, pre-social state. Implicitly, the *Boke of Nurture* constructs the household, to which the young man attempts to gain entry as the place of civilization.¹²⁰ Before he may enter the society and the civilization represented by the household he must remake himself in the image of the disciplined household servant. This is similar to the way in which the monastic novice was represented in monastic rules as being trained to fit into the idealised spiritual community of a religious house.¹²¹ In a similar way, Caxton's prologue to his translation of Jacques Legrand's *Book of Good Manners*, presents those of low status who do not exhibit the behaviours of the noble as something less than human. Caxton writes of:

...the condicyous & maners of the comyn people whiche withoute enformacion & lernyng ben rude and not manered lyke vnto beestis brute accordyng to an olde prouerb. he that is not manered is no man. for maners make man.¹²²

For the young nobleman, the discipline of gestures is doubly necessary if he is to take up his role in society. In Trevisa's translation of the princely mirror *De regimine principum* (1270s) by Giles of Rome, an Augustinian friar, there is a similar emphasis on the way gestures reveal nature. The English text defines 'berying' as 'the meuying of members and of lymes by the whiche meuying disposicion of the soule may be know', and states that gestures of young men, other than purely functional ones, are the unmediated expression of their sinful nature: they 'comeþ of folye oþer of pruyde oþer of som vice'.¹²³ Youthful gestures are particularly undesirable in a nobleman, because they reveal a nature which is not suitable for governing others. Giles, like the later English

¹¹⁹See *MED*, qv. 'wantoun', 'jangling(e)'. Young men are enjoined not to 'iangylle' in other courtesy texts. See, for example, *Lytylle Childrenes Lytil Boke*, l.90; *Babees Book*, l.68.

¹²⁰Elias ascribed a new fastidiousness about personal hygiene and table manners to the early modern period, and presented this trait as evidence of a social and cultural development towards 'civilisation'. In this narrative, the medieval represents the savage or uncivilized stage. As these courtesy texts suggest, the medieval period had its own concept of civilized modes of being. See Norbert Elias, *The Civilizing Process*, trans. Edmund Jephcutt, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1978).

¹²¹Nicholls, *Matter of Courtesy*, pp.23-24; Schmitt, 'Rationale of Gestures', pp.67-68.

¹²²William Caxton, *The Book of Good Manners* (London, 1500), quoted in Amos, ' "For Manners Make Man"', p.45.

¹²³DC Fowler, CF Briggs and PG Remely (eds.), *Of the Governance of Kings and Princes: John Trevisa's Middle English Translation of the De regimine principum of Aegidius Romanus* (New York, 1997), p.254, ll.26-27; p.285, ll.6-8.

courtesy texts, picks out the young man's gesture of looking around them as an illustration:

And þat is ful vnsemelich for kynges and princes if þei casten here eyyen and sight nyselich aboute, for þerby þei scholde be holde liȝt hedede and lowe and feynt herted for it wold seme þat he wondrede of all thinges.¹²⁴

This gesture tells observers, not only that the young king is in the grip of his youthful sinfulness and instability, but that he is unfit to exercise the rule which is his function as a prince. The text advocates the training of noblemen and princes in gestures from a young age:

þan þey that scholde be princes and lordes scholde be tauȝt in childehode of þe maner of lokyng and closing of eizene so þat þei opene and close here eizene soberliche, for a man doþ wel in ful age þynges þat þei vsen in childehode.¹²⁵

It is necessary for the young nobleman to construct an identity as a ruler, and in part this is to be achieved through his control of his gestures. He adopts a particular vocabulary of gesture in order to transmit messages about his capacity to rule well.

Trevisa's English *De regimine principum* expresses confidence that young noblemen may be trained in gesture when they are young, just as the morally didactic works discuss above express a confidence in the malleability of the characters of the young. In the same way, the middle English courtesy texts assume that it is possible to learn and to be trained in gestures in order to create an adult identity. Nicholls has shown that monastic rules taught physical control in order to promote a particular spiritual state - a control of the spirit which would render the individual 'receptive and acquiescent to the word of God'.¹²⁶ In other words, just as the inner nature determines outward gestures, so controlling outward gestures is a way of reforming one's inner nature. Effectively, the young man is able to remake himself on the inside by controlling his external gestures. Courtesy texts imply a similar process of self-making through a discipline of gestures.¹²⁷

What kind of man do courtesy texts want to produce? Although the texts often seem to list behaviours in an apparently random way, as a string of commands (to

¹²⁴Ibid., pp.229-230.

¹²⁵Ibid., p.230, ll.2-7.

¹²⁶Nicholls, *Matter of Courtesy*, p.38.

¹²⁷Amos, 'For Manners Make Man', p.45.

imitate, or to avoid specific gestures), it is possible to make some generalisations about the values which are fundamental to a household masculinity. The texts place a high value on gestures which express a commitment to cleanliness and personal hygiene in the context of dining. Young men are, for example, enjoined not to spit, or to eat with their mouths full, or to splash the table cloths. The texts also promote bodily control and restraint over one's gestures. Young men should not talk wildly, or wave their arms about when they speak, or gaze about them, and are expected to show a deft touch with table implements. Young men should strive to maintain a relative stillness and silence, especially when serving dinner, but they must also be capable of using talk effectively in social situations which require it. They should, for example, be able to converse with those they encounter on the public street rather than acting as 'a dombe freke' in public.¹²⁸ This indicates that sociability is also highly valued in household life, but in the right time and place. Finally, texts encourage men to adopt gestures of deference toward social superiors. Young men are advised to gauge their behaviour carefully in the presence of their betters, in order to impress superiors and to avoid the appearance of presumption. A young man should, for example, always stand in the presence of his lord to ensure that the lord does not think you 'bere þi-selue to hy'.¹²⁹

These behaviours are tailored to the social roles household servants are expected to play, but they also help construct a gendered status identity. Courtesy texts discourage some behaviours by associating them with low social status. *The Babees Book* warns young men, 'Kutte nouhte youre mete eke as it were Felde men' (l.176). In this case, eating hastily makes it appear that the diner is a hungry labourer.¹³⁰ The Ashmole *Stans puer ad mensam* warns readers to eat slowly, 'leste þou be callyd els both cherle or gloton' (l.84). According to *The Boke of Curtasye*:

þe boke hym calles a chorle of chere
That vylany spekes be wemen sere. (ll.261-62)

In the same way, good manners are a way of associating oneself with gentle status. *The Babees Book* promises that the young man who behaves appropriately 'shalle ywys / In nurture gete a gentyl name ful sone' (ll.115-16). Another text promises that when a man

¹²⁸*Boke of Curtasye*, l.255.

¹²⁹*Ashmole Stans puer ad mensam*, ll.171-74.

¹³⁰*Babees Book*, ll.176-79.

is punctilious about his manners at dinner, ‘Than men wylle say thereafter / That a gentylleman was heere’.¹³¹

This kind of masculinity is not a ‘natural’ masculinity, a masculinity which is held to arise from one’s essential maleness. It is a learned masculinity, a set of values and behaviours which has to be acquired. This means that it is necessary for individual young men to internalise its values. Courtesy texts are remarkable for the way in which they enlist the individual – in this case the young man – to re-fashion himself.¹³² As I have mentioned above, the texts use what may at first appear as rather crude incentives to encourage young men to conform in the form of the promise of praise or the threat of censure by observers of the young man’s behaviour.¹³³ But in fact their strategy is a much more subtle one than that. These courtesy texts work first of all to make the young man conscious of himself as individual. They do this by implying that his behaviour is constantly observed, and actively commented upon by a host of spectators. Caxton’s *Book of Curtesye* states that:

In euery prees and in euery company
Dispose you to be so compenable
That men may of you reporte for commendable
For trusteth wel vpon your berynge
Men wil you blame or gyue preysynge. (ll.150-54)

Texts depict censure – particularly of uncouth table manners – as issuing in uncomfortably audible ways, as mockery or laughter, as ‘a skorne’, or as status-related insults like those cited above. *The Boke of Curtasye* even imagines people passing on their comments about the behaviour of the young ‘be sibbe or couthe’ suggesting that bad manners become a talking point in a whole network of friends and relations.¹³⁴ The texts rely on the operation of shame to encourage conformity to household practices.¹³⁵ As one text puts it, ‘þe bigynnyng of þi worschip, is to drede schame’.¹³⁶ It may well have been that such hypercritical audiences were indeed constantly monitoring the

¹³¹*The Lytyle Childrenes Lytil Boke*, ll.95-96.

¹³²Sponsler, ‘Conduct Books’, pp.68-72.

¹³³Amos, ‘“For Manners Make Man”’, pp.36-37. See also Anna Dronzek, ‘Gendered Theories of Education’, in Ashley and Clark (eds.), *Medieval Conduct*, pp.135-59 (pp.150-51).

¹³⁴*Boke of Curtasye*, l.257.

¹³⁵On early modern drama and the use of shame see Gail Kern Paster, *The Body Embarrassed: Drama and the Disciplines of Shame in Early Modern England* (Ithaca, NY, 1993).

¹³⁶*Of the Manners to Bring One to Honour and Welfare*, l.9.

behaviour of the young in public contexts. But whether this was the case or not, making young men believe that they were constantly being scrutinised is an effective way of making them modify their behaviour. As Foucault has observed in relation to the regulatory regimes of eighteenth and nineteenth-century schools and prisons, creating the a consciousness of being observed effectively makes the young man into his own moral policeman.¹³⁷ The young man imagines how his behaviour will look from the point of view of the observer, and corrects it in order to avoid censure. Effectively the young man internalises the values of courtesy texts, pre-empting the judgement of critical observers by becoming the critical observer of his own behaviour. These texts also encourage young men actively to construct a masculinity for themselves, through the management of their gestures, for the benefit of this imagined audience. They present meals, when the household would be gathered together, and other public occasions as opportunities for self-representation to a wide audience who are alert to the meanings of gestures.¹³⁸

This kind of performance of a masculine identity appears to be a completely superficial one, in the sense that it seems possible to adopt a set of behaviours which one could put off again at will. The ease with which young men might adopt alternative identities is something of a concern to some courtesy texts, who warn their readers to avoid particular types of evil companions. Caxton's *Book of Curtesye* warns its readers against the gallant, familiar from early interludes and other moral texts, and characterised by his extravagant, fashionable dress and his profligate lifestyle, backchat and presumption.¹³⁹ The text seems to be particularly worried that the aspirant young man might imitate the manners of the gallant, believing them to represent noble behaviour. The text warns that the gallant represents a kind of fake or distorted gentility: he remains only a 'Counterfeter of vnconnyng curtoisye'.¹⁴⁰ Another text warns young men to avoid

¹³⁷Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (Harmondsworth, 1979).

¹³⁸Nicholls, *Matter of Courtesy*, p.19.

¹³⁹Furnivall (ed.), *Caxton's Book of Curtesye*, ll.449-97. See also Davenport, ' "Lusty fresche galaunts" '.

¹⁴⁰Furnivall (ed.), *Caxton's Book of Curtesye*, l.452. See also Amos, ' "For Manners Make Man" ', pp.43-44.

'bropels', 'boies' and the 'wastour'.¹⁴¹ The 'bropel' is associated both with lechery and with anti-social behaviour.¹⁴² While the term 'boie' can also be used to denote one who indulges in reprehensible behaviour, it also carries connotations of low status, which give it its force as an insult.¹⁴³ The term 'wastour' is usually applied to express moral outrage at one who is prodigal or who fails to contribute to the social good through hard work.¹⁴⁴

Courtesy literature, like morally didactic literature, is a genre which relies on a biologically essentialist view of young men, in that it sees their gestures as expressing their essential natures. However, courtesy texts also hold out a process whereby young men may reform or recreate that essential self through the discipline of their gestures. As they follow a regime to correct the wild and uncontrolled gestures to which they are naturally prone, they construct a new masculinity for themselves. This adult masculinity is fundamentally performative: it relies on the performing of particular gestures and movements.¹⁴⁵ Young men are encouraged to demonstrate their new natures, through their gestures to a watching audience of friends, neighbours, peers in the household and social superiors. This audience, the texts imply, affirms the young man who constructs the right kind of identity through their praise, and censures the young man with the wrong kind of masculinity with criticism, mockery, and disparagement. This suggests that, while interludes are being performed in the great halls of noble households, the actors are surrounded by an audience accustomed on a day-to-day basis to putting on their own performance, and to observing critically the performances of those around them.

To what extent are the early interludes informed by the theory and practice of this kind of performativity? Interludes certainly seem to mark as problematic the same kinds

¹⁴¹*Of the manners to bring one to honour and welfare*, ll.25-28, in Furnivall (ed.), *Babees Book*, pp.34-35.

¹⁴²*MED*, qv. 'brothel' (n.).

¹⁴³*Ibid.*, qv. 'boie' (n. (1)).

¹⁴⁴*Ibid.*, qv. 'wastour' (n.).

¹⁴⁵On performatively constructed gender identities, see Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York, 1990); eadem, 'Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory', in S Case (ed.), *Performing Feminisms: Feminist Critical Theory and Theatre* (Baltimore and London, 1990), pp.270-82; Judith Butler, 'Imitation and Gender Insubordination', in D Fuss (ed.), *Inside/Out: Lesbian Theories, Gay Theories* (New York, 1992), pp.13-31.

of young masculinities as courtesy texts. As Davenport has shown, several of the early interludes, including *Nature*, *Fulgens and Lucrez*, *The Worlde and the Chylde*, *Youth* and *Calisto and Melebea* take pains to mark the behaviours of young gallants as inappropriate.¹⁴⁶ As we have seen above, some courtesy texts also set up gallants as the antithesis of a household masculinity which the texts promote. In a more general sense, the interlude texts rely on the audience's ability to read external appearances of characters as evidence of their true inner nature. Much critical attention has focussed on the extravagant dress of figures in the early interludes as gestures which disclose the essential nature of the character. The dress of characters in moral plays and their changes of costume conventionally indicate a change in moral state.¹⁴⁷ As many critics have noted, the first entrance of Pryde in *Nature* is built around the assumption that the audience should be able to identify Pryde from what he wears, and the way in which he speaks.¹⁴⁸ In Alford's phrase, the play establishes both a 'visual' and a 'verbal rhetoric of pride'.¹⁴⁹ Pryde dresses extravagantly, but also displays arrogance towards the servants in the hall, and boastfulness about his ancestry, and his fashionable and costly garments. This passage is framed as a kind of 'metatheatrical game', since, though Pryde makes sly references to his name, he does not tell us directly who he is until later on.¹⁵⁰ This rhetoric is exploited in other plays, most notably in the presentation of the noble suitor, Cornelius in *Fulgens and Lucrez*.¹⁵¹ Cornelius dresses in the same way as Pryde, and treats Gaius, Lucrez' low-born suitor, with a disdain reminiscent of Pryde's.¹⁵² Lancashire has also drawn parallels between the presentation of Man and Pryde in *Nature* and that of Youth in *The Interlude of Youth*.¹⁵³ Cornelius and Pryde have both

¹⁴⁶Davenport, "Lusty fresche galaunts".

¹⁴⁷TW Craik, *Tudor Interlude: Stage, Costume, and Acting* (Leicester, 1958), pp.73-92.

¹⁴⁸Critical analysis has focussed on Pryde's opening speech: *Nature*, I.723-818. See Bevington, *Tudor Drama*, pp.51-52; Westfall, *Patrons and Performance*, pp.159, 166-67; Meg Twycross, 'The Theatricality of Medieval English Plays', in R Beadle (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval English Theatre* (Cambridge, 1994), pp.37-84 (pp.74-75); JA Alford, "My Name is Worship".

¹⁴⁹Alford, "My Name is Worship", p.156.

¹⁵⁰Twycross, 'Theatricality', pp.72-73. See also Westfall, *Patrons and Performance*, pp.166-67; Alford, "My Name is Worship", pp.155-58.

¹⁵¹Bevington, *Tudor Drama and Politics*, pp.51-52; Jones, 'Early Moral Plays', p.245.

¹⁵²RG Siemens, "As Strayght as Ony Pole": Publius Cornelius, Edmund de la Pole and Contemporary Court Satire in Henry Medwall's *Fulgens and Lucrez*, *Renaissance Forum* 1.2 (1996) [<http://www.hull.ac.uk/renforum/v1no2/siemens/htm>], paragraph 27.

¹⁵³Lancashire (ed.), *Two Tudor Interludes*, p.37.

been read as critiques of noble habits and lifestyles.¹⁵⁴ Indeed, pride was traditionally regarded as a sin to which the noble were particularly prone, and sermon literature routinely depicts the proud nobleman as boasting about ancestry and wealth and indulging in wasteful conspicuous consumption.¹⁵⁵ Clearly the gestures of Pryde and Cornelius are being marked as undesirable, since they proceed from a sinful inner nature.

Courtesy literature offers another way of interpreting their gestures. Caxton's *Book of Curtesye* describes the gallant as the 'Counterfeter of vnconnyng curtoisye' (ll.449-50). In adopting the identity of the gallant, Pryde and Cornelius do not as they fondly suppose display their noble identities. Instead they are imitating a kind of fake nobility or ineptly and ignorantly constructing the wrong kind of identity. Pryde's lack of social *savoir faire* is also revealed in his ignorance of, or disregard of, social conventions which govern behaviour within the great hall of a noble household. When Pryde makes his first entrance, the text of *Nature* is careful to draw attention to the space of the great hall, and to the fact that Pryde enters it as a stranger to the household. Pryde describes himself as one who 'comys in at the dorys' (l.727) - that is the doors in the screens passage at the low end of the hall - which indicates one entering the hall from outside. *The Boke of Curtasye* stipulates that one who enters a hall where he is a stranger should salute those presiding on the dais, acknowledge the gentlemen and yeomen seated in the main body of the hall, and stand in front of the screens until the marshal or usher on duty in the hall seats him.¹⁵⁶ In other words, the guest should modestly disclaim all pretensions to status by placing himself at the end of the hall associated with low status, and by waiting quietly to be attended. Pryde, in contrast, marches right into the hall loudly boasting about his noble connections, abusing the servants, and demanding the attention of all those present.

Pryde's talk also marks him as socially inept. Courtesy texts actively discourage boastful talk. As *How the Wise Man Taught His Son* declares:

Bi boostynge, men mowe foolis knowe.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁴Bevington, *Tudor Drama and Politics*, ppp.51-52; Westfall, *Patrons and Performance*, pp.167, 159-60.

¹⁵⁵Owst, *Literature and Pulpit*, pp.308-12.

¹⁵⁶*Boke of Curtasye*, ll.15-31.

¹⁵⁷*How the Wise Man Taught His Son*, l.124, in Furnivall (ed.), *Babees Book*, pp.48-52.

In more general terms, Pryde's verbosity also jars in comparison to courtesy texts' injunctions to young men to be brief and concise in what they say.¹⁵⁸ Pryde's disregard for social etiquette is designed on one level to illustrate his breath-taking arrogance: he simply does not think such conventions apply to him. However, it also suggests that Pryde is not as *au fait* with good manners and noble lifestyles as he would like us to think. In turn, this allows the household audience which does appreciate these fine points to congratulate themselves on their superior breeding. This in turn helps to reinforce the interlude's messages about what appropriate behaviour for men is.

The Worlde and the Chylde makes use of a similar breach of etiquette, both to reveal the true nature of a sinful character, and to reinforce the social norms of household masculinity. The protagonist Manhode encounters the character Folye in the middle of the play, and Folye asks Manhode to accept him as his servant. The humour of the scene derives from the fact that, although Folye speaks to Manhode with the utmost politeness, and greets Manhode with 'A, syr, God gyue you good eue',¹⁵⁹ he is performing a particularly coarse gesture. It is so disgusting that Manhode immediately exclaims, 'Stonde vtter, felowe, where doest þou thy curtesy preue'.¹⁶⁰ Manhode wants literally to put as much distance as possible between himself and Folye. Though there is no stage direction at this point, Folye's gesture is explained when Folye replies in tones of innocence, 'I do but clawe my ars'.¹⁶¹ Scratching, particularly amongst those dining, is presented as an uncouth gesture in texts detailing the forms of the 'curtesy' to which Manhode refers.¹⁶² This gesture confirms what the audience already knows of Folye. Conscience has not long before defined 'folye' so that Man may avoid it:

Syr it is Pryde, Wrathe, and Enuy,
Slouthe, Couetous, and Glotonye;
Lechery the seunte is.
These seuen synnes I call folye. (ll.457-60)

The audience already knows Folye's true nature: he represents the deadly sins. Folye's crude gesture serves to confirm the link between social behaviour and one's inner nature.

¹⁵⁸See for example *Babees Book*, ll.75-76.

¹⁵⁹*Worlde and the Chylde*, l.525.

¹⁶⁰*Ibid.*, l.526.

¹⁶¹*Ibid.*, l.527.

¹⁶²*Babees Book*, ll.78-84; *Lytlylle Childrenes Lytil Boke*, ll.141-42; *Harley Stans puer ad mensam*, l.14.

Furthermore, Manhode reinforces the association between sinfulness, bad manners and low status. From Folye's gesture alone, Manhode deduces that Folye is of low social status. This leads him to address Folye as 'felowe', a term here used not in the sense of a companion, but as a contemptuous term for an inferior, along with the familiar 'þou'.¹⁶³ Here the ideologies of gesture, status and morality are mutually reinforcing. Folye's outrageous breach of hall etiquette is intended to provoke shock, embarrassment, disparagement and laughter amongst the audience, and these reactions are enlisted to associate sinfulness with the same emotions.

Interludes, like courtesy texts, are concerned with teaching young men the values of a household masculinity which based on restraint, reticence, deference and knowing one's place. Like them, they emphasise the ways in which men effectively construct a masculine identity through a language of gesture. The texts reinforce the idea that what a man is on the inside will be disclosed by his external gestures. There is, however, more emphasis on the uncouth gestures of the sins rather than the young and noble protagonists of the plays. Indeed in *The Worlde and the Chylde*, it is the young nobleman Manhode who expresses utter disgust at Folye's crude gesture. Whatever else he has learned in the household of the Worlde, Manhode has clearly learned good manners; though his initial disgust at Manhode does not in the end prevent him from engaging Folye as his servant. Though the young men are shown as being sinful, they are never shown as being uncouth in their own person. A clear distinction is drawn between the manners of the noblemen and the ignoble men of *Fulgens and Lucrez*.¹⁶⁴ In the debate over who is the most noble of the two, for the hand of Lucrez, Gaius and Cornelius criticise each other bluntly, and Cornelius's language is at times transgressive, since it threatens to stir up violence. The servants A and B, in their competition for Jone, in contrast, end up playing 'farte prycke in cule', and B manages to distort Cornelius's token to Lucrez into a 'lewed message'.¹⁶⁵ Cornelius tells B a story about how he threw Lucrez's musk ball into a hole in a hollow ash, in order to provide B with a token to prove that he is Cornelius's servant. In presenting his bona fides to Lucrez, B claims that she 'kyst hym on the noke of the ars' (II.283). This broad comedy associates uncouth

¹⁶³MED, qv. 'felau(e)'.

¹⁶⁴Darryll Grantley, *Wit's Pilgrimage: Drama and the Social Impact of Education in Early Modern England* (Aldershot, 2000), p.61.

¹⁶⁵*Fulgens and Lucrez*, I.1169, II.309.

behaviour firmly with low status. Noblemen in *Fulgens and Lucretia*, however sinful, do not use this kind of explicit language, or crude gestures. Cornelius's abiding by these social conventions, even while he breaks others, is an expression of his inner nature - not his spiritual state, but his nobility. These plays reinforce status distinctions by making it clear that the gentle and the ungentle comport themselves in very different ways.

Although courtesy texts teach behaviours modelled on elite manners, they are not texts aimed exclusively at the nobility, and are often written to instruct aspirant young men from other status groups in the noble lifestyles of households. Princely mirrors, in contrast, address aristocratic audiences, and are concerned specifically with the acquisition of a noble masculinity by young noblemen. As the Middle English *De regimine principum* reveals, these texts are concerned with noble identities, because these are crucial to the effective exercise of political power.

Young men and bad government

Courtesy texts address the issue of what sort of masculinity a young man in service should adopt, and how his masculinity is to be constructed through the discipline of gestures. This form of masculinity is modelled on the manners of noblemen, and texts encourage young men to construct identities in the same way as noblemen are supposed to do, through conscious self-control. Late medieval mirrors for princes address the construction of a specifically aristocratic masculinity in a more direct way in addressing a notional audience of princes and great nobles. Noble masculinity is presented as being constructed performatively, through the exercise of rule or governance. As Briggs has noted, the phrase 'the rule' or 'the governance of princes' is employed so frequently as a title for mirrors owned in England that when wills or inventories refer to manuscripts by the term, it is impossible for modern scholars to identify the precise work without further evidence.¹⁶⁷ The phrase is virtually a generic term for princely mirrors in the English context.

While these titles emphasise the centrality of concepts of rule to aristocratic masculinity, they are also remarkably ambiguous, referring at one and the same time to the way in which aristocrats should govern others, in the sense of exercising political power over them; and to the way in which princes should be governed by others, in the sense of being guided by the counsel and advice of other men.¹⁶⁸ There is considerable tension between these two ideas. On the one hand, to govern successfully, the ruler should seek the advice of others, since it is unwise to trust one's own unaided judgement. On the other, the king must exercise his own judgement in weighing would-be counsellors and the advice they offer, since it is inappropriate that their advice should be adopted unthinkingly, or that any counsellor should exercise undue influence over the prince.

To an extent, the exercise of rule and governance was a vital task for many later medieval men apart from the greater nobility.¹⁶⁹ In *Handlyng Synne*, for example, Mannyng states that:

¹⁶⁷Briggs, *Giles of Rome's De regimine principum*, p.6.

¹⁶⁸Ferster, *Fictions of Advice*, pp.39-54.

¹⁶⁹On the importance of governance to men of the urban elites, see PJP Goldberg, 'Masters and Men in Later Medieval England', in DM Hadley (ed.), *Masculinity in Medieval Europe* (London and New York, 1999), pp.56-70; Shannon McSheffrey, 'Men and Masculinity in Late Medieval London Civic Culture: Governance, Patriarchy and Reputation', in J Murray (ed.), *Conflicted Identities and Multiple Masculinities: Men in the Medieval West* (London and New York, 1999), pp.243-78.

A man hys manhede shal yerne,
Hymself & his meyne to governe.¹⁷⁰

Mannyng's couplet suggests that one of the defining characteristics of late medieval manhood was governance. The 'man' is one who is able to govern himself, in the sense that he is no longer under the authority of a father or guardian, but is now responsible only to himself. The 'man' is also one who has others under his authority, his 'meyne', or the group consisting of his immediate family and servants who live under his roof.

In the case of noblemen, these two kinds of rule are doubly important, since they are intimately related to a third kind of rule, the exercise of political authority in kingdoms. The relationships between different forms of government are set out systematically in Trevisa's translation of the *De regimine pricipum*.¹⁷¹ The first book of this work, based on Aristotle's *Ethics*, deals with self-rule: that is, a nobleman's ability to exercise self-discipline over his own body and moral character, to control his tendency to vice and cultivate virtue. The second book, based on Aristotle's *Economics*, deals with the rule of the household, in this case understood in terms of the different kinds of authority the nobleman exercises over the different members of his household. The nobleman needs to understand the different kinds of governance appropriate to his wife, his children and his servants. The final book, based on the *Politics*, deals with the rule of kingdoms. The opening comments of the work argue that the three-book structure is necessary, since these different kinds of rule are fundamentally inter-related:

For he that wol be wise and kunnyng to gouerne and rule oþer schal be wise and konnyng to gouerne and to rule hymself.¹⁷²

A capacity for the exercise of political authority is contingent on a capacity for moral self-discipline, and on a capacity for the effective management of household relationships.

In this system of thought, ruling oneself is fundamental to the exercise of all other kinds of authority. Giles understands this self-rule primarily as a moral self-discipline, that is the promotion of moral virtues and the suppression of vices. Some of these virtues, such as wisdom, are directly related to the business of ruling.¹⁷³ The vices to be avoided are the

¹⁷⁰Robert Mannyng, *Handlyng Synne*, ed. Idelle Sullens (Binghampton, NY, 1983), ll. 5859-60.

¹⁷¹Briggs, *Giles of Rome's De regimine principum*, pp. 11-12, 91-92.

¹⁷²Fowler et al (eds.), *Governance of Kings and Princes*, p. 8, ll. 8-10.

¹⁷³*Ibid.*, p. 11, ll. 11-17.

familiar kinds of fleshly pleasures from moral literature, which are related to deviations from the moderate courses advocated by Aristotle.¹⁷⁴

Other mirrors for princes understand self-rule in terms of regulating the body's internal economy. Such works understand the concept of 'helthe' as a kind of 'governance', where the bodily humours are kept in balance by following bodily regimes which carefully control activities like eating and drinking, sleeping, and sex.¹⁷⁵ The proper regulation of the body is just as vital for men in authority as their rule of the moral character, a point made by Gilbert Kymer in his *Dietarium* (c.1414) addressed to Humphrey, duke of Gloucester.¹⁷⁶ Indeed, to govern one's body in this way is to exercise moral self-discipline, since the body determines so much of a man's moral character.

In this discourse the body becomes a kind of realm. Indeed, the rule of the body may be described in terms of political governance, in one version of the *Secretum secretorum* where the text describes how God 'hays stabyled his [a man's] body as a Citee, and he hauys put vnderstandyng yn hym, as a kyng sette yn þe moste noble and most souerayn stede of man, þat ys yn þe heud'.¹⁷⁷ In the work of John of Salisbury and Hugh of St Victor, the discipline of gestures, and the discipline of one's moral character which this entails, is compared to the government of a kingdom, and a man's physical body to the body politic.¹⁷⁸ Symbolically, the way a nobleman disciplines his body and his moral character signifies his capacity to exercise political governance.

Young noblemen, however, are not naturally inclined to this kind of self-control since their reason is underdeveloped in comparison with the mature man, and their hot complexions tend to be lecherous and unstable.¹⁷⁹ Young male bodies, therefore, tend to become images of the politically unstable kingdom. In *La Male Regle* (1406), Hoccleve describes how his wild lifestyle as a young man has played havoc with the internal physical

¹⁷⁴See *ibid.*, p.73, ll.12-20 (on 'intemperancia', as a reason-free trait).

¹⁷⁵*The Secrete of Secretes* (British Museum MS. Reg. 18A.vij, fifteenth century), in Steele (ed.), *Three Prose Versions of the Secreta Secretorum*, EETS, ES 74 (1898), pp.1-39 (pp.21-22).

¹⁷⁶Gilbert Kymer, *Dietarium*, in Thomas Hearne (ed.), *Liber Niger* (London, 1774). Full text in London, British Library, MS Sloane 4.

¹⁷⁷*The Governance of Lordschipes* (MS Lambeth 501, composed 'soon after 1400'), in Steele (ed.), *Three Prose Versions*, pp.41-118 (p.97, ll.5-10).

¹⁷⁸Schmitt, 'Rationale of Gestures', pp.67-68.

¹⁷⁹Fowler et al (eds.), *Governance of Kings and Princes*, pp.142-44. The passage occurs in the context of advice against following fleshly pleasures.

economy of his body, leaving him suffering physical disease. He describes his body in terms of a kingdom, where the ruler 'helthe' has been overthrown by youthful rebellion.¹⁸⁰ The older, sadder and wiser Hoccleve now proclaims his allegiance to 'helthe', promising to 'werre make, & sharp resitence / Ageyn thy fo & myn', and to 'exyle' the usurper 'mis reule', from the kingdom of Hoccleve's body.¹⁸¹

Young bodies symbolise badly-ruled kingdoms, and on a more practical level young bodies produce the kinds of qualities which make bad rulers. The moral characteristics of the young are those which are inimical to good rule. The opposition between youthful characteristics and the qualities desirable in a prince is illustrated in Hoccleve's princely mirror, *The Regement of Princes* (c.1412). In the prologue, the young Hoccleve describes a meeting with an old beggar, which occurs, like John Russell's meeting with the young man, as he wanders in the fields. Hoccleve is in great anxiety about his poverty and when the Beggar offers to advise him, they discuss the wild youthful lifestyles which have reduced both of them to penury. The Beggar recites a litany of familiar youthful failures. He explains that his youthful lifestyle centred around the tavern, a location which he sets up in opposition to the church, and the virtuous lifestyle associated with it.¹⁸² He describes his typical activities as dicing far into the night; swearing false oaths for payment; prodigal expenditure; and 'pryde and lechery'.¹⁸³ Like the old men in the devotional lyrics discussed above, the old Beggar acts as a kind of mirror to Hoccleve, showing him what he will become should he persist in his present courses.¹⁸⁴ Hoccleve also confesses to a misspent youth, characterised by prodigality with money.¹⁸⁵

Together, the descriptions of the youths of both Hoccleve and the Beggar construct

¹⁸⁰ *La Male Regle*, ll.9-12. References are to FJ Furnival and I Gollancz (eds.), *Hoccleve's Works: the Minor Poems*, rev. J Mitchell and AI Doyle, EETS, ES 61 and 73 (1970), 1:25-39. On the body-kingdom analogy, see AJ Hasler, 'Hoccleve's Unregimented Body', *Paragraph* 13 (1990): 164-83.

¹⁸¹ *La Male Regle*, ll.49-56.

¹⁸² Hoccleve, *Regement of Princes*, ll.596-609. All references are to FJ Furnivall (ed.), *Hoccleve's Works: The Regement of Princes and Fourteen Minor Poems*, EETS, ES 72 (1897). Owst, *Literature and Pulpit*, pp.438-41.

¹⁸³ Hoccleve, *Regement of Princes*, ll.610-12; ll.624-27; ll.631-37; 645-51.

¹⁸⁴ Hasler, 'Hoccleve's Unregimented Body', p.170. The Beggar also resembles the old men of moral lyrics and moral plays in his physical appearance. There is repeated reference to the Beggar's grey hair (l.122, l.134, l.401, l.407), and at one point he has to rest because of his 'crookid feeble lymes olde' (l.811).

¹⁸⁵ Hoccleve, *Regement of Princes*, ll.4362-76.

an anti-type of the ideal prince. The second part of the text, Hoccleve's advice to the Prince, describes the qualities which the prince should cultivate to be a good ruler, and these are set in opposition to the qualities of young Hoccleve and Beggar. The Prince should, for example, cultivate largesse rather than prodigality or covetousness; chastity rather than lechery; keeping faith rather than swearing false oaths.¹⁸⁶ The examples of Hoccleve and the Beggar also serve as a warning that the consequence of misrule in one's personal life is losing the rule in other spheres. Hoccleve and the Beggar have both lost the rule of money. As the Beggar puts it:

O wher is now al þe wantoun moneye
That I was maister of, and gouernour,
Whan I knew nat what pouert was to sey? (ll.687-89)

The prince, on the other hand, has much more to lose than merely the governance of money, and this is illustrated in the second part of the text by reference to the story of Rehoboam and other figures who lose their positions of governance through the practice of youthful foolishness, rather than careful self-rule.¹⁸⁷

In the *De regimine principum* the qualities of young men- their lack of reason, and their tendency to be ruled by passions - make them into the type of the bad ruler:

For no man cheseth zungelynges to be dukes, for it is vnworthy þat a child be a prince. Bote as it is iseide, primo Ethicorum, no differens is bytwene a child of zong age and one with maneres of zong age, for on þat vseth soche likyng. For thei he be olde of tyme and of age, for a is a child in maneres, he [is] vnworthi to be a prince.¹⁸⁸

So closely are the qualities of the bad ruler associated with the young, that the older man who demonstrates them is considered to be 'a child'. Conversely, it is possible for the young man to qualify for the position of ruler, but he must overcome his youthful nature and demonstrate the moral qualities associated with age:

A childe of age and olde of maneres is worth to be a prince.¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁶Hasler, 'Hoccleve's Unregimented Body', pp.166-67.

¹⁸⁷Ferster, *Fictions of Advice*, pp.148,154-57.

¹⁸⁸Fowler et al (eds.), *Governance of Kings and Princes*, p.18, ll.8-10.

¹⁸⁹Ibid., l.13.

The good ruler exemplifies his political competence, not only in the way in which he rules himself, but also in the way he conducts his household. The *De regimine principum* understands household rule in terms of the management of different kinds of relationships: those between husband and wife, those between father and son, and those between master and servant.¹⁹⁰ These relationships represent different kinds of political rule, and are founded on different principles. The rule of servants, for example, is solely for the profit of the master, whereas the rule of sons is intended for the sons' profit, rather than the father's.¹⁹¹ In dealing with servants, the noble master should demonstrate his prudence in his dealings with servants. He should test a servant's trustworthiness over a long period: he should place him in a lesser office to begin with, and advance him gradually as he proves his worthiness; he should not be overly familiar with his servants; he should only entrust private business to the servant who has proved his self-less attachment to his master over many years.¹⁹² These prescriptions are designed to preserve the right balance of power between noble masters and their servants, to ensure that status distinctions are preserved, on the one hand; and on the other, to ensure that the servant does not have the opportunity to gain undue influence over the master.

Similar concerns are evident when mirrors discuss a prince's government of a kingdom. The political competence of a king is figured, not through his relationships with his subjects *per se*, but through his relationships with his counsellors.¹⁹³ Middle English versions of the *Secretum secretorum* list the characteristics of good counsellors, and suggest a test for counsellors, to enable the king to select the proper person as counsellor in the first place.¹⁹⁴ In the test, the king should pretend to be in financial difficulties. The evil counsellor will suggest acquiring more money from the nation, while the good counsellor will respond by offering his own wealth to the king. Bad kings are susceptible to all kinds of evil speech. As the *De proprietatibus rerum* puts it, the evil king 'louth lyers and priue and iuel taletellers and bacbiters and bowip þe eres to here counsailes'.¹⁹⁵ The way a king deals with

¹⁹⁰Ibid., p. 175,

¹⁹¹Ibid., p. 213.

¹⁹²Ibid., p. 283.

¹⁹³Green, *Poets and Princepleasers*, pp. 161-67; Ferster, *Fictions of Advice*, ll. 39-54.

¹⁹⁴See for example *The Secrete of Secretes* (extant in mid and late-fifteenth-century manuscripts), Manzalaoui (ed.), *Secretum secretorum*, pp. 29-113 (pp. 77-79).

¹⁹⁵Seymour (ed.), *On the Properties of things*, 1:319-20.

his good and evil counsellors is vital, because the counsellor is in a position to influence the king, and potentially to direct affairs in the kingdom.

In the rhetoric of counsel, young men, both kings and counsellors, are symbolic of bad government. Old men are associated with good counsel, partly because of their greater experience, and partly because of the fact that they are no longer in the control of the passions and so are free to exercise reason.¹⁹⁶ The counsel of young men, by the same token, is untrustworthy, because of their physical and intellectual immaturity. As Judith Ferster has shown, the political ineptitude of the young was frequently illustrated in later medieval political texts with reference to the biblical *exemplum* of Rehoboam.¹⁹⁷ After Rehoboam accedes to the throne of Israel upon the death of his father, he is presented with a petition from his subjects for a less exacting regime. Rehoboam consults his father's counsellors, who are old and experienced men, and who advise him to agree to the request. He also asks the advice of his own young companions who counsel him to impose an even harsher regime. Rehoboam takes the advice of the young counsellors, but in doing so seals his own fate: a popular uprising follows, which leads to the division of the kingdom of Israel. The story sets up an opposition between the counsel of the old and the counsel of the young, associating the former with political *savoir faire*, the latter with its lack. Furthermore, it illustrates Rehoboam's incapacity to rule through the way he deals with counsel. Rehoboam's political incompetence is demonstrated principally through his choice of the wrong advice. Ferster demonstrates how the story of Rehoboam came to be used as a 'political code', particularly by those criticising the kingship of Richard II.¹⁹⁸ The story of Rehoboam had become a kind of shorthand for political incompetence, and the evaluation of counsel had become the defining moment for the young king.

The web of ideas connecting, young men, bad government, households and counsel is apparent in the alliterative poem *Richard the Redeless* (c.1400). This text offers a criticism of the kingship of Richard II, a kingship compromised from the beginning by

¹⁹⁶Ibid., 1:293, ll.1-4; Fowler et al (eds.), *Governance of Kings and Princes*, p.51. See also Shahar, 'Old Body'.

¹⁹⁷Ferster, *Fictions of Advice*, ll.122-126. For the biblical account, see I Kings 12:1-24.

¹⁹⁸Ferster, *Fictions of Advice*, pp.125-126. The story of Rehoboam continued to be used to illustrate the dangers of young kings and counsellors in the sixteenth century. See for example, J Wilson (ed.), *Sermons Very Fruitfull Godly and Learned by Roger Edgeworth: Preaching in the Reformation* (Cambridge, 1993), pp.354-56; Fulke Greville, *A Treatise of Monarchy*, ll.980-85, in GA Wilkes (ed.), *Fulke Greville: The Remains* (Oxford, 1965).

Richard's youth on his accession to the throne. Richard's youthful incapacity as a king is signalled by his failure to listen to the right counsellors. The speaker, who addresses the text to Richard as a form of counsel, laments the king's choice of young counsellors:

Whane ye were sette in youre se as a sir aughte,
 Ther carpinge comynliche of conceill arisith,
 The chevyteyns cheef that ye chesse evere,
 Weren all to yonge of yeris to yeme swyche a rewme.¹⁹⁹

Like Rehoboam, Richard demonstrates his political incompetence by choosing to listen to evil counsellors, whose inadequacy is symbolised by their youth. Not only has Richard selected the wrong council members, but he is also incapable of appreciating the good advice offered by good counsellors, in the form of the good counsellor Wit (also referred to as Wisdom), whom he rejects.²⁰⁰

In *Richard the Redeless*, however, Richard himself does not appear in person. His incapacity for good government is figured instead through the actions of the members of and hangers-on in his royal household.²⁰¹ The speaker heartily disapproves of the youth of Richard's counsellors:

For it fallith as well to fodis of twenty four yeris,
 Or yonge men of yistirday to geve good redis,
 As becometh a kow to hoppe in a cage!²⁰²

Not only do these young counsellors offer bad advice but they appear to be in control of the royal household. Richard's rejection of good counsel under the influence of his young counsellors is represented in terms of the ejection of Wit from the physical space of Richard's household, though it is not Richard himself who effects it. Instead, Wit is hounded out by the fashionably dressed and idle young courtiers with which Richard has surrounded himself, and then barred from re-entering the household by the porter at the gate.²⁰³ This episode shows how the household can come to stand for the person of the

¹⁹⁹*Richard the Redeless*, I.86-89. Line references are to James M Dean (ed.), *Richard the Redeless and Mum and the Sothsegger* (Kalamazoo, MI, 2000).

²⁰⁰*Ibid.*, II.206-38.

²⁰¹Jenni Nuttall, 'Household Narratives and Lancastrian Poetics', in C Beattie, A Maslakovic and S Rees Jones (eds), *The Medieval Household in Christian Europe, c.850-1550: Managing Power, Wealth and the Body* (Turnhout, 2003), pp.91-106 (pp.99-104).

²⁰²*Richard the Redeless*, III.260-63.

²⁰³*Ibid.*, III.207-38.

king: the actions of the evil young counsellors stand for the king's actions, and their domination of the household represents their domination of the king. Moreover, through their control of the king and his household they in effect control the kingdom.

The equation of the effective exercise of political authority with effective household rule and the acceptance of good counsel can also be seen in the alliterative poem *Mum and the Sothseggar* (c.1409). Though the opening of the poem is lost, it seems from remarks in the text that this section described the household of Henry IV in glowing terms:

Now is Henryis hous holsumly ymade
 And a meritable meyny of the moste greet,
 And next I have ynamed as nygh as I couthe,
 And the condicions declarid of alle,
 Rehershing no rascaille ne riders aboute.²⁰⁴

In contrast with Richard's household in *Richard the Redeless*, Henry's household is a model because it is composed only of worthy members, a 'meritable meyny' instead of Richard's arrogant young advisors.²⁰⁵ This well-ordered household is a reflection of Henry's kingly virtues, his wisdom, faith and knightly prowess.²⁰⁶ However, Henry's court is not altogether perfect, since it lacks household members who are prepared to tell Henry the truth about what is going on in the country.²⁰⁷ In this case, the problem with these household members is their silence, rather than their evil counsel, since they prefer to avoid the potentially unpleasant consequences of being a truth-teller. The main body of the poem concerns the narrator's efforts to find a truth-telling counsellor who will complete this model household. As the poem proceeds, the poem seems to cast doubt on the welcome which any truth-teller would receive at Henry's court, since the truth-teller, Sothseggar is rejected in every other institution in the land.²⁰⁸ Henry's well-ordered household offers a picture in little of his successful rule of the kingdom, which stands in sharp contrast to Richard's failures to rule as he ought. However, at the same time anxieties about Henry's kingship still are expressed through concerns over the

²⁰⁴*Mum and the Sothseggar*, ll.206-10. Line references are to James M Dean (ed.), *Richard the Redeless and Mum and the Sothseggar* (Kalamazoo, MI, 2000).

²⁰⁵Nuttall, 'Household Narratives', pp.102.

²⁰⁶*Mum and the Sothseggar*, ll.211-20.

²⁰⁷*Ibid.*, 155-70.

²⁰⁸*Ibid.*, ll.788-99. Nuttall, 'Household Narratives', p.103.

composition of the royal household.²⁰⁹

This kind of political discourse assumes links between different kinds of rule. Noble masculinity is predicated on the ability to govern: to govern one's own body; to govern one's household; and to govern a kingdom. For noblemen, therefore, the cultivation of moral virtue is not simply an end in itself, but has to do with demonstrating the kind of self-discipline which is the characteristic of a good governor. An orderly household testifies to one's practical abilities as a governor, but on a symbolic level it figures both a well-regulated body, and a political competence. In other words, the way a nobleman conducts himself, and conducts his household is a kind of political statement about his capacity to govern. In this discourse, however, young rulers are emblematic of a lack. They are the type of the man who cannot discipline his own unruly nature, a nature which can be read off the body by the corporeal signs of gestures and posture. By extension, young men are the type of the bad governor: of those who are unable to regulate their relationships with servants and counsellors; who are manipulated by counsel; who preside over unruly households and unstable kingdoms. Young men exemplify a threatening and dangerous masculinity because their unruly bodies represent and produce social and political disorder.

The interludes *Nature, Fulgens and Lucrez, The Worlde and the Chylde* and *Interlude of Youth*, and *Calisto and Melebea* can be considered at one and the same time morally didactic works, courtesy texts, and a kind of princely mirror. As critics have readily accepted, they offer explicit teaching on vice and virtue. They also provide a model of appropriate and inappropriate manners for great hall life, and a discussion of concepts of rule and governance. The figures of young men in the plays are able to act as sites for these inter-related concepts, because each relies on a similar understanding of the ways in which male development determines the personalities and behaviours of men. The physiognomy of young men makes them prone to naturally prone to sinfulness; naturally wild and uncivilized; and naturally incapable of good rule.

²⁰⁹Nuttall draws parallels with the efforts of the Long Parliament of 1406 to reduce Henry's household expenditure, which resulted in the expulsion of various undesirable household members, some of whom the Commons suspected of attempting to exercise undue influence over the king and queen: Nuttall, 'Household Narratives', pp. 100-101.

The interludes *Nature, Fulgens and Lucrez, The Worlde and the Chylde, Youth, and Calisto and Melebea* articulate these kinds of ideologies in their presentation of young male characters. However, it is also true that they focus specifically on *noble* men and masculinities, and in this context their depictions of young characters at the point of transition to adulthood reveal a preoccupation with the problems inherent in constructing a noble and adult masculinity. Like all young men, the young noblemen of the interludes are faced with the task of transcending a youthful nature, but there is a powerful sense that this is a particularly crucial, make-or-break moment for aristocrats.

Chapter Three will, therefore, consider the kind of noble masculinity which the interlude texts construct, and it will pay particular attention to the ways in which the great household is depicted as central to the question of what it means to be a noble man. The discourses of youth discussed above offer, in addition, a flexible political language that may be appropriated for other, political purposes. As we have seen, Young men are emblematic of political incompetence in the context of much later medieval advice literature for princes, and this indicates that male ageing offers commentators on kings and nobles a 'political code', under the cover of which they may present otherwise unpalatable views.²¹⁰ By the same token, it offers kings and nobles a 'political code' which they may appropriate to make statements about themselves, and about their own political capacities, and to speak to the situations in which they find themselves. Chapter Four will explore the political meanings and messages which are implicit in interlude texts, and in particular through their presentation of young noblemen.

²¹⁰Walker, 'Household Drama'.

Chapter Three. The Construction of Masculinity in the Interludes.

The interludes *Nature*, *Fulgens and Lucrez*, *The Worlde and the Chylde*, *The Interlude of Youth* and *Calisto and Melebea* focus on young men at pivotal moments in their transitions to adult and noble masculinity. *Nature* and *The Worlde and the Chylde* tell the story of their protagonist from cradle to grave, but each marks young adulthood as a decisive change in their protagonist's circumstances. In *Nature*, Man reconfigures his household from the modest one established for him by Nature, to a large household, full of servants. The protagonist of *The Worlde and the Chylde* finishes his childhood career in household service at the age of twenty-one, is created a knight, and takes on a servant of his own. In *The Interlude of Youth*, Youth has just inherited his father's property, and is contemplating an enlargement of his establishment. In *Fulgens and Lucrez*, on the other hand, Gaius and Cornelius are contemplating marriage to the noble Lucrez; while the young Calisto of *Calisto and Melebea* is devoting himself to romantic adventures with Melebea. These young noblemen are relatively mature. They are by no means children, or even teenagers. They are mature in physical terms - not only sexually mature, but mature in that they have clearly reached the end of their 'ful incresing', in the words of John Trevisa's translation of *De proprietatibus rerum*, and have attained the height of their physical powers.¹

The young noblemen are also socially mature, in that they have reached an age where they no longer have to accept the authority of anyone, unlike the young noblewomen - Lucrez of *Fulgens and Lucrez*, and Melebea of *Calisto and Melebea* - who remain under the authority of their fathers. In fact, none of the young noblemen are provided with mothers or fathers in any case. The plays mark the end of their submission to other authorities, and the beginning of their own exercise of authority. The young men are in a position to exercise independent authority over their own servants. However, these young men are also socially immature in the sense that few of them have taken up the wider social roles and responsibilities of noblemen. None are married. Only Gaius has taken part in military campaigns and is actively involved in the exercise of political authority, though he is yet to

¹MC Seymour (ed.), *On the Properties of Things, A Critical Text: John Trevisa's Translation of Bartholomaeus Anglicus' De proprietatibus rerum*, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1975), 1:292.

marry.² These young noblemen are located in a kind of liminal period between childhood and fully realised noble adulthood. They are in the process of negotiating for themselves an adult masculinity, which will determine the tenor of their adult lives.

The plays, however, are not purely exercises in the description of young noblemen at this interesting stage of their lives. They have a didactic emphasis, and show young men at points of transition to adult masculinities, in order to mark particular kinds of adult masculinity as wrong. They tend to focus on young noblemen as problems, as men who fail to make the proper transitions to the right kind of noble masculinity. *The Worlde* emphasises the consequences of a failure to become the right kind nobleman in terms of a miserable and destitute old age. In *Nature*, though Man does not sink into poverty, he is full of regret at his failure to direct his courses in a fitting way as a younger man. Youth does repent and change his ways, but only after a period of sometimes violent resistance to the forces of good who are seeking to direct him to an appropriate identity. Cornelius in *Fulgens and Lucre*s and Calisto in *Calisto and Melebea* are presented in stark opposition to the old noblemen, Fulgens and Danio - and in the case of Cornelius, to the younger man Gaius - all of whom seem to represent a mature ability to govern themselves and others, marked as the desirable characteristic of the adult nobleman. The texts present the acquisition of masculine and noble adult identities as problematic and uncertain, as the negotiation of a difficult pathway. The major obstacle to the successful transition to male adulthood is the young men themselves, who are presented as naturally inclined to deviant masculinities.

Craik was the first critic to discuss in detail the ways in which the identity of characters in moral interludes like *Nature*, *Fulgens and Lucre*s, *The Worlde and the Chylde*, *Youth* and *Calisto and Melebea* - at least in terms of their spiritual affiliations with good or evil - was bound up with outward, visible (or audible) signs such as their dress, their gestures and their manner of speaking.³ The issues of identity and gesture have subsequently made the vice Pryde in *Nature* one of the most intensively discussed figures of these plays, since he directly draws attention to the way in which his identity, his true nature as the deadly sin of pride, may be read from outward clues - indeed he challenges the audience to

²*Nature*, I.97, II.681. Line references are to Alan H Nelson (ed.), *The Plays of Henry Medwall* (Cambridge, 1980).

³TW Craik, *The Tudor Interlude Stage, Costume and Acting* (Leicester, 1958).

out his identity from these symbols alone.⁴ Alford has called these signs a ‘verbal’ and ‘visual’ rhetoric’ of pride.⁵ The play relies on the audience’s familiarity with the conventions of morally didactic literature to help them read Pryde’s gestures, where boastfulness, conspicuous consumption and disdain for others are typically associated with noble pride.⁶ As Craik and others have pointed out, the depiction of Cornelius in *Fulgens and Lucre* also seems constructed with this rhetoric of pride in mind.⁷ Like Pryde, he dresses in the height of fashion, and spends exorbitant amounts on what he wears, according to his servant B.⁸ Cornelius even wears the same style of dress as Pryde does. Cornelius also employs the verbal rhetoric of pride by boasting about his ancestors, in order to use their greatness to glorify himself, and demanding that people show him ‘reverence’.⁹ This sounds like Pryde’s boasting about his noble ancestry and the status of his mother and father.¹⁰ As Davenport has pointed out, the depiction of Youth, in *The Interlude of Youth* also relies on this ‘dramatic shorthand’.¹¹

Recently attention has turned to the ways in which verbal and visual signals given out by these characters express social status as well as a spiritual state, so that the plays

⁴Meg Twycross, ‘The Theatricality of Medieval English Plays’, in R Beadle (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval English Theatre* (Cambridge, 1994), pp.37-84 (pp.72-73); John A Alford, ‘“My Name is Worship”: Masquerading Vice in Medwall’s *Nature*’, in idem (ed.), *From Page to Performance* (East Lansing, MI, 1995), pp.151-77.

⁵Alford, ‘“My Name is Worship”’, p.157.

⁶GR Owst, *Literature and Pulpit: A Neglected Chapter in the History of English Letters and of the English People* (Cambridge, 1933), pp.308-12.

⁷Craik, *The Tudor Interlude Stage*, pp.58-59; David Bevington, *Tudor Drama and Politics: A Critical Approach to Topical Meaning* (Cambridge, MA, 1968), pp.51-52; Marion Jones, ‘Early Moral Plays and the Earliest Secular Drama’, in AC Cawley et al, *The Revels History of Drama in English, Vol. 1: Medieval Drama* (London and New York, 1983), pp.213-91 (p.245); Howard B Norland, *Drama in Early Tudor Britain, 1485-1558* (Lincoln, NB, and London, 1995), p.237.

⁸*Fulgens and Lucre*, I.713-50. Line references are to Nelson (ed.), *Plays of Henry Medwall*. Compare *Nature*, I.747-70.

⁹*Fulgens and Lucre*, II.457-514. See also; Norland, *Drama in Early Tudor Britain*, p.240; Suzanne Westfall, *Patrons and Performance Early Tudor Household Revels* (Oxford, 1990), pp.166-67.

¹⁰*Nature*, I.731-38.

¹¹Tony Davenport, ‘“Lusty Fresch Galaunts”’, in P Neuss (ed.), *Aspects of Early English Drama* (Cambridge and Totowa, NJ, 1983), pp.111-28 (p.125).

provide a model for constructing a noble identity.¹² Westfall therefore reads Pryde's opening speeches in *Nature* as 'a lesson in signification', the signification of a noble identity.¹³ Critics have read these plays as speaking to a controversy between 'new' nobles and 'old' nobles.¹⁴ In this reading the figures of *Pride* and *Cornelius* represent an inadequate traditional noble masculinity, in contrast with the new noble masculinities of a body of 'rising men' under the Tudors, who place value on intellectual ability, hard work, and moral virtue.

In this chapter, then, I want to reconsider the problems of noble signification, in terms of the difficulties young noble men find as they attempt to construct a noble masculinity through the manipulation of outward signs like dress, physical gestures and speech. Scholarly discussion of the construction of noble identities in these interludes has drawn attention to the ways bodies and gestures are used to construct identities, but has not really considered the operations of gender on this process, in particular, the relationship between gendered bodies and gestures. Scholarly discussion has also neglected to consider the other methods by which young noblemen construct adult masculinities in the texts. Though many scholars have noted the fact that the young protagonists of these plays are accompanied by servants, few have considered the wider significance of the servant-master relationship for noble identities.¹⁵ More attention has focussed on A and B in *Fulgens and Lucrez* in terms of the theatrical innovation they represent as mediators between the play and the audience, and their role in the sub-plot.¹⁶ The second part of this chapter will

¹²Westfall, *Patrons and Performance*, pp.165-75, pp.159-60. See also Darryll Grantley, *Wit's Pilgrimage: Drama and the Social Impact of Education in Early Modern England* (Aldershot, 2000), pp.85, 88, 136, 138, 140.

¹³Westfall, *Patrons and Performance*, pp.155-56. See also: Alford, '“My Name is Worship”', p.156; Twycross, 'Theatricality', p.72.

¹⁴Bevington, *Tudor Drama and Politics*, pp.42-53. See also Westfall, *Patrons and Performance*, pp.161, 181-2; Norland, *Drama in Early Tudor Britain*, pp.234-235; John Watkins, 'The Allegorical Theatre: Moralities, Interludes, and Protestant Drama', in D Wallace (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Medieval English Literature* (Cambridge, 1999), pp.767-92 (pp.774-6).

¹⁵AP Rossiter, *English Drama From Early Times to the Elizabethans: Its Background, Origins and Developments* (London, 1950), p.104; Robert Potter, *The English Morality Play: Origins, History and Influence of a Dramatic Tradition* (London and Boston, 1975), p.64; ME Moeslein (ed.), *The Plays of Henry Medwall: A Critical Edition* (New York and London, 1981), p.90. Westfall, *Patrons and Performance*, pp.160, 171-73, 190; Grantley, *Wit's Pilgrimage*, p.150.

¹⁶Robert C Johnson, 'Audience Involvement in the Tudor Interlude', *Theatre Notebook* 24 (1970):101-111; Robert C Jones, 'The Stage World and the "Real" World in Medwall's *Fulgens and*

explore the ways in which the introduction of household servants makes the noble household and the practice of householding central to noble masculinity. By understanding the young male protagonists in the context of the noble household and some of its ideologies, it is possible to see the interludes as participating in a much more wide-ranging discussion of what it means to be a noble man than that implicit in the focus on gesture. This section of the chapter will draw on the models of noble masculinity established in later medieval political discourse, as discussed in the previous chapter.

Luces', *MLQ* 32 (1971): 131-42; John Scott Colley, 'Fulgens and Luces: Politics and Aesthetics', *Zeitschrift für Anglistik und Amerikanistik* 23 (1975): 322-30; William Tydeman, *English Medieval Theatre, 1400-1500* (London, 1986), pp.137-48; Twycross, 'Theatricality', pp.74-75; Peter Happé, *English Drama Before Shakespeare* (London and New York, 1999), pp.57-58.

Noble masculinity and noble male bodies

As the figures of Pryde and Cornelius reveal, *Nature* and *Fulgens* acknowledge that it is possible for men to construct identities for themselves, through the manipulation of the outward signs displayed on and through their own bodies. Pryde and Cornelius expressly design their clothes, gestures and speech to declare their own nobility. Pryde, for example, assures us that his expensive and fashionable dress is an unequivocal sign of the noble status he claims. He defines himself as ‘a gentyman .../ That all hys dayes hath worn gylt sporys’, implying that it is the wearing of spurs which guarantees his nobility.¹⁷ His investment in expensive clothing is designed to display the noble wealth derived from his estates.¹⁸ In turn, one of Pryde’s first pieces of counsel to Man is to adopt a more fashionable style of dress.¹⁹ Cornelius also seeks to display the wealth which he sees as central to his noble status in the way he dresses both himself and his household.²⁰ The leisured, noble lifestyle of ‘ease and plesaunt idelnesse’ which he promises Lucre is also designed to mark aristocratic status, through noble pursuits such as the wearing of luxurious dress, hunting, hawking and music.²¹ These Cornelius presents as the defining activities of a nobleman or woman. In a similar way, Youth in *The Interlude of Youth* is determined to build himself a reputation through extravagant conspicuous consumption, since he believes that, ‘he is not set by / Without he be unthrifty’.²² Pride also advises Youth to adopt a specific visual rhetoric of status. Pride commands:

Be in company with gentlemen.
 Jet up and down in the way,
 And your clothes - look they be gay.
 The pretty wenches will say then,

¹⁷*Nature*, I.727-28.

¹⁸*Ibid.*, I.731-70.

¹⁹*Ibid.*, I.1022-34, II.504-11.

²⁰Cornelius’s servant B describes the dress of Cornelius and his household at *Fulgens and Lucre*, I.717-70. Cornelius argues that his nobility consists in his inherited wealth and the illustrious deeds of his ancestors at II.441-523.

²¹*Fulgens and Lucre*, II.543-63.

²²*Interlude of Youth*, ll.63-64. Line references are to Ian Lancashire (ed.), *Two Tudor Interludes: Youth and Hick Scornor* (Manchester, 1980).

‘Yonder goeth a gentleman,
 And every poor fellow that goeth you by
 Will do off his cap and make you courtesy. (ll.346-52.)

Pride teaches Youth a specific vocabulary of gesture for articulating his noble status, which depends on Youth making himself highly visible. He is supposed to make himself seen associating with other nobles, strutting in the streets, and wearing eye-catching, bright clothing. The mechanism for constructing a masculine identity is strikingly similar to that of the courtesy texts discussed above, in relying on display in front of an audience who, it is assumed, will be watching and passing judgement on the performer. Like the courtesy texts, Pride claims that self-conscious display of the right signs will elicit the spontaneous tribute of respect from observers, in this case those of lower status who are also out on the public streets. Dress is also a satisfying marker of his high status for Manhode in *The Worlde and the Chylde*. He describes himself as ‘ryall arayde’ and as clothed in the fabrics of high status, being ‘proudely aparelde in purpure and byse’.²³

Many of these characters also use language to construct themselves as noble. They deploy pronouns which are marked for status as a way of emphasising the social distance between themselves and their servants. In *The Worlde and the Chylde*, Manhode, when confronted by the base Folye, positions himself as superior by addressing him with the familiar ‘þou’ and by calling him ‘felowe’.²⁴ In *The Interlude of Youth*, Youth addresses his prospective servant, Pride, as ‘thou’ and as ‘fellow’, while Pride addresses Youth as ‘sir’.²⁵ Cornelius uses the same tactic as a way of scorning Gaius in *Fulgens and Lucrez*. Cornelius makes a deliberate attempt to disparage Gaius, his rival for Lucrez’ hand, by addressing him as ‘thou’.²⁶ In fact, he is being so offensive and provocative to Gaius in this strategy that Lucrez has to reprove him.²⁷ In *The Interlude of Youth*, Pride encourages Youth to be even more direct in using language to emphasise his nobility. According to Pride, Youth should,

²³*Worlde and the Chylde*, ll.268-69. Line references are to Clifford Davidson and Peter Happé (eds.), *The Worlde and the Chylde* (Kalamazoo, MI, 1999).

²⁴*Worlde and the Chylde*, ll.526.

²⁵*Interlude of Youth*, ll.327-28, 331.

²⁶*Fulgens and Lucrez*, II.529-35.

²⁷*Ibid.*, II.536-38.

‘Put down the poor, and set nought by them’.²⁸ In other words, he should adopt the sort of verbal rhetoric which has the object of debasing others in order to exalt oneself. Pryde, Youth, Cornelius and Manhode are also quick to make their own nobility the theme of much they say. Youth claims his superiority to every other lord.²⁹ Manhode boasts of his military exploits.³⁰ Cornelius and Pryde vaunt their noble ancestry.³¹

The problem for the young noblemen of these plays is that the system of signs they adopt to express their innate nobility is an unreliable one. The play-texts themselves are seeking to put a different interpretation on their gestures, as the verbal and visual rhetoric, not of nobility, but of pride. It is difficult to avoid this interpretation of their gestures in *Nature* and *The Interlude of Youth*, where these behaviours are taught by characters called pride. It is clear that very similar conventions are operating in the presentation of Cornelius and Manhode. Their young bodies effectively disrupt even conscious attempts to construct an adult noble masculinity through the performance of gestures, since gestures express in an unmediated way the true nature within. In the case of these characters, the nature which makes itself seen is not a noble nature but the youthful, inherently sinful nature dictated by male bodies. Comparison with courtesy literature confirms that these kinds of gestures as inimical to a noble identity. Courtesy texts warn aspirant young men not to use scorn or quarrelsome words, whereas the Lambeth *How the Wise Man Taught His Son* describes boasting as the mark of a fool.³²

Constructing a noble masculinity through gestures is a problematic activity because gestures may reveal more about the performer’s true inner nature than they intend. The texts regard other kinds of gestures as problematic for the opposite reason, that they are *not* a unmediated expression of an essential nature. *Nature* and *Fulgens and Lucre*s show a

²⁸*Interlude of Youth*, l.345.

²⁹*Ibid.*, ll.589-96.

³⁰*World and the Chylde*, ll.237-66.

³¹*Fulgens and Lucre*s, II.455-514; *Nature*, I.731-34.

³²*Babees Book*, ll.118-105; *Vrbanitas*, l.63f.; Ashmole *Lytylle Childrenes Lytil Boke*, l.57f. Line references are to FJ Furnivall (ed.), *The Babees Book*, EETS, OS 32 (1868), pp.1-9, 13-15, 16-24. See also idem (ed.), *Caxton’s Book of Curtesye*, EETS, ES 3 (1868), l.23; *Stans puer ad mensam*, ll.115-16, in idem (ed.), *Quene Elizabethes Achademy*, EETS, ES 8 (1869), pp.56-64. On boasting see *How the Wise Man Taught His Son*, l.124, in idem (ed.), *Babees Book*, pp.48-52.

particular concern about the unreliability of dress as a signifier of noble status. Apparel is not necessarily an involuntary expression of inner nature, since this sign of nobleness may be purchased by anyone with enough cash to spend. The correspondence, or lack of correspondence, between inner nature and outer garb was a particular concern in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. Sumptuary legislation was repeatedly enacted in order to control the consumption of particular styles of dress and fabrics, in order to preserve visual distinctions between different status groups.³³ In the 1509-10 legislation, for example, only gentleman servants were permitted to wear ‘eny gounne or coote or suche lyke apparrell of more clothe then two brode yerdes and a halfe in a shorte gowne and thre brode yerdes in a longe gowne’.³⁴ The legislation wants a man’s dress to be a reliable index of his in-born nature:³⁵ one should be able to look at the amount of cloth a servant has on his back and be able to tell whether he is noble or not. This kind of concern is also expressed by Edmund Dudley who warns those of the mercantile elites not to ‘presume about ther own degre, nor conterfete the state of his Better, nor excede in their apparell or diet’.³⁶ The implication of such exhortations is that dress had become an unreliable sign of nobility, and that distinctions between status groups were being effaced as the low-born adopted styles of dress previously the preserve of the noble.³⁷ Indeed, these texts evince a concern that the lower orders are actively deploying dress to construct through the imitation of noble lifestyles, noble identities for themselves which do not correspond to any nobility within. Recent work in economic history shows that rising levels of disposable income at the end of the fifteenth century left ordinary people with an increased amount of money to spend on material goods, and there is some evidence that social elites of the later fifteenth-

³³On attempts to regulate clothing in the fifteenth century, see John Scattergood, ‘Fashion and Morality in the Late Middle Ages’, in D Williams (ed.), *England in the Fifteenth Century* (Woodbridge, 1987), pp.255-72. See also Claire Sponsler, *Drama and Resistance: Bodies Goods and Theatricality in Late Medieval England* (Minneapolis and London, 1997), pp.1-23.

³⁴Record Commission, *The Statutes of the Realm*, 11 vols. (London, 1963), 3:8-9.

³⁵Scattergood, ‘Fashion and Morality’, pp.259-60, 269-70; Sponsler, *Drama and Resistance*, pp.12, 20.

³⁶Edmund Dudley, *The Tree of Commonwealth: A Treatise*, ed. by DM Brodie (Cambridge, 1948), p.48.

³⁷Alford discusses the instability of dress as sign in relation to nobility in relation to Pryde in *Nature*. See idem, “My Name is Worship”, pp.167-68.

century changed their patterns of consumption to more exclusive fabrics in response to this new social competition from relatively low-status consumers.³⁸

In *Fulgens and Lucres*, a concern about the significance of dress first becomes apparent in the opening section of the play where the two servants known as A and B set up the action to follow. A and B are presented as acquaintances who have encountered each other by chance while they wait in the great hall to see the play. A causes B offence by suggesting that he is one of the players. A explains:

Nay, I mok not, wot ye well,
 For I thought verely by your apparell
 That ye had bene a player
 [...]
 Lo, therfor, I say
 Ther is so myche nyce aray
 Amonges these galandis now aday
 That a man shall not lightly

Know a player from a nother man. (I.48-56)

A's comments need to be read in the context of sumptuary legislation which reveals some of the problems of dress and the signification of status in this period. Players were frequently exempted from legislation of apparel because of their professional obligations to dress like people of other status groups.³⁹ The exchange between A and B indicates that B is comparatively richly dressed - more richly dressed than his status in fact strictly entitles him to be. A does not make the mistake of assuming B is noble, because of his previous acquaintance with B. Instead he assumes instead that B is wearing his fine clothing because he is a player. In apologising for his error, A hardly improves matters since he implies that B's dress constructs him as a gallant, one who according to Caxton's *Book of Curtesye* is only a 'Counterfeter of vnconnyng curtoisye'.⁴⁰ By his dress, B is making a false claim to a noble identity. As Westfall has observed, this is potentially a telling side-swipe at any

³⁸Christopher Dyer, *Making a Living in the Middle Ages: The People of Britain, 850-1520* (New Haven and London), p.322.

³⁹Record Commission, *Statutes of the Realm*, 11 vols.(London, 1963), 2:402, 469; 3:8-9.

⁴⁰Furnivall (ed.), *Caxton's Book of Curtesye*, 1.452. See also Mark Addison Amos, '“For Manners Make Man”: Bourdieu, De Certeau, and the Common Appropriation of Noble Manners in the *Book of Courtesy*', in Ashley and Clark (eds.), *Medieval Conduct*, pp.23-48 (pp.43-44).

extravagantly dressed men of lower status in the audience of the play.⁴¹ The episode reveals the difficulties of distinguishing between men. In turn, it calls into question whether we are able to read the extravagant dress of Cornelius, described later in the play, as a marker of nobility, as he wishes us to do.

The problematic nature of Cornelius's dress is explicitly discussed at the moment when the servant B boasts about his master's fashionable and expensive clothes.⁴² However, B admits that deploying dress as a sign of nobility is not without its difficulties:

A gentylman shall not were it a daye,
But every man wyll hym self araye
Of the same fascyon even by and by
On the morow after! (I.754-57)

Cornelius's dress only works to display his superiority as long as lesser men do not dress in the same way. Fashionable dress can only ever be a provisional sign of nobility for young men because fashions are soon taken up by the ignoble. In *Nature*, Pryde also remarks on the unreliability of fashionable dress, as he comments unfavourably on Man's appearance:

It ys now two dayes agon
Syth that men bygan thys fassyon,
And every knave had yt anon! (I.1026-28)

The currency of Man's style of dress among low-status men has, in Pryde's eyes, debased it as a sign of nobility. Pryde's solution is to devise a new fashion, more outrageous than the last, which will make observers identify Man as a 'rutter' and 'galand'.⁴³ The strategy of adopting fashionable dress as a sign of nobility brings its own inherent problems, because this sign must continually be renewed and refashioned if it is to preserve distinctions with those of lower status, who constantly seek to appropriate the signs of nobility.

Adopting the identity of the gallant, one who is the first with the new fashions, is therefore not a satisfactory solution to the problem of constructing an adult and noble masculinity. The gallant is, after all, according to the Boke of Curtesye only a

⁴¹Westfall, *Patrons and Performance*, pp.108-09.

⁴²*Nature*, I.713-70.

⁴³*Ibid.*, I.1053-81.

‘Counterfeter of vnconnyng curtoisye’.⁴⁴ In the mid-sixteenth century, Laurence Humphrey was to complain about ‘lewde cutters and roysters who in theyr vtter behaiour, apparayle, practises & talke counterfaite a maner nobilitye’.⁴⁵ Gallants perform a kind of noble masculinity with a repertoire of gestures which do not in fact relate to an essential noble nature.⁴⁶ For Man or Cornelius or Youth to adopt their practices does not enable them to confirm their noble natures: rather it calls them into doubt, since these strategies are repeatedly associated with the construction of fake noble identities.⁴⁷

If counterfeiting the exterior signs of nobility is relatively easy, the benefit of making nobility contingent on abstract qualities like modesty and truthfulness is that these cannot be counterfeited, or at least not with such ease. Such virtues can be seen as proceeding more directly from an essentially noble nature, and not merely as the purchase of wealth which anyone might acquire. An alternative way of constructing a noble masculinity through gestures which indicate virtuous qualities is suggested in the presentation of Gaius in *Fulgens and Lucreces*. Gaius is not noble by birth, and does not enjoy the inherited wealth which allows Cornelius to indulge in conspicuous consumption. However, Gaius is, like Cornelius, self-consciously engaged in constructing a noble identity, not only for himself, but for his descendants:

By these wayes, lo, I do aryse
Unto grete honoure fro low degre,
And yf myn heires will do likewyse
Thay shal be brought to nobles by me. (II.686-89)

Although Gaius does not make it explicit, marriage to Lucreces is part of a long term dynastic strategy. Lucreces’s wealth and status will help to produce nobleness in Gaius’s descendants - as it has in the case of Cornelius. Marriage was an important matter to all later medieval nobles, since producing legitimate heirs was crucial for the preservation of family lines and

⁴⁴Furnivall (ed.), *Caxton’s Book of Curtesye*, 1.452.

⁴⁵Laurence Humphrey, *The nobles or of nobilitye* (London, 1563), sig.Fi.

⁴⁶On fifteenth-century concerns with the construction of ‘counterfeit’ identities through dress, see Sponsler, *Drama and Resistance*, pp.6-14. See also Paul Strohm, ‘Hoccleve, Lydgate and the Lancastrian Court’, in Wallace (ed.), *Cambridge History of Medieval Literature*, pp.640-661 (pp.647, 649-50).

⁴⁷Alford, ‘“My Name is Worship”’, p.168.

family estates.⁴⁸ Gaius's ambitious marriage to Lucre would have been recognised by audiences as a tactic for advancement.

Bevington and others have argued that Gaius is intended to represent a new kind of noble: an emergent social group of the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries who owed their advancement to talent and ability rather than to birth.⁴⁹ Since Gaius has obtained 'office and fee', and devotes himself to study and to a virtuous life, scholars have tended to see him as a type of the Tudor able administrator.⁵⁰ Gaius modestly disclaims noble status for himself in the passage quoted above, and Cornelius bluntly insists on Gaius's low birth.⁵¹ However, these are tactical moves in a rhetorical contest between the two men, and as Grantley has suggested, the play-text presents them as on more of a par than their rhetoric of status might suggest.⁵² The dramatic device of the sub-plot makes a fundamental distinction between the nobles and the group of non-noble characters, which is reinforced by the contrast between the coarse behaviour of A and B and the noble style of their superiors. Whatever their personal antipathy, Cornelius and Gaius clearly have much more in common with each other than either has with these characters. In other words, *Fulgens and Lucre* may be less of a debate about who is and who is not noble, and more of a debate about how to be noble, how to construct the noble masculinity which will set one apart from other status groups, and indeed from other nobles, in the competition for scarce resources - like the marriage to an heiress.

The figure of Gaius has as much to say to the established nobility as to emergent nobles, as a kind of theoretical model of how noblemen might express their essentially noble nature, without recourse to ambiguous or unreliable material signs of nobility. Gaius performs nobility in a different way to Cornelius, but in some senses he is a resolutely traditional noble. While Cornelius is apparently indulging in aristocratic leisured pastimes,

⁴⁸KB McFarlane, *The Nobility of Later Medieval England* (Oxford, 1973), pp.10-11, 151-3. Kate Mertes, 'Aristocracy', in R Horrox (ed.), *Fifteenth-Century Attitudes* (Cambridge, 1994), pp.42-60 (pp.45-47); David Starkey, 'The Age of the Household: Politics, Society and the Arts, c.1350-1550', in S Medcalf (ed.), *The Later Middle Ages* (London, 1981), pp.225-90 (pp.232-43).

⁴⁹See n.13 above.

⁵⁰*Fulgens and Lucre*, II.568, 679-70.

⁵¹*Ibid.*, II.530-35, 564-70.

⁵²Grantley, *Wit's Pilgrimage*, pp.61, 88.

Gaius has made a name for himself in the defence of the realm through military exploit.⁵³ Gaius is not offering a radically new kind of aristocracy at all. The one innovative aspect to Gaius's noble activities is his devotion to 'study', which in itself was not an uncontested marker of noble masculinity. Paul Strohm has argued that Hoccleve's fifteenth-century works mark 'practices of reading and introspection' as female.⁵⁴ Gaius re-aligns the activity of study with the aid of long-standing concepts of noble masculinity. Gaius makes study central to his noble masculinity because it prevents 'idleness' and so discourages vice. In other words, it is a disciplining activity, a way of training the unruly young body, just as military exploit requires the training of the physical body. The discipline of study is significant not just because it produces virtue. As we have seen above, it is the very act of disciplining oneself which is so politically significant, as the marker of the noble and indeed the king.⁵⁵ Gaius shows in the way that he trains and rules himself the capacity he has for ruling others, which Cornelius is unable to display in his lifestyle of leisure and pleasure.

As discussed above, Cornelius attempts to perform his nobility through a series of bodily gestures, particularly his dress and his speech. The visual and verbal rhetoric he developed to express his noble nature was unsuccessful, since in fact he only succeeded in expressing his sinful young masculine nature. Gaius, in contrast, is presented as successfully employing gestures to transmit messages about his nobility. There is no reference to Gaius's appearance in the play-text, and therefore no direct reference to any of the ways in which Gaius uses dress to express his noble nature. This in itself suggests that Gaius's external appearance is completely unremarkable, and that Gaius forms a striking visual contrast with Cornelius - particularly if Cornelius is wearing a gown made of seven 'brode yerdis' of cloth, which B claims he usually wears.⁵⁶ Gaius's unremarkable dress makes quite a powerful statement about his restraint if it forms a visual antithesis to Cornelius's extravagance. This visual contrast also reflects the way in which Gaius presents himself as the antithesis of Cornelius in terms of his speech.

Gaius claims to embody the virtues of continence, industry and moderation (in

⁵³*Fulgens and Lucrez*, II.681-85.

⁵⁴Strohm, 'Hoccleve, Lydgate', pp.648.

⁵⁵Judith Ferster, *Fictions of Advice: The Literature and Politics of Counsel in Late Medieval England* (Philadelphia, 1996), p.44.

⁵⁶*Fulgens and Lucrez*, I.740-42.

opposition to Cornelius's vices of incontinence, idleness and prodigality).⁵⁷ It is on the basis of such moral virtues that he bases his claim to a superior kind of nobility. They are in this context specifically noble virtues, because they are identified as characteristics of noblemen and princes in mirrors for princes.⁵⁸ These virtues are difficult to represent in a visual way, so Gaius displays his possession of them through his demeanour, by employing what we might describe, after Alford, as a verbal rhetoric of virtue. Gaius frequently calls attention to or comments on his own manner of speaking. For instance, in his early conversations with Lucre, Gaius declares his refusal to employ 'flattering wordis' normally employed by lovers, which he describes as a way of winning people's love by guile.⁵⁹ He is determined to 'be short and playne', and he cites his proposal of marriage to Lucre in 'wordis expresse' as example of this directness.⁶⁰ He urges Lucre to use the same kind of language and to reply to his proposal with 'a playne ye or nay'.⁶¹ In the nobility debate, he declares his intention to tell 'the veray trowth'.⁶² Gaius's plain-speaking and directness are gestures which express his sincerity and honest dealing. Like the courtesy texts discussed in Chapter Two, he puts a high value on brevity, and implies that verbosity is a negative trait. His suspicion of flattery echoes the suspicion of flatterers expressed in political literature, where flattery is associated with evil counsellors, and proceeds from a desire to manipulate; whereas plain speaking is a characteristic of the truth-telling, good counsellor.⁶³

Gaius's decision to be a truth-teller in the nobility debate means that he has to speak plainly about himself and Cornelius. Even before the debate itself, he has drawn attention to his reluctance to impugn Cornelius. When his new servant A tells him that he has seen

⁵⁷Ibid., II.627-55, 670-99.

⁵⁸Olga Horner, 'Fulgens and Lucre: An Historical Perspective', *METH* 15 (1993): 49-86 (pp.55-59).

⁵⁹*Fulgens and Lucre*, I.521.

⁶⁰Ibid, I.526, 530.

⁶¹Ibid., I.526-28, 538.

⁶²Ibid., II.598.

⁶³Helen Barr and Kate Ward-Perkins, ' "Spekyng for one's sustenance": The Rhetoric of Counsel in *Mum and the Sothsegger*, Skelton's *Bowge of Court*, and Elyot's *Pasquil and Playne*', in *The Long Fifteenth-Century: Essays for Douglas Gray* (Oxford, 1997), pp.249-72. See also Strohm, 'Hoccleve, Lydgate', p.648.

Lucrez in Cornelius's company, Gaius declares:

He shall not be dispraysid for me
Withoute that I be compellid therto. (I.667-68.)

In the debate with Cornelius, he claims that he is 'loth...to make ony reportur / Of this mans foly or hym to dispice'.⁶⁴ This seems to echo Lucrez's dislike of 'all suche wordis as may gyve occasion / Of brallynge or other ongodely condycion'.⁶⁵ Lucrez and Gaius's values contrast with those of Cornelius, who speaks disparagingly to Gaius in the nobility debate.⁶⁶ Indeed, Gaius takes advantage of Cornelius's outburst to point out that Cornelius 'spekyth after his lernyng' in scorning him.⁶⁷ Cornelius's words, rather than hurting Gaius, disclose Cornelius's true nature, and provide an implicit contrast with his measured tones. Gaius's decision to be a truth-teller also means that he is faced with the difficult task of speaking about himself. Speaking about one's own good qualities is uncomfortably close to the kind of boasting which characterises the proud Cornelius. Instead Gaius makes a point of expressing his reluctance about having to describe his virtues. He declares that he is 'lothe.../ To boste of myne own dedis' and that he is not mentioning his own virtues 'for myne one prayse'.⁶⁸

Gaius demonstrates how to perform a noble masculinity without recourse to material displays which, in fact, will frequently fail to transmit messages about nobility effectively. Gaius makes use of a rhetoric of virtue, where he displays honesty, sincerity, lack of contentiousness, and modesty through the way in which he speaks. Through this strategy, he seeks to display his noble nature, though perhaps paradoxically this involves cataloguing the features of his own speech, in a way reminiscent of Pryde's exhibition of his fashionable dress. The positive example of Gaius is constructed in opposition to those young noblemen in other early interludes who project the wrong messages about their inner natures. *Nature*, *Fulgens* and *Youth* use the figures of Man and Pryde, Cornelius, and Youth to suggest what an adult nobleman is not: he is not uselessly extravagant in his dress; he does not treat

⁶⁴*Fulgens and Lucrez*, II.594-95.

⁶⁵*Ibid.*, II.373-74.

⁶⁶*Ibid.*, II.529-35.

⁶⁷*Ibid.*, II.539.

⁶⁸*Ibid.*, II.592-93, 670.

others with contempt in order to emphasise his superiority; he does not boast about what he is or what he has.

In *The Worlde and the Chylde* the debate about nobility, and the construction of a noble masculinity centres on the concept of knighthood, which is explicitly discussed by Conscience. Conscience's remarks come in response to Manhode's behaviour towards him, which bears all the symptoms of pride in his status as knight. Manhode demands to know Conscience's business, calls him offensive names, and promises that he shall be taught who Manhode is.⁶⁹ He boasts that, 'All powere of Pryde haue I tane; / I am as gentyll as iay on tre'.⁷⁰ Manhode boasts of his relationship with the King of Pride, whom he serves; but again, for the audience it indicates that his identity proceeds not from an his inner nobility, but from his proud, sinful state.⁷¹ Conscience therefore seeks to re-educate Manhode about what 'longeth to a knight'.⁷² He constructs an image of a knighthood based on Christian virtue, rather than the form of knighthood, associated with vice, which Manhode's patron The Worlde has promoted. The Worlde has taught Manhode to seek pre-eminence through the use of arms. He gives him 'a swerde and also strength and myght' for battle, and Manhode proceeds to conquer many nations, defeat many individuals in battle and to boast about it at length.⁷³ Manhode is also proud of his sumptuous dress and his relationship with the seven kings, who send him their liveries and give him other benefits.⁷⁴ Conscience in contrast advocates a lifestyle of moderation, and argues against a life of sin: Manhode ought to have a 'Conscience clere'.⁷⁵ Conscience begins by arguing against Manhode's allegiance to each of the deadly sins.⁷⁶ He proposes a new set of activities for Manhode the knight: the service of God, the observance of the commandments, attendance at matins and mass, and

⁶⁹*Worlde and the Chylde*, ll.317-323.

⁷⁰*Ibid.*, ll.326-27.

⁷¹On Manhode's service with the King of Pride, see *ibid.*, ll.184-95.

⁷²*Ibid.*, l.331.

⁷³*Ibid.*, ll.210, 237-74.

⁷⁴*Ibid.*, ll.268-70, 275-82.

⁷⁵*Ibid.*, ll.328-31.

⁷⁶*Ibid.*, ll.340-447.

the protection of the church.⁷⁷ He also indicates how Manhode should manage his life in the world, without becoming worldly. Manhode does not have to abjure an aristocratic lifestyle: he should however exercise moderation and ‘good gouernance’ or self-discipline over himself in his pleasures.⁷⁸ Moreover, he confirms that Manhode may dress ‘honestly’ and ‘In all maner of degre’.⁷⁹ In other words, he claims it is entirely possible for a knight to dress in a way that expresses his status, without it becoming an outlet for his pride, though Conscience does not specify how this is to be achieved.⁸⁰ Conscience attempts to re-interpret knighthood, to discourage Manhode from behaviour which he sees as proceeding from a worldly, and therefore sinful set of values. He seeks to re-orientate knighthood back to longstanding concepts of knighthood as Christian service.⁸¹ Like Paul, Conscience acknowledges that though the individual should not be ‘of the world’, he still has to live ‘in the world’. Moderation and self-control are the key to living a life in the world without becoming prey to sin. They are also key virtues for nobles and princes in later medieval political literature.

A noble masculinity, dependent on noble virtues which are also moral virtues, may conflict with other conceptions of masculinity. When Youth of *The Interlude of Youth* is first urged to amend his ways by Charity, Youth does not see the life of virtue as consonant with his noble status. As Charity quotes scripture to Youth, Youth recoils in horror and hostility:

What! Methink ye be clerkish,
For ye speak good gibb’rish. (ll.113-14.)

His anger seems in part motivated by a rejection of a ‘clerkish’ identity.⁸² Youth perhaps associates the clergy not only with learning but with restraint in dress, and a lifestyle which rejects aristocratic activity. John Myrc outlines a clerical masculinity in similar terms:

In worde and dede thowe moste be trewe,

⁷⁷Ibid., ll.356-59, 424-39, 441-47.

⁷⁸ Ibid., ll.448-51, 469-72.

⁷⁹ Ibid., ll465-68.

⁸⁰Craik, *Tudor Interlude*, pp.82-83.

⁸¹Maurice Keen, *Chivalry* (New Haven and London, 1984), pp.4-6, 44-63.

⁸²Grantley, *Wit’s Pilgrimage*, p.141.

And grete opes thow moste enchewe,
 In worde and dede þou moste be mylde...
 Dronkelec and glotonye,
 Pryude and slouþe and enue,
 Alle þou moste putten a-way...
 ...sle þy lust for any thyng...
 Hawkyng, huntynge, and dawnsynge...
 Cutted clothes and pyked shone,
 Thy god fame þey wol for-done...
 In honeste clothes thow moste gon,
 Baselarde and bawdryke were þow non.⁸³

Myrc forbids clergy the lifestyle of leisure and conspicuous consumption, which Cornelius adopts in *Fulgens and Lucrez*, and by which he attempts to induce Lucrez to marry him.⁸⁴ Youth's forceful rejection of Charity stems from his fear that Charity is trying to make him into a clerk, and therefore deprive him of the lifestyle of conspicuous consumption through which Youth wants to make his name.⁸⁵ By marking these pursuits as sinful, Gaius in *Fulgens and Lucrez* might also be running the risk of positioning himself in terms of clerical identity, rather than in terms of noble identity. It is perhaps for this reason that Gaius also constructs his noble identity in relation to his military prowess as well as to study. Military activity was a defining characteristic of the secular nobility, but an activity debarred to the clergy, who were prohibited from even carrying arms.⁸⁶

The act of constructing a gendered status identity on the body appears to be a particularly complex one for the young men of these interludes. Man in *Nature*, Cornelius in *Fulgens and Lucrez*, Manhode in *The Worlde and the Chylde*, and Youth of *The Interlude of Youth* attempt to live up to concepts of adult, noble masculinity which are false. Instead of demonstrating their nobility through gestures, they reveal only sinfulness dictated by their young natures. Adult male identities are problematic for many of these young men precisely because of their male bodies. That young men are ruled by the powerful natural forces inherent in their physical development, underpins *Nature*, *The*

⁸³John Myrc, *Instructions for Parish Priests*, ed. Edward Peacock, EETS 31 (1868), ll.23-48. On clerical identities, see PH Cullum, 'Clergy, Masculinity and Transgression in late Medieval England', in DM Hadley (ed.), *Masculinity in Medieval Europe* (London, 1999), pp.178-96.

⁸⁴*Fulgens and Lucrez*, II.550-63.

⁸⁵*Interlude of Youth*, ll.62-64.

⁸⁶Cullum, 'Clergy, Masculinity', pp.182-86.

World and *Youth*. They are susceptible to sensuality, weakness in their capacity for reason, and the interplay of the humours in determining their complexion. However hard they try to construct their own social identities, the biological essentialism of male developmental models assures us that their natural selves will out. On the other hand *Fulgens and Lucretius* presents Gaius as a young man who has managed to transcend his youthful, male nature through the self-conscious discipline of his body.

The interludes do not only represent the way in which young noblemen construct or fail to construct appropriate masculinities through their bodies. Their success and failure in the task of acquiring an adult masculinity is also displayed in the way in which they manage others. The dealings of young men with their servants show how well they are able to carry out the nobleman's function of the governance of others, and, as in mirrors for princes, their competence or incompetence in this area is closely related to their ability to exercise moral self-discipline.

Noble masculinity and the noble household

Scholars of the later medieval and Tudor period have shown that noble households were central to noble identities in a number of ways.⁸⁷ The physical household - the castle or manor which housed the nobleman and his *familia* - was not just concerned with the supplying of the practical needs of a nobleman or woman, and not just a centre for the administration of his estates. Such places were also places of conspicuous consumption, where nobles displayed their status through their investment in architecture, material goods and a particular style of living.⁸⁸ This investment was not only for the satisfaction of personal tastes, but had a practical political value. It was incumbent on nobles to display the quality of liberality in their mode of living, and those who did not do so not only lost face, but lost political power as a result.⁸⁹ Through the tactical deployment of liberality, nobles attracted the service of gentry and others, who were interested both in the material rewards to be won from the service of a magnificent noble, and the prestige of being attached to such an individual.⁹⁰ For this reason, the building and rebuilding of manors have often been seen as strategic, political acts. The rebuilding of Collyweston by Lady Margaret Beaufort can be read in the context of her role in the administration of the midlands and as an assertion of her status as the queen's mother.⁹¹ The building of Westhorpe by Charles Brandon has been seen as an attempt to bolster his position as Duke of Suffolk, to which title he had been somewhat precipitately elevated by Henry VIII.⁹² The Duke of Buckingham's household at

⁸⁷On the later medieval noble household, see Mark Girouard, *Life in the English Country House: A Social and Architectural History* (New Haven, 1978), pp.14-80; Starkey, 'Age of the Household', pp.225-90; Kate Mertes, *The English Noble Household, 1250-1600: Good Governance and Politic Rule* (Oxford, 1988); Caroline Barron, 'Centres of Conspicuous Consumption: The Aristocratic Town House in London 1200-1550', *The London Journal* 20 (1995): 1-16; CM Woolgar, *The Great Household in Late Medieval England* (New Haven, 1999).

⁸⁸Girouard, *Life in the English Country House*, p.15; Starkey, 'Age of the Household', p.224, 253-61; Mertes, *English Noble Household*, pp.102-103; Woolgar, *Great Household*, p.1.

⁸⁹Starkey, 'Age of the Household', pp.255-56.

⁹⁰Mertes, 'Aristocracy', p.50.

⁹¹Michael K Jones, 'Collyweston - An Early Tudor Palace', in D Williams (ed.), *England in the Fifteenth Century* (Woodbridge, 1987), pp.129-41.

⁹²SJ Gunn and PG Lindley, 'Charles Brandon's Westhorpe: An Early Tudor Courtyard House in Suffolk', *Archaeological Journal* 145 (1988): 272-89.

Thornbury and the earl of Northumberland's manors at Wressil and Leconfield have both been interpreted as tools for the assertion of the political importance of their nobles.⁹³

The performance of interludes and the provision of other entertainments at festive occasions formed part of the magnificent lifestyles of great nobles. Nobles were prepared to make a considerable investment of the financial and human resources of their households in festivity, because festive occasions were an opportunity to manage political relationships. The duke of Buckingham, for example, entertained a large number of the local gentry at the feast held at Thornbury on Twelfth Night, 1508.⁹⁴ Buckingham intended such gentlemen to be impressed by his magnificence, and honoured to be invited to such an occasion; and hence be all the more ready to repay their obligations to him by expediting his business in the locality, and through support and co-operation when required.⁹⁵ The touring of players patronised by a nobleman was also a way of reinforcing political relationships with towns, religious houses and other nobles.⁹⁶ Rewarding a lord's players was a tangible way by which to recognise an alliance with or an allegiance to that lord. Those who hosted touring companies often operated a sliding scale of payments to companies, depending on the closeness of their relationship with their patron.⁹⁷

The later medieval noble household was, however, not just a group of buildings or a physical space. Kate Mertes has defined it as a 'collection of servants, friends and other retainers around a noble and possibly his immediate family', living 'as a single community, for the purpose of creating the mode of life desired by the noble master and providing suitably for his needs'.⁹⁸ This collection of people, or *familia*, helped the aristocrat to construct a noble identity in a number of ways. To begin with, employing a large number of servants was also a kind of conspicuous consumption, a way of making visible one's wealth

⁹³Barbara J Harris, *Edward Stafford, Third Duke of Buckingham, 1478-1521* (Stanford, CA, 1986), pp. 76-103; Ruth Larsen, 'Expressions of Nobility: Conspicuous Consumption and Segregation in the Household of the Fifth Earl of Northumberland' (MA diss., University of York, 1998).

⁹⁴Harris, *Edward Stafford*, p.92.

⁹⁵Westfall, *Patrons and Performance*, pp.2-3, 11.

⁹⁶Ibid., pp.122-27.

⁹⁷Ibid., pp.132, 143. See also John Wasson, 'Professional Actors in the Middle Ages and Early Renaissance', *Medieval and Renaissance Drama in England* 1 (1984): 1-11.

⁹⁸Mertes, *English Noble Household*, p.5.

and power in terms of sheer manpower.⁹⁹ Evidence available for later medieval great households suggests that their size in terms of the numbers of staff employed was related to status and wealth.¹⁰⁰ It is probable that most noble households numbered between thirty and seventy persons, though there are considerable difficulties in generalising about household sizes.¹⁰¹ The households of great aristocrats, however, were much larger. On the basis of records of the numbers of portions served at meals in the manor of Edward Stafford, duke of Buckingham, at Thornbury in November 1508 to January 1509, the duke's household numbered 157 people.¹⁰²

Those with large landed estates needed a large administrative staff to manage them. But as Mertes' definition implies, with its reference to the 'creation of a mode of life', the function of many of the servants who resided in this 'single community' was as much symbolic as purely practical.¹⁰³ Within the physical space of the household the *familia* participated in a constant round of ceremony and ritual centred on the person of the noble, which served constantly to re-inscribe his/her status.¹⁰⁴ When the noble was present in the hall, for example, his/her status was marked in terms of physical space at the 'high' end of the hall, by the noble's being seated on a dais, elevated above the other diners, and through the celure or canopy over the dais.¹⁰⁵ The supreme authority of the lord was emphasised by the careful gradations in rank which were observed in the seating plan of the hall, where the status of diners was signalled by their proximity to the dais.¹⁰⁶ The rituals of dining, performed by the attendant staff, were also designed to produce the nobleman as noble.¹⁰⁷ So, for example, those serving the lord performed a series of gestures of deference to their lord as they set up the tables for dining, even though the lord was not present.¹⁰⁸ As they

⁹⁹Ibid., pp.132-33. See also Girouard, *Life in the English Country House*, p.19.

¹⁰⁰Starkey, 'Age of the Household', pp.243-44; Woolgar, *Great Household*, pp.8-24.

¹⁰¹Mertes, *English Noble Household*, p.18. On the problems inherent in calculating the size of households, see Woolgar, *Great Household*, pp.8-24.

¹⁰²Woolgar, *Great Household*, pp.12-13. For other measures of the Thornbury household see Harris, *Edward Stafford*, p.77.

¹⁰³Woolgar, *Great Household*, p.16.

¹⁰⁴Girouard, *Life in the English Country House*, pp.46-51.

¹⁰⁵Ibid., p.34. On the architectural layout and fabric of the great hall, see Margaret Wood, *The English Mediaeval House* (London, 1965); and Jane Grenville, *Medieval Housing* (London, 1997), pp.89-120. On hall furnishings, see Woolgar, *Great Household*, pp.147-57.

¹⁰⁶Woolgar, *Great Household*, p.103.

¹⁰⁷Girouard, *Life in the English Country House*, pp.47-51; Westfall, "'A Commonty'", pp.46-47.

¹⁰⁸Girouard, *Life in the English Country House*, p.47.

served the food, they knelt to offer him bowls for washing, and utensils for eating.¹⁰⁹ Even where nobles customarily dined in separate chambers, their food was still ceremonially paraded along the length of the hall before the diners within the hall were served, as a way of making visible the invisible lord.¹¹⁰ Whenever the noble entered the hall, he or she would do so as part of a formal procession, their entrance heralded by musicians, usually trumpeters.¹¹¹ As the Northumberland Orders for Twelfth Night indicate, the first part of the performance on this festive occasion was not the interlude, but the procession of the earl, his officers and family into the hall.¹¹² The earl was placed in the middle of the procession, and the rest of the participants were arranged in order of importance around him, so that the least important in status were positioned at the very beginning or the very end of the procession. The status of all the other participants, whether the earl's family or household officials, was made to depend on the earl. Conversely, this arrangement also served to stress the earl's pre-eminence over all the others.

Nobles were constantly at the centre of a performance designed to transmit messages about power and status. In part, as discussed above, they were obliged to construct their noble identity through their gestures, on and through bodies, to draw attention to their essential noble natures. Daily household practices were also a kind of performance designed to disclose nobility, but these relied on the gestures and behaviour of household servants to signify the nobility of their master. Paradoxically, then, servants were fundamental to constructing noble identity within the household. In the earl of Northumberland's procession on Twelfth Night, the earl gives meaning to his inferiors, but by the same token they confer meaning on him.

In the interludes which are the subject of this thesis, the importance of house-holding to the construction of noble masculinity is suggested by the fact that all the young male protagonists are provided with servants. Each is, in other words, represented in the context of a *familia*. *Man in Nature* employs Pryde and the other deadly sins, as well as the competing counsellors in the form of Reason and Sensualyte. In *Fulgens and Lucrez*, Gaius

¹⁰⁹Ibid., p.49. See also Camille's discussion of the depiction of a lord dining in the Luttrell Psalter (c.1340): Michael Camille, *Mirror in Parchment: The Luttrell Psalter and the Making of Medieval England* (Chicago, 1998), pp.84-85.

¹¹⁰Girouard, *Life in the English Country House*, p.48.

¹¹¹Westfall, *Patrons and Performance*, pp.64-74.

¹¹²Ian Lancashire, 'Orders for Twelfth Day and Night circa 1515 in the Second Northumberland Household Book', *ELR* 10 (1980): 7-45 (pp.15-16).

employs A as a servant, while Cornelius employs B. We learn from B that Cornelius already has a larger household, and he claims to be rich enough to support a household of 'an hundred or twayne' if Lucreces should marry him.¹¹³ Manhode in *The Worlde and the Chylde* begins his career as a servant of The Worlde, and as a young adult employs Folye in his own service. Youth in *The Interlude of Youth* engages Pride as his servant, though Youth suggests he has other servants by speaking of his desire to have 'one man more / To wait me upon' (ll.312-13). Calisto has two servants, Sempronio and Parmeno. The plays tend not to depict *familiae* as consisting of kin, though Riot in *The Interlude of Youth*, who is Youth's companion or 'compeer' rather than his servant, also seems to be a member of his *familia*.¹¹⁴

Relationships of service are sometimes used to mark transitions to adulthood by the young protagonists. This is particularly clear in *The Worlde and the Chylde*, where the protagonist's life-cycle is defined in terms of different kinds of service.¹¹⁵ As the child Infans, the protagonist enters The Worlde's household as a servant. Life-cycle service of this kind was a common stage in the education of many of the lesser and the greater nobility. Young men of noble status routinely spent some of their formative years in the service of a noble patron, though many were not intended for careers in household service.¹¹⁶ Rather they and their families expected household service to help them acquire the manners and polish of a gentleman, and to make useful contacts for later life. The childhood of Infans in *The Worlde and the Chylde* conforms to this model, though this character does not seem to come from a particularly privileged background. He first seeks service with the Worlde as a child of seven, because he cannot provide for himself. He requests 'Mete and clothe my lyfe to save', offering loyal service in return.¹¹⁷ This may not be intended to indicate the typical social background of a life-cycle servant: Infans's desperation for the necessities of life is a familiar trait of the new-born figures of moral literature, and emphasises human

¹¹³*Fulgens and Lucreces*, I.760-64, II.561-63.

¹¹⁴*Interlude of Youth*, l.216.

¹¹⁵Westfall, *Patrons and Performance*, p.172.

¹¹⁶Nicholas Orme, *From Childhood to Chivalry: The Education of the English Kings and Aristocracy, 1066-1530* (London and New York, 1984), pp.45-65. See also Girouard, *Life in the English Country House*, pp.16-18; Mertes, *English Noble Household*, pp.30-31, 60; Woolgar, *Great Household*, p.37.

¹¹⁷*Worlde and the Chylde*, ll.61-63.

weakness and vulnerability in a hostile world.¹¹⁸ By the age of fourteen, the young man, as 'Wanton', describes himself as The Worlde's 'page' and is now able to base his claim to The Worlde's favour on the fact that 'This seuen yere I haue serued you in hall and boure / With all my trewe entent'.¹¹⁹ Rather than being a menial servant, Wanton has been involved in personal service to his lord, usually referred to as chamber-service or body-service, of the type which the well-born life-cycle servant would undertake.¹²⁰ In this context, The Worlde's gift of clothes to his servant signifies not only the moral status of the young man, but also his status as a household servant, since the gift of garments was a familiar form of payment for service.¹²¹

At the age of twenty-one the young protagonist, now called Manhode, is dubbed a knight by The Worlde and leaves his household service, but this does not mean that he is beyond the influence of or excluded from the patronage of his former master. Manhode goes on to enter other relationships of service, at the instigation of The Worlde, as he becomes the retainer of the seven kings (the seven deadly sins). Manhode is not permanently resident in their households, but is at the service of these lords in return for the benefits they can bestow on him.¹²² Manhode boasts of the 'letters' he gains from the King of Lechery, presumably letters patent confirming the grant of offices or lands.¹²³ Manhode also receives livery from four of the other kings.¹²⁴ In a more general sense, Manhode is as their retainer able to call on their 'mayne' and 'myght' to help him expedite his own business.¹²⁵ However, Manhode owes his advancement to his early household career and to the patronage of his lord, The Worlde, since it is he who dubs Manhode a knight - one able to render the kings the military service they require - and he who recommends Man to the seven kings.¹²⁶ The prospect of this kind of patronage in later life made household service in youth particularly

¹¹⁸See for example *Mirror of the Period's of Man's Life*, ll. 1-24, in FJ Furnivall (ed.), *Hymns to the Virgin and Christ*, EETS, OS 24, 1867, pp.58-78; *Castle of Perseverance*, ll.275-300, in Mark Eccles (ed.), *The Macro Plays*, EETS, OS 262 (1969).

¹¹⁹*Worlde and the Chylde*, ll.117, 121-22.

¹²⁰Starkey, 'Age of the Household', pp.250-51; Mertes, *English Noble Household*, pp.42-46; Woolgar, *Great Household*, pp.41-42.

¹²¹Woolgar, *Great Household*, pp.31-32.

¹²²On retaining, see McFarlane, *Nobility of the Later Middle Ages*, pp.102-121; MA Hicks, *Bastard Feudalism* (London, 1995). See also Starkey, 'Age of the Household', pp.264-76.

¹²³*Worlde and the Chylde*, l.276, and n.

¹²⁴*Ibid.*, ll.279-281.

¹²⁵*Ibid.*, l.278.

¹²⁶*Ibid.*, ll.168-203.

attractive for young nobles.

For Manhode in *The Worlde and the Chylde*, and Youth in *The Interlude of Youth* the engaging of a servant is also a life-cycle marker. Both texts show the young men, having attained their majority, acting as noble masters by negotiating terms of service with new servants. In each case, the terminology employed indicates that it is specifically household service. Manhode's adult and noble status, after he is dubbed a knight at the age of twenty-one, is underscored by his engaging of his own servant, Folye. When Folye seeks service with Manhode, like Infans, he requests the most basic kind of remuneration, simply 'mete and drynke' for one resident in the household, without wages of any kind.¹²⁷ Rather than reflecting extreme youth, as in the case of Infans, Folye's request reflects his low status. Manhode, for example, assumes Folye is of ungentle birth by asking him if he is a 'craftes man'.¹²⁸ Folye is probably to be thought of as occupying a menial position within Manhode's household.¹²⁹ Youth in *The Interlude of Youth* engages Pride as his servant upon inheritance of his father's property. He requires an extra servant 'To wait me upon', that is to provide day-to-day service to Youth in the household context.¹³⁰ However, Pride's seems superior to Folye in status, since Youth offers Pride 'gold and fee', and not just food and lodgings.¹³¹

Nature depicts a more complex process of the formation and re-formation of a noble household as the young noble Man grows up. At the beginning of the play, Nature appoints a small number of servants to act as Man's household from birth, comprising Innocencye (Man's nurse), Sensualyte, and Reason, whom Nature makes pre-eminent amongst the others.¹³² Sensualyte describes Reason as Man's 'chyef counseyller', and this is also how Man introduces Reason to *The Worlde*.¹³³ Like all noblemen, Man has the benefit of a council of advisors, whose expertise and experience will serve to expedite his business, whether in estate administration, political action, or familial business, such as the arranging

¹²⁷*Worlde and the Chylde*, ll.636-38. See Woolgar, *Great Household*, pp.31-34, on the different forms of emoluments which servants might receive.

¹²⁸*Worlde and the Chylde*, l.537.

¹²⁹Mertes, *English Noble Household*, pp.32-28.

¹³⁰*Interlude of Youth*, l.313.

¹³¹*Ibid.*, ll.329-30. For this formula, see *MED*, qv. 'fe' (n.(2)), 3 a and b. See also Mertes, *English Noble Household*, p.60.

¹³²*Nature*, I.101-05.

¹³³*Ibid.*, I.205, 533.

of marriages.¹³⁴ Nature's establishing of a small household for the young Man reflects the royal practice of establishing a separate household for heirs to the throne, run by a council while the prince was a minor.¹³⁵ Man soon reconstitutes his household on the advice of The Worlde, relying on The Worlde's protegés, Sensualyte and Worldly Affeccyon for counsel, rather than Reason, and appointing more servants to reflect his status.¹³⁶ The re-formation and the enlargement of Man's establishment reflects the actions of one who has just come of age. The Worlde has inducted Man into his rule of 'thys empyr', and on a cosmic level this represents the role of humanity in ruling the secular world.¹³⁷ However, Worldly Affeccyon describes this event in terms of a young nobleman inheriting his lands at the age of twenty-one. He urges Man to live like a nobleman, 'Syth that ye be come to your own' (I.689), and asks:

Wyll yt lyke you therfore that I survey
 And se thextent of all your land
 And theruppon in all the hast purvey
 Both for you and yours all maner of vyand,
 Wyth other utensylls redy at your hand,
 So that ye be purveyd all tymes erey and late
 Of eche thyng that belongeth to your estate? (I.695-701)

Worldly Affeccyon is offering to hold a view or valor of Man's estates, in order to determine what his income is, so that he can decide the scale on which Man can afford live, and then provide all the practical necessities for household life on that scale.¹³⁸ His concern about 'vyands' reflects the fact that the provision of food and drink took up a large proportion of a noble's income, and much of the household organization was devoted to the supplying, preparation and serving of food.¹³⁹

Man's transition to legal adulthood at the age of twenty-one is marked by the establishing of a great household, and the employing of new servants. Man's exalted noble

¹³⁴Carole Rawcliffe, 'Baronial Councils in the Later Middle Ages', in C Ross (ed.), *Patronage, Pedigree and Power in Later Medieval England* (Gloucester, 1979), pp.87-108; eadem and S Flower, 'English Noblemen and their Advisers: Consultation and Collaboration in the Later Middle Ages', *Journal of British Studies* 25 (1986): 157-177. See also Mertes, *English Noble Household*, pp.126-31.

¹³⁵Nicholas Orme, 'The Education of Edward V', *BIHR* 57 (1984): 119-30. See also Frederick Hepburn, 'Arthur, Prince of Wales and his Training for Kingship', *The Historian* 55 (1997): 4-9.

¹³⁶*Nature*, I.526-32, 706-08.

¹³⁷*Ibid.*, I.421-27.

¹³⁸Mertes, *English Noble Household*, pp.77-78.

¹³⁹Woolgar, *Great Household*, pp.111-35 (p.111). See also Mertes, *English Noble Household*, pp.104-20.

status is underscored by the fact that he employs Pryde, who himself claims to be noble. Pryde describes himself as a gentleman, and boasts that his father was a knight and his ‘aunceters great estatys’.¹⁴⁰ He is moreover a landowner in his own right.¹⁴¹ Pride’s aim is to obtain an office with Man, which will carry a fee, rather than to become a menial servant.¹⁴² Sensualyte promises him an office with the substantial annual fee of twenty pounds.¹⁴³ Envy later refers to the ‘office’, ‘fees’ and ‘wagys’ which Pride holds from Man.¹⁴⁴ Pride’s much vaunted noble status works to the benefit of Man, since the employing of gentlemen servants carried considerable social cachet for the greater nobility, and also was a form of patronage deployed to gain influence amongst the local gentry.¹⁴⁵ In order to secure the service of such men, the fifth earl of Northumberland operated a kind of rota system for his most important gentlemen servants, who were thus able to spend part of their time in attendance on Northumberland, and the rest attending to their own affairs as landowners.¹⁴⁶ Man’s other new servants, the remaining deadly sins, are introduced to Man’s service through Pryde, and these figures are clearly also members of the *familia* since Pryde urges each of them to ‘gyve contynuall attendaunce [...] After the propertye of hys offyce’ at one point.¹⁴⁷ At another, Man complains about the bad service rendered by Sloth who comes and goes as he pleases, and Man is also disposed to be angry with Bodely Lust and Pryde for absenting themselves from household duties.¹⁴⁸ This reflects contemporary concerns by noble masters over the absences of members of the *familia* without official leave.¹⁴⁹

The engaging of servants has less significance as a life-cycle marker in *Fulgens and Lucres* and *Calisto and Melebea*, since these texts do not present male-life-cycles in their entirety. In *Fulgens and Lucres*, Cornelius’s desire for an extra servant is occasional: he needs an extra servant to help him expedite his suit to Lucres, though Cornelius already has

¹⁴⁰*Nature*, I.727-34, 834.

¹⁴¹*Ibid.*, I.735-36.

¹⁴²*Ibid.*, I.834.

¹⁴³*Ibid.*, I.887.

¹⁴⁴*Ibid.*, II.848-49.

¹⁴⁵Rosemary Horrox, ‘Service’, in eadem (ed.), *Fifteenth-Century Attitudes: Perceptions of Society in Late Medieval England* (Cambridge, 1994), pp.61-78 (pp.63-65). See also Mertes, *English Noble Household*, p.59; Woolgar, *Great Household*, p.37.

¹⁴⁶Mertes, *English Noble Household*, p.59.

¹⁴⁷*Nature*, I.1099-101.

¹⁴⁸*Ibid.*, II.166-67, 416-18, 431-34. See also Slouth’s ironic comment at II.388.

¹⁴⁹Starkey, ‘Age of the Household’, pp.251-52.

a larger establishment.¹⁵⁰ In the case of Gaius, it is A who, as a masterless man, applies to Gaius for employment, though he specifically offers to aid Gaius in his suit to Lucre.¹⁵¹ The structure of the play implies that servants are a marker of nobility, for the introduction of A and B ensures that each of the main characters has a servant. Lucre is already provided with her servant Jone. In *Calisto and Melebea*, Calisto's two servants, Sempronio and Parmeno both play an important role in the action of the play. Both seem to have been in Calisto's service for some time, and both seem to be members of his *familia*. Both are conversant with his plans with regard to Melebea, and both offer their counsel to him on how to proceed with the affair.

The importance of households for the construction of an adult masculinity is indicated in the attempts of young characters to use the *familia* as way of self-consciously constructing a noble identity. The protagonists of *The Interlude of Youth* and *Nature* both use their servants as a form of conspicuous consumption, to advertise their wealth and status by the number of servants in their train. Youth, for example, is spurred by the acquisition of his lands to engage an extra servant.¹⁵² For Youth, his new source of income not only allows him to enlarge his *familia*, but almost obliges him to do so in order to make a public display of it. In *Nature*, the young Man is all too ready to listen to the advice of The Worlde, who urges him to acquire more servants since he is 'nothyng accompanye / Accordynge to a man of your degre'.¹⁵³ The Worlde implies that there ought to be a strict correlation between rank and the numbers of servants in one's train. Man is soon anxiously exclaiming:

I must have mo servauntys what so ever chaunce! (I.708)

What is perhaps surprising about these passages is that they are clearly working to mark the practice of keeping a large household as (at least potentially) sinful and undesirable. The young men are prompted to engage more servants by the evil parts of their natures - by their pride and their desire to do as everyone else in the world does. *Nature* and *The Interlude of Youth*, at any rate, do not want us to believe that status ultimately rests on how many servants one has.

Although it might be tempting to regard such passages as a critique of large noble households by those outside the secular nobility, there were in the late-fifteenth and early-

¹⁵⁰*Fulgens and Lucre*, I.347-53, 760-64.

¹⁵¹*Ibid.*, I.613-620.

¹⁵²*Interlude of Youth*, II.308-13.

¹⁵³*Nature*, I.528-29.

sixteenth century sound political reasons why the noble patrons of interludes might use them to decry unnecessarily large households. Henry VII had enacted legislation in 1504 to limit the numbers of retainers maintained by great nobles, and was all too ready to levy substantial fines on aristocrats for having too many followers.¹⁵⁴ Strictly speaking this legislation did not apply to those servants directly employed in the household, but to retainers who were only paid during actual periods of service, usually military service.¹⁵⁵ Retaining was necessary to the king, since he relied on his own retinue and those of great nobles in any military action, so the legislation was designed rather to restrict the ability of nobles to buy political and military support which might pose a threat to the crown.¹⁵⁶ However, in practice it was probably less easy to draw a hard and fast line between household servants and retainers, since some household servants might be bound by rather loose ties to the household where they served. As mentioned above, the earl of Northumberland's gentlemen of the chamber served on a rota basis, which seems to indicate that they spent most of the year outside the household. Given these sorts of uncertainties, it was probably wise to voice a commitment to a small and strictly functional body of household servants. If it is right to associate *Youth* with the Northumberland household, the Percies may have had an additional reason for voicing such a position: the fifth earl was indicted for illegal retaining in 1504, and his imprisonment in the Fleet in 1516 may have been on this score.¹⁵⁷

If *Nature* and *The Interlude of Youth* mark the inflation of the size of households as undesirable, they and other interludes also show their young protagonists failing to perform noble masculinity effectively through relationships with their *familiae*. As we have seen in Chapter Two, mirrors for princes and other political texts imply that the 'rule' or 'governance' of a household was a crucial way of signifying noble status. *De regimine principum*, for example, makes the management of servants, along with the management of wives and of children, into a key activity for nobles and princes, since it enables them to demonstrate the qualities which justify their enjoyment of noble status and its attendant

¹⁵⁴Luders, et al (eds.), *Statutes of the Realm*, 2:658-60. On Henry VII's use of indictments for retaining, see SB Chrimes, *Henry VII* (London, 1972), pp.188-90; DM Loades, *Tudor Government: Structures of Authority in the Sixteenth Century* (Oxford, 1997), p.238.

¹⁵⁵Starkey, 'Age of the Household', pp.267-268.

¹⁵⁶Ibid., pp.268-71. See also GW Bernard, *The Power of the Early Tudor Nobility: A Study of the Fourth and Fifth Earls of Shrewsbury* (Brighton, 1985); Loades, *Tudor Government*, p.238.

¹⁵⁷TB Pugh, 'Henry VII and the English Nobility', in GW Bernard (ed.), *The Tudor Nobility* (Manchester, 1992), pp.49-110 (p.75).

privileges.¹⁵⁸ The on-going management of servants by a noble master contributes to maintaining of such a status identity, and this is why so many of the mirrors are concerned with intensely practical advice on how to deal with households and servants. The practical business of the day-to-day rule of a household has a symbolic meaning. It is in part on the basis of the conduct of the household - both the behaviour of individual servants, and the effectiveness of the lord in managing servants - that observers will draw conclusions about the abstract and unseen nature of the nobleman at its head. Just as the nobleman's physical gestures, the movements of his physical body, will be taken as expressing his inner nature; so the household becomes a kind of gesture from which his character can be read.

Noble status depended in part on the maintenance of unequal power relations with inferiors. In the plays considered here, the ineffective management of servants endangers status identities because it results in the inversion of power relations.¹⁵⁹ Young men in *Nature*, *The Worlde and the Chylde*, *The Interlude of Youth* and *Calisto and Melebea* cease to be noble in an important sense, because they end up effectively under the control of their servants, rather than exercising their proper and natural authority as nobles over their social inferiors. In the moral scheme of these plays, inverted relationships of power are used to stand for the ways in which sin acts progressively on the soul. The process is described in terms of servants attaining power over their lords. This metaphor presents master-servant relations within households in a particularly interesting way. It implies that the exercise of authority over inferiors may naturally be the right of the noble, but that in practice the exercise of that authority is far from problematic. The terms of the relationship are subject to negotiation and renegotiation, and relationship may be one of an on-going power struggle, which has the potential to render noblemen powerless, unless able to achieve ascendancy in the relationship. In the context of these relationships of service, noble status is not something automatically ascribed to a passive recipient, but an identity which must be actively constructed and then actively maintained.

Relationships of service in later medieval England were potentially a site of contest for power between those of different status, because of the nature of the contracts on which they were based.¹⁶⁰ These were personal contracts (most frequently verbal) between

¹⁵⁸Starkey, 'Age of the Household', pp.253-56.

¹⁵⁹Alford, ' "My Name is Worship"', p.160.

¹⁶⁰On contracts, formal and informal, between noble masters and gentleman servants, see Horrox 'Service'. On great household service more generally, see Woolgar, *Great Household*, pp.30-45. On

individuals which set out the mutual obligations of master and servant, as agreed by both parties.¹⁶¹ Though noble masters may be assumed to be the more powerful party at the moment of entering a contract, nevertheless this was a point at which a servant was able to exercise independent ‘bargaining power’.¹⁶² In other words, it was potentially a levelling moment in terms of power relations, and likely to set the tone for the subsequent relations between master and servant.¹⁶³ Relationships of service were *on-going* relationships between the master and the servant, and this meant that the relationship was over time open to re-negotiation. Servants and masters would both have had opportunities over time to develop mutual affection and trust, or to become antagonistic, or to exploit the other party to their own advantage.¹⁶⁴

Nature, Fulgens and Lucrez, The Worlde and the Chylde, and The Interlude of Youth all depict this crucial moment, where noble masters bargain with new servants over the terms of their contract. In the interludes, this is frequently a moment where one party establishes an ascendancy over another. Of these plays, *The Worlde and the Chylde* is the only interlude to show its young nobleman first as a relatively powerless household servant in relation to a powerful noble master (The Worlde). The balance of power in this relationship is tilted in favour of The Worlde, right from the beginning. The Worlde is presented as a king, secure and confident in his wealth and power.¹⁶⁵ The central character first seeks service with The Worlde as a child of seven named Infans, in order to supply his own bodily needs. Infans requests ‘Mete and clothe my lyfe to saue’, and offers loyal service as a ‘true seruaunt’ in return.¹⁶⁶ The Worlde promises Infans that ‘I wyll the fynde whyle thou art yinge’, but he demands in return that Infans ‘be obeyent to my byddyng’.¹⁶⁷ Obedience in any case was a fundamental requirement (implicit if not explicit) of a

contracts in the urban context between masters and male apprentices, and masters and servants, see PJP Goldberg, ‘Masters and Men in Later Medieval England’, in DM Hadley (ed.), *Masculinity in Medieval Europe* (London and New York, 1999), pp.56-70; and idem, ‘What was a Servant?’, in A Curry and E Matthew (eds.), *Concepts and Patterns of Service in the Later Middle Ages* (Woodbridge, 2000), pp. 1-20.

¹⁶¹Horrox, ‘Service’, p.63.

¹⁶²Ibid., p.65; Goldberg, ‘What Was A Servant?’, pp.9-10.

¹⁶³Goldberg, ‘What Was A Servant?’, p.10.

¹⁶⁴Ibid.

¹⁶⁵*Worlde and the Chylde*, ll.1-24.

¹⁶⁶Ibid., ll.61-63.

¹⁶⁷Ibid., ll.65-66.

relationship that demanded the servant acknowledge the authority of the master.¹⁶⁸ However, the pressing nature of the body's needs, and Infans's inability to provide for himself otherwise, mean that he is not bargaining from a position of strength.

In this context, The Worlde's gifts of clothes to Infans take on a multiple signification.¹⁶⁹ On the moral level, they represent the spiritual state of man. As in other moral plays, the change of costume reflects a change in spiritual state, in this case Infans's succumbing to the lures of the worldly life.¹⁷⁰ In terms of relationships of service, they refer to familiar household practices of the giving of cloth and clothing as part of a servant's liveries.¹⁷¹ They are also an aspect of the power relations between The Worlde and man. They remind man of the contract which he has entered, but more importantly The Worlde's gifts call for a reciprocal gesture. Since Infans in his poverty is unable to match the gift, he remains in the debt of his master, a debt he can only repay through allegiance to The Worlde.

Infans depends on The Worlde completely for all his subsequent advancement, and this means that as time passes he accrues ever more obligations to his master. Since the young man's worldly career depends entirely on the progress of his household career with The Worlde, he must repeatedly return to him to request further advancement. At this point, Man can make these requests on the basis of a history of true service. He reminds his master that faithful service calls for a reward. At fourteen, for example, man, as Wanton, describes himself as The Worlde's 'page' and is able to remind The Worlde that 'This seuen yere I haue serued you in hall and in boure / With all my trewe entent'.¹⁷² Between the ages of fourteen and twenty-one, man as 'Lust and Lykyng' affirms his commitment to The Worlde's service:

For the Worlde wyll me auaunce
I wyll kepe his gouernaunce (ll.148-49)

As an ambitious young man, Lust and Lykyng is bound to The Worlde not only out of obligation for past benefits, but in the hopes of future ones through a career in household service, and so he voluntarily submits to his authority. At the age of twenty-one the

¹⁶⁸ Goldberg, 'What was a Servant?', p.10.

¹⁶⁹ *Worlde and the Chylde*, ll.67, 96-97.

¹⁷⁰ Craik, *Tudor Interlude*, p.82.

¹⁷¹ Twycross, 'Theatricality', p.81; Woolgar, *Great Household*, pp.31-32.

¹⁷² *Worlde and the Chylde*, ll.117, 121-22.

substantial material benefits of his service begin to accrue to the man, as *The Worlde* dubs Manhode a knight, and introduces him to the service of seven kings (the seven deadly sins).¹⁷³ Service with one lord is a means of obtaining service with others. It was quite usual for gentlemen of independent standing to enter relationships of service with more than one noble masters.¹⁷⁴ Henry VII's household servants and counsellors were retained by other noble masters, though in these relationships it was the man of lesser status who enjoyed the greater power, in the form of access to the king.¹⁷⁵

The on-going exchange of worldly benefits in return for service in *The Worlde and the Chylde* binds the man ever more closely to *The Worlde*. Given this long history of relations with *The Worlde*, Manhode is most reluctant to take any step which would displease *The Worlde*, even once he has left his household service. When Manhode meets Conscience, for example, he at first appears to follow his dictates, and accepts that 'Conscience techynge is trewe'.¹⁷⁶ However, when Manhode remembers his long association with *The Worlde*, and specifically *The Worlde's* gifts and grants to him, he is unwilling to abandon *The Worlde's* principles. As he observes:

The Worlde fyndeth me all thyng
And dothe me grete seruyse. (ll.516-17)

In a similar way, Manhode is reluctant to dismiss Folye outright, in part because Folye is 'felowe with the Worlde' (l.618). On one level this demonstrates how entanglement in worldly life makes it increasingly difficult to repent. However, on another it demonstrates how household service might secure for a powerful nobleman a life-long influence over an individual who was obliged to him for his patronage early in life.

The Worlde and the Chylde, along with *Nature*, *Fulgens and Luces*, and *The Interlude of Youth*, makes the employing of one's own servants into a marker of adult masculinity. Each of these plays shows the young nobleman engaging a servant of his own, but also shows how, with the exception of Gaius, these young men fail to exercise noble authority in relation to their servants and invites us to judge how well the young protagonist maintains a nobleman's proper ascendancy over his servant. *The Worlde and the Chylde*,

¹⁷³Ibid., ll.168-83.

¹⁷⁴Horrox, 'Service', pp.71-73.

¹⁷⁵MM Condon, 'Ruling Elites in the Reign of Henry VII', in Ross (ed.), *Patronage, Pedigree and Power*, pp.109-42 (p.123).

¹⁷⁶*Worlde and the Chylde*, l.505.

Nature and *The Interlude of Youth* show servants establishing the upper hand over their young noble masters at the moment of negotiating a contract of service.

In *The Worlde and the Chylde*, Folye seeks service with the twenty-one-year-old Manhode. Folye asks for the most basic rewards for his service, simply ‘mete and drynke’, which marks him as poor and of low status, as the impoverished Infans is at the beginning of the play.¹⁷⁷ Manhode ought to be the more powerful party of the two, and he shows his awareness of his superiority by addressing Folye with the familiar ‘thou’.¹⁷⁸ Folye appears deferential to Manhode in the way he carefully addresses him as ‘you’ and as ‘syr’.¹⁷⁹ Manhode first cedes ground to Folye when he accepts his service despite his own better judgement. He correctly reads Folye’s base nature from his crude gestures; but despite this, and despite Conscience’s warnings to him to avoid Folye, he takes his service anyway.¹⁸⁰

Manhode attempts to follow the example of *The Worlde* in establishing ascendancy over a powerless servant. Like him, he requires Folye to be his ‘trewe seruaunt’.¹⁸¹ However, he is soon treating Folye as an equal, rather than an inferior of not much moment. *The Worlde*’s attitude to his servant was always characterised by a calm confidence in his own superiority, an air of aloof condescension which Starkey has described as characteristic of the nobleman, and as expressed through household relationships.¹⁸² Manhode, however, is easily goaded by Folye’s insinuations of cowardice into a wrestling match with him.¹⁸³ This is a levelling moment, where Manhode forgoes any sense of social distance in order to respond to a taunt about his courage. Finally, Folye consolidates his influence over Manhode by pandering to his baser desires: he offers Manhode an entrée into the world of London vice, of drinking, lechery, and gambling.¹⁸⁴ By accepting Folye as his guide to this milieu, Manhode cedes his advantage to Folye, and gives him the means of gaining a greater influence over him, since it is through drunkenness that Folye expects to be able to counter the influence of Conscience’s reasoned arguments over Manhode.¹⁸⁵

Folye’s ascendancy over man is represented by his renaming of Manhode as Shame

¹⁷⁷*Worlde and the Chylde*, ll.636-38.

¹⁷⁸*Ibid.*, ll.526, 529, 537.

¹⁷⁹*Ibid.*, ll.525, 527-28.

¹⁸⁰*Ibid.*, ll.456-60, 526, 529.

¹⁸¹*Ibid.*, l.643.

¹⁸²Starkey, ‘Age of the Household’, pp.523-55.

¹⁸³*Worlde and the Chylde*, ll.551-63.

¹⁸⁴*Ibid.*, ll.652-680.

¹⁸⁵*Ibid.*, ll.649-51.

(in fact, part of Folye's own name).¹⁸⁶ It is also probably represented in spatial terms: the text suggests that as the pair exit, Folye literally leads the way.¹⁸⁷ By this point, Manhode, who began by regarding the low-status Folye with horror and disgust, has come to regard him affectionately as 'my felowe in fere'.¹⁸⁸ The regarding of such a vile companion as an intimate friend represents both a moral and a social degradation. Here Folye exercises power over his master, in that he has ensured that Manhode conforms to his values, and emulates his lifestyle, rather than he to Manhode's. Manhode, in allowing himself to be manipulated by his servant, risks the gradual erosion of his noble identity.

Similar inversions of power are apparent in *Nature*. As in *The Worlde and the Chylde*, the action of the play describes the internal conflict within the young man, as different parts of his nature attempt to determine his actions, and this conflict is shown in terms of the conflict between household servants and counsellors for influence over a noble master. The language of household dispute is introduced by Sensualyte, who complains about Nature's appointment of Reason to govern the young Man's actions. Nature uses the metaphor of human life as a journey or pilgrimage, familiar from other moral texts of the life of man.¹⁸⁹ She describes Reason as Man's 'chyeft gyde' for the 'great and longe vyage' of life.¹⁹⁰ In contrast, when Sensualyte disputes Nature's decision, he uses terms which make the conflict between Reason and Sensualyte sound like a dispute for pre-eminence amongst household servants. Sensualyte claims that Reason and Innocencye are 'avaunced and I let go by'.¹⁹¹ He claims that Nature has 'put me out of hys [Man's] servyce', and calls the job of influencing Man being his 'chyeft counseyller'.¹⁹² This comparison of Man's nature to a household naturally introduces a discourse of rule and governance, and these terms are used throughout the opening section of the play.¹⁹³ The household established by Nature is in fact there to ensure that Man is ruled by others, in this case Reason. At this point it is, however,

¹⁸⁶Ibid., ll.681-82. See also l.607.

¹⁸⁷Ibid., ll.697-98.

¹⁸⁸Ibid., l.683.

¹⁸⁹See for example *The Mirror of the Periods of Man's Life*, ll.29-30; *The Castle of Perseverance*, l.277. See also Samuel C Chew, *The Pilgrimage of Life* (Port Washington, NY, and London, 1962); ET Schell, 'On the Imitation of Life's Pilgrimage in *The Castle of Perseverance*', *JEGP* 87 (1968): 235-48; Arthur Forstater and Joseph L Baird, '“Walking and Wending”: Mankind's Opening Speech', *Theatre Notebook* 26 (1971-72): 60-64.

¹⁹⁰*Nature*, I.97, 103.

¹⁹¹Ibid., I.172.

¹⁹²Ibid., I.187, 205.

¹⁹³Ibid., I.101, 159-61, 259-61, 538.

it is quite proper that the young man should be governed by others, because he is still a child, and by definition not responsible for himself. This is in line with the role of the counsellors of princes like the heirs of Edward IV and Henry VIII, who had the responsibility of enforcing the educational regime laid down for the prince, as well as conducting the business of the prince's household on his behalf.¹⁹⁴

The good household order established by Nature is disrupted under the influence of *The Worlde*. *The Worlde* advises Man to conform to the habits of other nobles in keeping a household which will reflect his status.¹⁹⁵ *The Worlde* not only suggests that Man should engage more servants, but recommends that he allow Sensualyte and Worldly Affeccyon to guide him in conforming to worldly habits and lifestyles, and that he reject Innocencye and Reason. Man re-forms his household according to this advice, but in doing so he ensures that his rule of his servants is compromised from the beginning. Man has accepted as his chief counsellors men who are closely bound to *The Worlde*. *The Worlde* describes Sensualyte as one who 'hath ben longe of myne acquayntaunce'; while Sensualyte describes *The Worlde* as 'my good mayster meny a day'.¹⁹⁶ On the basis of this longstanding relationship, he appeals to *The Worlde* for help in obtaining Reason's place in the household. Sensualyte and Worldly Affeccyon own their first loyalties to another noble master, *The Worlde*. Serving more than one noble master was not in and of itself problematic,¹⁹⁷ but Man unquestioningly accepts Sensualyte and Worldly Affeccyon without ascertaining their obligations to other lords, or indeed requiring them to make pledges of loyalty to him.¹⁹⁸ In accepting their service, Man illustrates both the human susceptibility to the sins of the world and the flesh, and a naive reliance on new and untested counsellors, which in princely mirrors is the mark of an incompetent nobleman.¹⁹⁹ Man's incompetence is of course a function of his youth and inexperience. As *The Worlde* puts it, he is like a stranger in a strange land, who must rely totally on 'some syngler person that can shew hym the way / Of all the behaviour and gyse in that contray'.²⁰⁰

Man's ignorance and reliance on counsellors puts him at a distinct disadvantage in

¹⁹⁴Orme, 'Education of Edward V'; Hepburn, 'Arthur, Prince of Wales'.

¹⁹⁵*Nature*, I.526-636.

¹⁹⁶*Ibid.*, I.244, 606.

¹⁹⁷Horrox, 'Service', pp.71-73.

¹⁹⁸Woolgar, *Great Household*, pp.30-31.

¹⁹⁹Ferster, *Fictions of Advice*, pp.39-54.

²⁰⁰*Nature*, I.565-66.

his relationship with them. In this context, Sensualyte's intention to be a 'ruler' over Man takes on rather sinister connotations.²⁰¹ In one sense this term refers to the practice of offering advice, which is Sensualyte's office as Man's counsellor.²⁰² In another, it refers to the inverted power relations between Man and Sensualyte where the counsellor is able to exercise (undue) domination and control over his master. The remainder of the play illustrates the consequences of Man's fatal decision, and the extent to which, as a result of his first decision, he is manipulated by his inferiors. Man's fall into sin is represented by the hiring of a sequence of servants, but it is in effect Sensualyte and Wordly Affeccyon who govern Man's household and fill the household with their own allies. When Pryde enters, seeking a household office, he turns first, not to Man, but to Sensualyte, since he reckons that winning Sensualyte's support is the key to obtaining the position.²⁰³ Sensualyte is virtually able to hire and fire at will, and promises Pryde that 'I shall bryng the in servyce for twaynty pound' before Pryde has even met Man.²⁰⁴ The negotiation of the contract of service is not primarily between Pryde and Man, but between Pryde and Sensualyte. Instead, two servants agree to help each other, in order that both may profit at their noble master's expense. Pryde will gain his office with its substantial annual fee, and the prospect of further material benefits; Sensualyte will gain Pryde's assistance in maintaining the estrangement between Man and Reason.²⁰⁵ This negotiation reveals the relative powerlessness of Man: he has little control over the people employed in his household. Instead of Man keeping servants for his own profit, the servants exploit Man for their profit.

Man's first meeting with Pryde further demonstrates his lack of that acumen which princely mirrors see as so important to noblemen. Man is unable to judge Pryde's true identity as one of the deadly sins from his dress and gestures, as the audience has been able to do.²⁰⁶ Instead he is fully deceived by Pryde's adoption of the pseudonym 'Worshyp'.²⁰⁷ Not only is Man unable to perceive Pryde's deception, but immediately compounds his error by soliciting Pryde's 'counsel', rather than prudently testing his new servant over a long

²⁰¹Ibid., I.323-36, 816; II.316-17.

²⁰²See *MED*, qv. 'reulen', 1(f)

²⁰³*Nature*, I.811-18.

²⁰⁴Ibid., I.887.

²⁰⁵Ibid., I.862-85.

²⁰⁶Twycross, 'Theatricality', pp.72-73.

²⁰⁷*Nature*, I.836-40.

period as princely mirrors advise.²⁰⁸ Man gives Pryde the opportunity to manipulate him, which Pryde is ready to exploit. Pryde had planned that, once in Man's service, he would employ the powerful tool of flattery to combat the influence of Reason. His plan is to inflate Man's opinion of his own intellectual abilities, so that he believes he may dispense with the counsels of Reason.²⁰⁹ Pryde proceeds with his plan, and Man responds exactly as desired.²¹⁰ He succumbs to Pryde's flattery and arrogantly dispenses with Reason's good counsel, apparently unaware that he is uncritically accepting evil counsel. This passage reveals the power of advising, the way in which advice may become a means of manipulation and control.

Finally, Pryde seeks to extend his influence over Man by influencing the composition of Man's *familia*. Pryde advises Worldly Affeccyon,

To bryng hym [Man] shortly in acquayntaunce
 Wyth all the company of myne affyaunce
 And let them gyve contynuall attendaunce,
 Every man bysyly
 After the propertye of hys offyce:
 Than shall ye se hym utterly despyce
 Reasons counsell - on warantyse! -
 And forsake hym utterly. (I.1097-1104)

Pryde manages to pack the household with members of his own affinity, individuals who owe him obligations of service, and whom he may use as instruments to control Man. These individuals turn out to be the remainder of the seven deadly sins, who like Pryde serve under pseudonyms.²¹¹ Sensualyte also describes the sins as Worldly Affeccyon's 'kynnesnen'.²¹² This means that Man's household is full of servants who owe an allegiance not only (perhaps not even primarily) to him, and who will form further channels through which Pryde will control Man. Their influence is one which is based on their intimacy and familiarity with their master. Pryde intends that they should give 'contynuall attendaunce' on Man, that is actively exploit their constant access to him, so that he is continually exposed to their counsel. These servants also gain power from the fact that they also control access to the nobleman by others. In the royal household, the right of access to the king was

²⁰⁸Ibid., I.942-45.

²⁰⁹Ibid., I.862-885.

²¹⁰Ibid., I.922-1017.

²¹¹Ibid., I.1192-99.

²¹²Ibid., I.1195.

what conferred power on royal servants, and it was for this reason that they were courted and retained by other noblemen, who expected that royal servants would help them to expedite their own business with the king.²¹³ In *Nature*, the servants' skilful exercise of their power means that in effect it is they who control both Man and his household. However, in consequence, the natural dependence of the young man on the counsel of others becomes unnaturally extended into Man's later life, so that he never really attains that condition of a mature nobleman, who is capable of keeping his servants in their place, nor does he employ the noble prudence which would make him naturally superior to their brand of low cunning.

A similar inversion of power relations is implied in *The Interlude of Youth*, as the nobleman Youth engages Pride as his servant. Pride effects this despite the fact that Youth is very conscious of his social superiority. Pride seems content to accept the inferior position allotted to him when Youth addresses him as 'good fellow', since he addresses Youth as 'Sir' and employs the respectful 'you' towards him.²¹⁴ However, despite this humility, the influence which Pride - along with Riot - comes to exercise over Youth in effect makes him Youth's master. The true power relations of their connection are revealed in Pride's use of the word 'rule'. As Pride is being engaged as a servant, he promises Youth that 'If ye will be ruled by me, / I shall you bring to high degree'.²¹⁵ As he negotiates the terms of their relationship, Pride is aware that he has something which Youth wants: the knowledge about how social climbing is to be achieved. In one sense, when Youth agrees to be ruled by Pride, he just means that he will accept his 'counsel', the advice which Pride offers on how to be noble.²¹⁶ Without really noticing it, however, Youth is effectively ceding his right to govern himself to another, and to his own servant at that. In trying to better himself, Youth has, paradoxically, placed himself in the power of another, and has exchanged the true basis of noble status - the right to rule others - for the fake signs of this status, like dress and arrogant manners, which Pride recommends.

²¹³On the servants of Henry VII, see Condon, 'Ruling Elites', pp.123. On the importance of Henry VIII's body-servants, see David Starkey, 'Representation Through Intimacy: A Study in the Symbolism of Monarchy and Court Office in Early-Modern England', in I Lewis (ed.), *Symbols and Sentiments: Cross-Cultural Studies in Symbolism* (London, 1977), pp.187-224.

²¹⁴*Interlude of Youth*, ll.327-30, 331-33.

²¹⁵*Interlude of Youth*, ll.336-38. Pride repeats this offer at ll.620-23, in order to counter the advice offered by Charity and Humility.

²¹⁶*Ibid.*, ll.354-57.

The climactic scene of the play becomes a debate for the soul of Youth, conducted in terms of a struggle by good and evil counsellors for influence over their master.²¹⁷ The text repeatedly uses the rhetoric of counsel to evoke this context. Charity and Humility offer 'our counsel and our rede'.²¹⁸ Pride and Riot repeatedly urge Youth to be 'ruled' by their 'counsel' instead.²¹⁹ The turning point of the play comes when Youth agrees to 'be ruled after you [Charity]', rather than Riot and Pride.²²⁰ *The Interlude of Youth* shows a young nobleman having to choose between opposed counsellors. Youth eventually does make the correct distinction between good and evil counsel, and rejects the evil counsellors, despite having followed their advice for much of the play. The play therefore seems to show the transition of Youth, not just from sinner to repentant, but from immature nobleman to mature nobleman, able to exercise the judgement which is a mark of noble masculinity.

Youth's transition to adult masculinity stands in contrast to the failure of the knight Calisto in *Calisto and Melebea* to act like a nobleman. Calisto is the master of two servants, Parmeno and Sempronio, who appear to have been in his service for some time. Calisto illustrates his own foolishness and viciousness by accepting the counsel of Sempronio,²²¹ and the offices of Celestina, the bawd to whom Sempronio introduces him. As is clear to the audience, this pair are ready to facilitate Calisto's seduction of Melebea, not out of loyalty to Calisto, nor out of sympathy for him, but because doing so will earn them the material rewards they desire. Both make broad hints about the rich rewards which they expect from Calisto. When Calisto gives Sempronio his gold chain as a reward for his help, Sempronio comments that 'wythout rewardes it is hard to work well', and advises Calisto that in his dealings with Celestina he must 'let rewardis go'.²²² When Calisto addresses Celestina with high-flown rhetoric, she tells Sempronio to 'Byd hym close his mouth and to his purse get'.²²³ Parmeno, observing the manoeuvres of Sempronio and Celestina, cites them as an example of 'How servauntis be dissaytfull in theyr maisters foly'.²²⁴ It is not so much that

²¹⁷Grantley, *Wit's Pilgrimage*, p.150.

²¹⁸*Interlude of Youth*, 1.607.

²¹⁹*Ibid.*, ll.620-23, 635-36, 673-76, 690-91.

²²⁰*Ibid.*, ll.727-29.

²²¹Sempronio's advice is described as counsel in *Calisto and Melebea*, ll.146, 147-148, 462. Line references are to Richard Axton (ed.), *Three Rastell Plays: Four Elements, Calisto and Melebea, Gentleness and Nobility* (Cambridge and Totowa, NJ, 1979).

²²²*Ibid.*, ll.276, 292.

²²³*Ibid.*, 1.447.

²²⁴*Ibid.*, 1.470.

Calisto is employing these individuals in his own business, but they are pandering to his base nature in order to further their own designs.

Calisto shows his lack of noble prudence, as well as his lack of moral virtue, in his wilful blindness to the way he is being manipulated. Calisto illustrates his foolishness even more explicitly in his inability to appreciate the disinterested advice of Parmeno. Parmeno goes out of his way to warn Calisto against his bad servants, and acts purely out of loyalty to his master. He refuses Celestina's bribes to make him co-operate with Sempronio,²²⁵ and declares the principles by which he lives:

I love to lyfe in joyfull poverte
And to serve my mayster with trewth and honeste. (ll.540-41)

Parmeno at this point represents the kind of disinterested service which princely mirrors value. He is the kind of servant who should be rewarded with advancement and entrusted with the important business of his lord.

However, Calisto demonstrates his lack of ability to rule himself and others by rejecting Parmeno's warnings. He repays them only with insults.²²⁶ In doing so, Calisto is instrumental in creating another bad servant, who will consider his own advantage before that of his master. Embittered by Calisto's treatment, Parmeno resolves in future only to tell Calisto what he wants to hear, a form of 'flattery' which will ensure his pecuniary gain.²²⁷ It is clear that honest dealing is not going to win the approval of Calisto, let alone the proper rewards which should accompany loyal service. Calisto is the anti-type of the effective noble, in that he consciously chooses to be swayed by bawds and flatterers, rather than accept the plain-speaking of his truth-telling counsellor.

This episode of incompetent rule stands in stark contrast to the successful governance practised by the older nobleman, Danio, father to Melebea. Danio's competence as a governor is illustrated not by the way he deals with his servants, but by the way he has dealt with his daughter. Danio has taken seriously his obligation to train his daughter (or to have her trained) in her devotional habits when she was young, and this education has saved her from succumbing to Calisto's seduction in deed, if not in thought. Danio is one who has thought carefully about the theory and practice of governing others, as his closing speech reveals. Calisto in contrast is too preoccupied with his own pleasures to consider such

²²⁵Ibid., ll.528-53.

²²⁶Ibid., ll.609-11.

²²⁷Ibid., ll.619-32.

matters, and as a result alienates good servants, and is manipulated by bad servants.

The connection between the competent management of servants, and noble identity also suggests a further reason why *Fulgens and Lucrez* features parallel scenes where Gaius and Cornelius engage the servants A and B. The introduction of the servants enables the play to make a bridge between the real world of the audience in the great hall, and the fictive world of the play.²²⁸ It also enables the play to make clear distinctions in status between the servile - A, B and Jone - who are relegated to the sub-plot, and the nobles - Gaius, Cornelius and Lucrez - who are the focus of the main plot.²²⁹ However, the scenes which introduce A and B as the servants of Gaius and Cornelius are another means by which the play develops Gaius's superiority as a nobleman over Cornelius. As Gaius engages A, he displays noble prudence and caution, and is careful to maintain power relations in his own favour. Cornelius does not act in the same way, and has a very different concept of what he wants his servants to be and do.

Cornelius's careless attitude toward the governance of his servants is clear from his first invitation to those in the hall to apply for a job as his servant. Cornelius issues a general invitation to those of lower status in the hall, the 'gode felowes' who are watching the play.²³⁰ Yet he proposes to engage this servant 'To gyve me counseile and assistence' in the delicate and personal matter of his suit to Lucrez.²³¹ Cornelius is apparently all too ready to allow a comparative stranger intimate access to him and his affairs, and a degree of influence over him as a counsellor which is not in line with noble prudence. The inappropriateness of B for the delicate business of negotiating a noble marriage to Lucrez is clear when B speaks of his aptitude for the task:

For there is not in this hondred myle
A feter bawde than I am one. (I.367-68)

B's unsuitability as a messenger in this sensitive matter is also apparent when he garbles Cornelius's token, the story which Cornelius tells him to repeat to Lucrez as evidence of his *bona fides* as Cornelius's messenger. B distorts it into a crude 'lewed message'.²³² This episode reflects the consequences of employing a base servant in sensitive personal matters,

²²⁸Jones, 'The Stage World and the "Real" World'; Colley, *Fulgens and Lucrez: Politics and Aesthetics*.

²²⁹Grantley, *Wit's Pilgrimage*, pp.61, 88.

²³⁰*Fulgens and Lucrez*, I.354-59.

²³¹*Ibid.*, I.350.

²³²*Ibid.*, II.175-315.

business which in a noble household would normally be conducted by chamber servants or officers of the household.²³³

Gaius deals with A, who seeks service with him, in a much more cautious manner than Cornelius. Before he engages A, he requests a 'surete', someone who will act as a guarantor of A's good behaviour.²³⁴ The practice of obtaining sureties seems to have been used in the royal household for those household staff in sensitive or important offices.²³⁵ When A is only able to produce B as his surety, Gaius, though still rather doubtful about A, does agree to employ him.²³⁶ He is however careful to maintain proper power relations in the contract he enters with A. Gaius stipulates that 'after thi gode deservynge, / So shall I thy wagys pay'.²³⁷ Gaius makes A's remuneration completely dependent on A's conduct in his service, and reserves for himself the right not to pay A any wages at all, if he finds him wanting. A is in truth not a very efficient messenger. He garbles his greeting to Lucre, though not in the crude way which B does; he loses the letter he was supposed to deliver to Lucre; and forgets his master's and then his own name.²³⁸ Gaius's shrewdness, however, has ensured him some power of redress for this kind of bad service.

In these interludes servants are important to noble masculinity. The task of becoming an adult noble man requires young men to exercise the authority appropriate to that identity. As young men reach an age when they are independent of the authority of fathers and other men, they mark their independence by engaging household servants of their own. However, several of the interludes - *Nature*, *The Worlde and the Chylde*, *the Interlude of Youth*, and *Calisto and Melebea* - illustrate the immaturity of young noblemen by showing them as in thrall to the advice of servants who exploit their daily close association with noble masters for their own ends. These servant-master relationships represent inversions of natural authority: the servant directs the master, and the servant employs the master for his profit, not the other way round. Young noble masters show their ineptitude for governance in the way they fail to evaluate the counsel they are offered carefully. They readily accept the advice of evil counsellors, and reject that of the good, and their judgements are swayed by base thoughts of personal pleasure, rather than being an intellectual decision about what

²³³Mertes, *English Noble Household*, pp.123-24.

²³⁴*Fulgens and Lucre*, I.623.

²³⁵Woolgar, *Great Household*, pp.30-31.

²³⁶*Fulgens and Lucre*, I.624-28.

²³⁷*Ibid.*, I.652-53.

²³⁸*Ibid.*, II.316-55.

is right and what is wrong. In contrast, the prudent noble master, like Gaius in *Fulgens and Lucretia*, is careful to keep the power in his own hands, as he reserves the right to reward his servant in line with the quality of his service. The interludes stress that the exercise of authority is an ongoing process. Relationships of service are not static relationships with unthinking, acquiescent servants, but relationships which are dynamic, if not adversarial. Servants are frequently shown as pushing for advantage, as testing the weak spots of their masters in the hope of exploiting them to their own advantage. The act of governing such servants requires qualities such as suspicion and shrewdness, but it also requires noble masters to be constantly active in evaluating their servants' words and deeds, in forestalling the plans of servants inclined to evil, and in disciplining them.

The characteristics of the incompetent governors of the interludes are closely related to their youth. Young men under the sway of their bodies, their sanguine complexions and their passions, rather than their reason, do not have that capacity for government which older men have. The link between an inability to govern oneself and an inability to govern others is made in *Nature*, *The Worlde and the Chylde* and *The Interlude of Youth*, where the servants which the young men fail to govern are of course at one and the same time the sins to which young men are particularly prone, as a function of their physical and mental development. The sins/servants are not external to man's being, not supernatural forces of good and evil, but traits of his own being.²³⁹ This device confirms that a capacity for rule is contingent on male biology. However, it also suggests that the noble household is a metaphor for the noble body: that the way a nobleman rules his household makes visible and concrete the invisible conflicts taking place in the physical, spiritual and intellectual being of a nobleman. In these plays, therefore, the household is not just an arena wherein the nobleman can act out his nobility and construct his noble masculinity through what he does. Nor are the servants merely foils against which to construct a noble identity. In a real sense the households of *Man*, *Manhode* and *Youth* stand as a visual representation of their essential selves.

This endows the noble household and its governance with considerable symbolic power. The early part of this chapter discussed the ways in which a nobleman's gestures worked to construct a masculinity. These gestures were signs which expressed his inner

²³⁹Alford, ' "My Name is Worship"', p.160. See also Charles W Crupi, 'Christian Doctrine in Henry Medwall's *Nature*', *Renascence* 34 (1982):100-12.

nature, and audiences might read these gestures as evidence for his essential self. *Nature*, *The Worlde and the Chylde* and *The Interlude of Youth*, however, also present the conduct of the young man's *familia* as a sign from which his inner nature may be read. The conduct of the *familia* is significant in a double sense. First of all, the way in which individual servants behave in these plays can be attributed to their master. In the case of *Nature*, for example, the boastfulness, and arrogance of Pryde in *Nature* can be attributed to his master Man, because this relationship is a way of showing how the sin of pride is part of Man's fallen nature. But secondly, the way in which the noble master governs, or attempts to govern his servant, reveals the extent to which he is successful in governing or disciplining himself. Man's failure to judge Pryde and his counsel effectively shows that he is self-deluding, unable to recognise his own sin for what it is, but instead believing it to be wisdom. The progressive manipulation by his servants shows how Man becomes progressively extricated in his sins.

The close identification between household and noblemen is also apparent in political literature, where the households of kings are used to illustrate their moral characters and their capacity or incapacity for rule. It is also implied later medieval ordinances for royal households and households of the greater nobility, and explains their commitment to good order and good governance in the household. The nobleman who has achieved a mature noble masculinity will express that in the successful exercise of authority in his household, of which the behaviour of his servants is a tangible sign. Like mirrors for princes, household ordinances appear at first to have a ruthlessly practical bent. They specify, sometimes in painstaking detail, guidelines for the conduct of household life.²⁴⁰ Many set the numbers of servants to be employed, their precise functions and duties, and their remuneration. Other texts give detailed instructions for the execution of household ceremonial and ritual, down to the smallest gestures of the participants.²⁴¹ This attention to detail is driven in part by financial prudence and the desire to keep expenditure under control. Great households were sites for extravagant conspicuous consumption, but that consumption was rigorously managed.²⁴² The management of money was also an aspect of good rule with an important message about a nobleman's competence. Prodigality was not just a moral vice, but a mark

²⁴⁰Mertes, *English Noble Household*, pp.6-7.

²⁴¹Girouard, *Life in the English Country House*, p.47; Lancashire, 'Orders for Twelfth Day and Night'; Woolgar, *Great Household*, p.1.

²⁴²Mertes, *English Noble Household*, pp.75-120.

of the ineffective ruler.

Household ordinances were important as much for their ideological impact as for their practical application.²⁴³ Extant manuscript copies of the Northumberland household books, for example, do not appear to be well-thumbed exemplars, carrying the physical evidence of day to day use.²⁴⁴ Rather, they are large volumes, written in a decorative script which indicates that they were probably intended for display.²⁴⁵ More practical and less expensive copies may have been in everyday use, but nobles' investment in display copies indicates that the act of classifying servants and departments and laying down rules of conduct was also a means of projecting an image of good order and careful regulation. The act of categorising, labelling and defining is also in itself a way of asserting authority and power.²⁴⁶ Through the compilation and display of such documents, nobles were making statements about their capacity to govern, and hence reinforcing their own noble identities, just as chief executives and managers project an image of their professional competence by the use of convincing looking diagrams in their annual reports.

Royal household ordinances and rules drawn up in the later fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries suggest that the way a royal household was conducted would be observed and commented on, and that its conduct would reflect for good or ill on the king at its head. Ordinances of the household of Henry VI (c.1455) state that a 'sadde and substantiall reule in the king's houshold' will ensure him 'not oonly greet honour and worship in this his reaulme, and comfort to his people; but also it shold be to his singuler renoume, fame and laude in other lands and countrees'.²⁴⁷ The *Ordinances of Eltham* (1526) are particularly conscious that 'the king's house ...is requisite to be the myrrour and example of all others within this realme' and therefore requires 'mynisters and offices, elect, tried, and picked, for the King's honour'.²⁴⁸ The conduct of the king's household is particularly important because of the political power at stake in these households, as well as the issue of noble masculinity.

²⁴³Ibid., p. 7.

²⁴⁴Larsen, 'Expressions of Nobility', p. 58.

²⁴⁵Lancashire, 'Orders for Twelfth Day and Night'. See also DM Barratt, 'A Second Northumberland Household Book', *Bodleian Library Record* 8 (1968):93-98.

²⁴⁶Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, trans. AM Sheridan Smith (London, 1972).

²⁴⁷Society of Antiquaries of London, *A Collection of Ordinances and Regulations for the Government of the Royal Household* (London, 1790), p. 15.

²⁴⁸Ibid., p. 146.

Such ordinances often stipulate that household staff and their personal servants should exhibit certain qualities, because they will reflect on the king.²⁴⁹ In the Black Book of Edward IV (1478) the ordinances stipulate that if those at court employ their own young servants, these should be ‘comyn of clene blood; good of condicions, vertuose, and of person lykely, that if it fortune them to growe to the kinges service, the worship of the courte to continue by suche chosen people’.²⁵⁰ The ‘worship’ of the court - its public reputation, and hence the reputation of the king at its head - depends on the qualities shown by those in the king’s service. The quality of the court - and by extension the quality of the king - will be judged from the quality of the individual servant. The servant is in this respect a living sign of his master. The *Ordinances of Eltham* (1526) draw attention to the necessity of advancing only those who are ‘of good towardnesse, liklyhood, behaviour, demeanour, and conversation’ and are ‘personages of good gesture, contenance, fashion and stature’.²⁵¹ These directions regard not only the moral character of servants but their physical appearance and the way in which they use gestures. They sound not unlike the fifteenth-century courtesy literature described in chapter two. Such outward shows are being encouraged at the king’s court because they are in themselves a way of making visible the invisible moral qualities of the gentlemen in service there. The text is not primarily concerned with the reputation of the king’s servants for their own sake. It is concerned that their gestures will be read as evidence of their master’s character as much as their own.

The royal servant’s behaviour is regarded as reflecting on his master, whether the servant is physically within household space or not. The Black Book carefully delineates punishments for the officer who is a ‘theof or outrageous royatour in much haunting sclauderous places, companyes, and other’.²⁵² The ordinances for the household of George, Duke of Clarence (c. 1469) say that household servants should be ‘of wurshipfull, honeste, vertuose conversation, absteyninge themselves from suspected places; and also restrayning them from seditious language, varyaunces, discentions, debates and frayes, as well within the seide Duke’s courte as withoute’.²⁵³ Both texts clearly refer to the behaviour of the individual outside the physical space of the household, and away from the presence of the

²⁴⁹Mertes, *English Noble Household*, pp. 177-79.

²⁵⁰AR Myers (ed.), *The Household of Edward IV: The Black Book and the Ordinance of 1478* (Manchester, 1959), p. 163.

²⁵¹Society of Antiquaries, *Collection of Ordinances*, p. 146.

²⁵²Myers (ed.), *Household of Edward IV*, p. 163.

²⁵³Society of Antiquaries, *Collection of Ordinances*, p. 89.

king or noble lord. This implies that employment in a lord's service is enough to convert one's actions into a signifier of the character of that lord. It suggests the behaviour of such officers remains crucial to the king's identity even when they are at a distance from him.

On a more general level these texts also show a particular concern for the orderly conduct of day-to-day household activity. The Black Book urges officers to ensure that there is 'good and sad rule within theyre offyces'.²⁵⁴ The Black Book also says that the controller of the household should be 'sytyng dayley at metes and soupers in the hall after the syght that he takyth, furst of the seruyce of alle hoole court, or ellez then he syttythe in other place or office with in the court to see the good gouernaunces thereof and the dylygence of offycers and theyre conueyaunce in worship and profitt to the king'.²⁵⁵ The proper execution of daily duties is presented as an opportunity to enhance the king's reputation. On the other hand, violence and quarrelling offend against the standards of order and harmony which the writers of ordinances want to associate with the household. Robert Grosseteste's rules for the governance of a noblewoman's household, drawn up in Latin c.1241, advise that there should be no 'strife, discord or divisions within the household, but all shall be of one accord...'.²⁵⁶ The Black Book also commands that there should be no fighting or 'perrturbance... nyghe to the hyghe presence and hys famous houshold'.²⁵⁷ The deft and orderly service rendered by members of the *familia* is envisaged as helping to construct the public image of kings and nobles.

In comparison with these ideal households, the households of the young protagonists of the interludes begin to look dystopic. Far from excluding the base, the violent and the unmannerly from his household, the young nobleman often actively employs these types in his household. This rejection of household values is first figured in *Nature* and *The Worlde and the Chylde* through the employment of servants (such as Pryde and Folye) who consciously violate the customs of the household space in which their interludes are being performed.²⁵⁸ However, as *Nature*, *The Worlde and the Chylde* and *The Interlude of Youth* proceed, it becomes clear that the young noblemen not only allow these types of anti-household figures into their *familiae*, but they too are being transformed into such types. In

²⁵⁴Myers (ed.), *Household of Edward IV*, p.161.

²⁵⁵Ibid., pp.147-48.

²⁵⁶Jennifer Ward (ed. and trans.), *Women of the English Nobility and Gentry, 1066-1500* (Manchester, 1995), p.159.

²⁵⁷Myers (ed.), *Household of Edward IV*, p.162.

²⁵⁸See part one of this chapter, above.

The Interlude of Youth, for example, Youth adopts the violent behaviour of Riot, which the audience is able to see directly as Youth threatens Charity with his dagger, and assists Riot as he stocks Charity.²⁵⁹ This kind of violent affray is exactly the sort of disorder which later medieval household ordinances want to exclude from noble households.

Indeed, so strong are the associations of household space with good order, that as the moral corruption of the young nobleman proceeds, he is lured away to other kinds of spaces, where he will be able to indulge in his sinful pastimes more freely. As the ordinances cited above indicate, the undesirable servingman, 'the theof or outrageous royatour', is characterised by his 'much haunting sclauderous places, companyes, and other'.²⁶⁰ The desirable servitor is one capable of 'absteyninge themselves from suspected places'.²⁶¹ Frequenting of these locations is presented as a threat to the household and its master because they attract disrepute, and they foster behaviours like drunkenness, whoring, violence and gambling. In *Nature*, *The Worlde and the Chylde* and *The Interlude of Youth* the young nobleman and his evil servants forsake the household space, and the values associated with it, for places of ill-repute. In *Nature*, for example, the sins/servants whom Man employs lure him away from the household space of the great hall where he begins the play, off to the tavern where he meets the prostitute Margery, and where he assaults Reason, by striking him on the head with his sword.²⁶² Man's second fall is also marked by his return to this milieu.²⁶³ In *The Worlde and the Chylde*, Folye leads Manhode off to explore the stews of London, and the drinking and gambling associated with them.²⁶⁴ In *The Interlude of Youth*, after the assault on Charity, Youth, Riot, Pride and Lady Lechery all exit for the tavern, which is presented as the proper place both for drinking and consorting with Lechery.²⁶⁵ The departure of the young men from household space is significant because it indicates the young nobleman's implicit abdication from his responsibilities to rule. The hierarchical structure of the household is designed to place the members of the *familia* under the ultimate authority of the nobleman; but by decamping to the tavern the young noblemen step

²⁵⁹*Interlude of Youth*, ll.83-84, 130-32, 158-61, 173-74, 520-46.

²⁶⁰Myers (ed.), *Household of Edward IV*, p.163.

²⁶¹Society of Antiquaries, *Collection of Ordinances*, p.89.

²⁶²*Nature*, I.1112-57.

²⁶³*Ibid*, II.165-302.

²⁶⁴*Worlde and the Chylde*, ll.652-708.

²⁶⁵The connection between lechery and drinking is first made by Riot: *Interlude of Youth*, ll.374-76. For the stocking of Charity, and the exit to the tavern, see ll.520-46.

outside these structures, to places where no good rule obtains. Towns had considerable anxiety about the fact that taverns hosted a transient population who were not under the authority of any respectable person.²⁶⁶ Later medieval urban legislation attempted to make tavern-keepers responsible for the conduct of guests who stayed for more than two nights. That is, it attempted to construct a hierarchy to govern a group of people who found themselves, at least temporarily, outside the social structures designed to produce good order. In effect, when the young men of the interludes depart from household space, they too put themselves outside these structures, and refuse to govern at all. This is threat to noble masculinity, for if the young man refuses to exercise authority, then he effectively refuses to be noble. The means which the noble household offers to construct a noble masculinity is lost to him, and all that is left to him are the spurious signs of nobility in the form of wealth, dress, boasting and so on, which as we have seen above are inadequate for the purpose.

While the noble household and the great hall are the locations for the establishing of adult noble male identities through performance and ceremony, the tavern is the location for establishing other kinds of masculine identities, diametrically opposed to household-based identities. *The Worlde* and *Nature* seem particularly anxious about young nobles adopting particular kinds of hyper-masculine identities: those which rely on the exhibition of physical strength, and which involve aggressive competition with other men. In *The Worlde and the Chylde*, for instance, the labelling of the protagonist as 'Manhode' in his third stage of life plays on the double meaning of the term: it is a developmental term for the attaining male adulthood, but also a term for a concept of masculinity.²⁶⁷ In the context of *The Worlde and the Chylde*, the idea of manliness refers in part to a physical prowess which has to be displayed in competition with other men. In the play, Folye challenges Manhode to a fight, and when Manhode declines, Folye taunts him with cowardice, which in turn spurs Manhode into action.²⁶⁸ As Manhode puts it:

Manhode wyll not that I saye naye. (1.555)

Here, it is Manhode's wounded masculine pride, and his fear of Folye's insult being

²⁶⁶Sharon Wells, 'Food in the City: An Interdisciplinary Study of the Ideological and Symbolic Uses of Food in the Urban Environment in Later Medieval England' (PhD. Diss, University of York, 2002), pp.154-57.

²⁶⁷*MED*, qv. 'manhed(e) (n.).

²⁶⁸*Worlde and the Chylde*, ll.541-65.



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broadcast which goads him into action. Having agreed to the fight, it is crucial to both Manhode and Folye that they win the fight, and that the by-standers recognise their victory. Both appeal to the audience to bear testimony to their supremacy.²⁶⁹ The text is seeking to undermine this masculine competitiveness by representing it as the product of foolishness which is a kind of moral stupidity.

Nature and *Fulgens and Lucrez* also make direct references to forms of masculinity based on violence and anti-social behaviour. In *Nature*, when Sensualyte first gains influence over Man, he urges him to ‘play the man’ and ‘play the boy’.²⁷⁰ Nelson glosses ‘play the man’ as ‘act the part of a swaggering man’.²⁷¹ As this remark follows directly from the dismissal of Innocencye,²⁷² it appears in the context of Man’s following of the promptings of his sensual nature which will lead to his commission of all the deadly sins. Sensualyte seems to be advocating the life of sinfulness by representing it as an attractive form of masculinity. Other uses of this phrase in the play suggest that it had a more restricted significance. It is used by the vicious characters as they describe Man’s violent attack on Reason.²⁷³ Reason remonstrates with Man, after finding him in the company of prostitutes at the tavern, and in response Man strikes Reason on the head with his sword. Sensualyte speaks of this incident as one where Man ‘played the man’ (I.1153), and, as Sensualyte describes the resulting battle between Man and Reason, Worldly Affeccyon asks:

But can our master play the man now
And fare wyth thys gere? (I.1169-70)

Worldly Affeccyon refers to Man’s facility with the weapons of war. These contexts associate an adult masculinity with a readiness to resort to physical violence to resolve grievances. The association of adult masculinity with violence and quick temper is confirmed by the inclusion of the sin of wrath in Man’s ‘retynue’ of servants.²⁷⁴ Like the other sins, Wrath takes on a pseudonym to disguise his true nature, and the name he adopts is Manhode, as Sensualyte explains, ‘bycause he ys somwat hasty’.²⁷⁵ In *Fulgens and Lucrez*, Cornelius also evinces these characteristics. His servant B expects him to react violently to

²⁶⁹ *id.*, ll.560-63.

²⁷⁰ *Nature* I.660-63.

²⁷¹ Nelson (ed.), *Plays of Henry Medwall*, n. to I.660.

²⁷² *Nature*, I.637-54.

²⁷³ *id.*, I.1146-70.

²⁷⁴ *id.*, I.1200.

²⁷⁵ *id.*, I.1217-18.



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that of Reason; Manhode in *The Worlde and the Chylde* chooses the counsel of Folye over that of Conscience; Calisto chooses the counsel of Sempronio over that of Parmeno. Some young noblemen are unable to read the true nature of their new servants from their appearance and gestures, like Man when confronted with Pryde in *Nature*; whereas in *The Worlde and the Chylde*, Manhode is able to appreciate exactly how repulsive Folye is, but still ends up accepting his service anyway. Young noblemen succumb to the flattery of servants, like that of Pryde in *Nature* or that planned by Parmeno in *Calisto and Melebea*.

The figure of Gaius, on the other hand, implies the kind of masculinity produced through the on-going management of one's own behaviour, the self-conscious regulation of all kinds of gesture. Gaius has a mastery of himself unequalled by Cornelius, or any other of the young noblemen of the interludes. He devotes himself to study, warfare, and the governance of the commonwealth, rather than self-gratification, and these activities produce the noble virtues. He controls his speech, and makes language into a tool for self-representation, to illustrate his lack of contentiousness, modesty and prudence. He demonstrates his capacity to rule through his negotiation with his new servant A, ensuring that the balance of power in this relationship is tilted in his favour.

Households are crucial to noble masculinities in these plays, as places where nobility is constantly reinscribed through the act of governing others. The young nobleman's dealings with servants are evidence of his true inner nature as a man and as a nobleman. They allow him to show whether he has the qualities which belong to noble men or not. The conduct of the household takes on an additional significance in *Youth*, *Nature* and *The Worlde and the Chylde* where the servants belonging to his *familia* are also the sins which afflict his soul. The action between nobleman and servants therefore come to stand for the state of his soul. This suggests that household life may be read as an index of the true and inner nature of the nobleman. As surely as the nobleman's own gestures indicate his inner nature, so the actions of his servants (both individually and corporately) become in a sense his actions, and in turn may be taken to indicate his nature.

The interludes seek to re-interpret other signs of nobility as at best ambiguous. Noble practices such as the maintaining of large households and the wearing of costly and fashionable dress are presented as unreliable markers of noble masculinity. Young noblemen like Youth and Cornelius attempt to use these aspects of noble lifestyle in a conscious attempt to construct a noble masculinity, but the plays re-interpret them as the signs not of a noble nature, but a sinful one. Rather than making visible their essentially noble nature,

these young men make visible their youthful tendency to sin.

The threat of an unregulated young masculinity to noble identity is suggested in *Nature*, *The Worlde and the Chylde* and *The Interlude of Youth*, where the progressive sinfulness of the young nobles is inextricably linked to a progressive alienation from household spaces. In turn this means that young men are deprived of the signifying power of the household. They fail to make use of household structures and spaces which are designed to produce them as nobles, and finally are persuaded to abandon them, in favour of extra-household spaces which are dangerously free of hierarchies and the good order these promote. These interludes present the nightmare scenario, from the point of view of mature noblemen, of the dissolution of noble masculinity, as young men fail to acquire this identity becoming instead generic 'boyes', 'brothels', and gallants.

As this discussion implies the noble masculinities of the plays also have a political significance. Noble masculine identities are constructed on the premise that it is incumbent on noblemen to wield power and authority over others, and the depictions of young and noble men are engaged with the question of who can and who cannot effectively exercise authority. As we have seen in Chapter Two, this discussion is informed by later medieval political literature, which makes the young ruler whether of households or of kingdoms into the type of the bad governor. The introduction of such types into early Tudor interludes allows the texts to allude directly and indirectly to the concepts of the theory and practice of government, and provides the interludes with a flexible political code or political shorthand with which to do so. Chapter Four discusses ways in which the interludes exploit the presentation of young noblemen to make political points.

Chapter Four. Interludes and the Politics of Youth

In the interludes *Nature*, *Fulgens and Lucrez*, *The Worlde and the Chylde*, *The Interlude of Youth*, and *Calisto and Melebea*, the operation of natural processes does not guarantee an easy transition to adult and noble masculinity. As the cases of Man in *Nature*, Cornelius in *Fulgens and Lucrez*, Manhode in *The Worlde and the Chylde*, Youth in *The Interlude of Youth*, and Calisto in *Calisto and Melebea* show, the youthful nature, if left unchecked, will determine behaviours and lifestyles which are inimical to adult, noble masculinity. The case of Gaius, in contrast, shows that it is possible to learn a noble masculinity, and re-make oneself through self-discipline and application.

The anxiety expressed in these texts about young masculinity is also an anxiety about political power. Noble masculinity is predicated on an ability to rule and govern others. The lack of moral self-discipline displayed by many of the young male characters is symptomatic of a wider incompetence, further illustrated in the interludes by the failure of young men to govern their own household servants effectively, and to evaluate counsel and counsellors effectively. The question of how to become an adult nobleman is therefore closely bound up with questions of good and bad government. The figures of young noblemen are in this sense a convenient means by which to introduce a political discussion, which draws on familiar assumptions in later medieval political texts.

The connection between noble masculinity and the ability to govern evident in these plays is natural one, given that the later medieval nobility constituted a ruling class. Many noblemen were active at the political centre through their roles as members of parliament and privy councillors.¹ Others were appointed to offices at the disposition of the king, which conferred power and status, since the holders were deputized to act on behalf of the king.² Nobles exercised political authority at a local level by serving on commissions of the peace in their counties, as well as contributing to the maintenance of good order through their households.³ For many noblemen, to govern was to be noble, and the interludes reflect this by making the government of others the defining test of noble masculinity.

Interludes are political literature in the sense that they make the exercise of political

¹Helen Miller, *Henry VIII and the English Nobility* (Oxford, 1986), pp.102-133.

²*Ibid.*, pp.164-206.

³David Loades, *Tudor Government: Structures of Authority in the Sixteenth Century* (Oxford, 1997), pp.236-46.

authority into a theme. However, the interlude is also a political genre in the sense that it is frequently used throughout the sixteenth century as a vehicle for commenting on specific personalities and controversies of high political life.⁴ As scholars of the early interlude *Magnyfycence* (1519?) have demonstrated, it is a political play in this double sense. The action of the play is set in the court of the prince Magnyfycence, whose moral fall is the result of the influence of his evil courtiers. The interlude is a discussion of the theory and practice of royal government, through the depiction of the royal household, where the prince demonstrates his lack of governing ability, and which stands for the kingdom as a whole.⁵ The virtue of magnificence is, after all, not a moral virtue which is to be imitated universally by all men, like humility or charity.⁶ Magnificence is a status-specific virtue, the openhandedness which is a characteristic of kings, rather than the less lavish liberality which characterises other virtuous men.⁷ Magnificence is one of the markers of a good king and derives from Aristotelian traditions of political virtues. The interlude *Magnyfycence* also comments directly on personalities and topical events at the court of Henry VIII, in this case probably the so-called purge of the minions in 1519, when a group of Henry's young courtiers were expelled from the court, on the grounds of their evil influence over the king.⁸

While internal evidence in *Magnyfycence* makes it clear that the play is closely engaged with the politics of the royal household, in the case of other interludes, it is sometimes more difficult to make a connection between interlude texts and topical events. Interlude texts are clearly very allusive in nature, and are texts designed for performance at particular times and in particular places. However, the often oblique nature of the allusions, and the lack of information about times and places of first performance of the interludes sometimes make them difficult to interpret as topical plays.

Critics have been ready to interpret some of the interludes which are the subject of

⁴David Bevington, *Tudor Drama and Politics: A Critical Approach to Topical Meaning* (Cambridge, MA, 1968); Norman Sanders, 'The Social and Historical Context', in idem et al, *The Revels History of Drama in English II: 1500-1576* (London, 1980), pp.3-67, esp. pp.12-23.

⁵Greg Walker, 'A Domestic Drama: John Skelton's *Magnyfycence* and the Royal Household', in idem, *Plays of Persuasion* (Cambridge, 1991), pp.60-101; John Scattergood, 'Skelton's *Magnyfycence* and the Tudor Royal Household', *METH* 15 (1993):21-48.

⁶Scattergood, 'Skelton's *Magnyfycence*', p.23.

⁷Scattergood, 'Skelton's *Magnyfycence*', pp.25-27.

⁸Walker, 'A Domestic Drama'; Scattergood, 'Skelton's *Magnyfycence*'. See also Alistair Fox *Politics and Literature in the Reigns of Henry VII and Henry VIII* (Oxford, 1989), pp.237-39.

this thesis as political ly engaged. Many critics have read *Fulgens and Luces* as the product of the London political culture in which the author Henry Medwall and his patron John Morton lived and moved. The text's first modern editors, Boas and Reed suggested that *Fulgens and Luces* should be understood in the context of the negotiations between England and Spain regarding the proposed marriage of Prince Arthur to Katherine of Aragorn. They proposed that the play was first performed in Morton's household for the Spanish and Flemish ambassadors present in London in 1497.⁹ Bevington saw *Fulgens* as a play supporting Henry VII's policy of employing men of relatively undistinguished birth in his administration, rather than members of the greater aristocracy.¹⁰ In this reading, the young Gaius represents a new class of rising men, while the young nobleman Cornelius represents a rather decadent aristocracy who fail to fulfil their functions of their estate.¹¹ Luces's choice of Gaius over Cornelius therefore stands for the triumph of the rising men over the scions of noble houses in the quest for political offices under Henry VII. Other scholars have read the depiction of Cornelius as an attack on specific enemies of the Tudor dynasty.¹²

The association of *The Interlude of Youth* with the household of Henry Algernon Percy, the fifth earl of Northumberland has encouraged a reading of the play both as a work of noble education, and as a satire on the young Henry VIII. As Lancashire pointed out, Henry indulged in many of the same pastimes as Youth, and was also associated through his own songs with a courtly cult of youth.¹³ Lancashire also suggested that the inclusion of Riot is a topical reference to the political situation in the north in the early years of Henry VIII's reign.¹⁴ Northumberland was not appointed as Lieutenant of the North, an office he

⁹FS Boas and AW Reed (eds.), *Fulgens & Luces: A Fifteenth-Century Secular Play by Henry Medwall* (Oxford, 1926).

¹⁰Bevington, *Tudor Drama and Politics*, pp.123-32.

¹¹Suzanne R Westfall, *Patrons and Performance: Early Tudor Household Revels* (Oxford, 1990), pp.182-83.

¹²On the depiction of Cornelius as an attack on Perkin Warbeck, see Moeslein, (ed.), *Plays of Henry Medwall*, pp.60-68. On Edmund de la Pole, see RG Siemens, ' "As Strayght as Ony Pole": Publius Cornelius, Edmund de la Pole and Contemporary Court Satire in Henry Medwall's *Fulgens and Luces*', *Renaissance Forum* 1.2 (1996) [<http://www.hull.ac.uk/renforum/v1no2/siemens.>]; RA Godfrey, 'Nervous Laughter in Henry Medwall's *Fulgens and Luces*', *Tudor Theatre* 3 (1996): 81-96.

¹³Ian Lancashire (ed.), *Two Tudor Interludes: Youth and Hick Scorner* (Manchester, 1980), pp.54-56.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, pp.56-58.

appears to have considered his due. In this reading, the play insinuates that, by not appointing Northumberland, Henry VIII is allowing civil disorder to reign unchecked, just as Youth allows himself to be governed by Riot.

In the case of *Nature*, *The Worlde and the Chylde*, and *Calisto and Melebea*, recent readings have concentrated on their general, rather than specific, political significance, as texts which, like *Fulgens and Lucrez* and *The Interlude of Youth* develop an ideology of nobility.¹⁵ Westfall, following Bevington, viewed these interludes as commenting on the rise of a new nobility who achieved their noble status through administrative ability, rather than through inherited wealth and status. There have been few attempts to relate *The Worlde and the Chylde* and *Calisto and Melebea* to specific personalities or events, which is perhaps understandable, given the lack of evidence, both internal and external for the auspices of the texts. Lancashire's association of *The Worlde and the Chylde* with the household of Richard Grey, earl of Kent, and his identification of Folye with Empson and Dudley have not been widely accepted.¹⁶ The neglect of *Nature* is perhaps more surprising, when there is a general consensus that this text, like *Fulgens and Lucrez*, was first performed in John Morton's household. *Nature* seems to be viewed as an apolitical play, perhaps because of its classification as a 'morality'.¹⁷ Its overt moral and religious didacticism appears to preclude it in the minds of scholars from topicality, in terms of comment on or participation in high political life. For many critics *Fulgens and Lucrez* represents a great leap forward into new modes of sophisticated thought and expression, including knowing references to current affairs, and *Nature* is often implicitly constructed as relatively unsophisticated and naive drama.¹⁸ As Potter has pointed out, however, if we are to associate *Nature* with John Morton's household, this places the play as a 'courtly entertainment' squarely in a high

¹⁵Westfall, *Patrons and Performance*, pp.180-99; Darryll Grantley, *Wit's Pilgrimage: Drama and the Social Impact of Education in Early Modern England* (Aldershot, 2000).

¹⁶Ian Lancashire, 'The Auspices of *The World and the Child*', *Renaissance and Reformation* 12 (1976):96-105. See also Clifford Davidson and Peter Happé (eds), *The Worlde and the Chylde* (Kalamazoo, 1999), pp.3-5.

¹⁷Moeslein (ed.), *Plays of Henry Medwall*, p.5.

¹⁸See for example Joel B Altman, *The Tudor Play of Mind: Rhetorical Inquiry and the Development of Elizabethan Drama* (Berkeley, 1978), pp.13-30; Marion Jones, 'Early Moral Plays and the Earliest Secular Drama', in AC Cawley et al, *The Revels History of Drama in English, Vol. 1: Medieval Drama* (London and New York, 1983), pp.213-91.

political context.¹⁹

It is of course difficult to see the political specificity of plays, since their political sub-texts - their allusion to political issues and personalities - would have been more apparent in performance. The performance of a play in a high political context, and in the presence of political figures almost immediately reconfigures its meanings. Hall's well-known anecdote of Wolsey's reaction to the play directed by John Roo at Gray's Inn in 1526-27 illustrates this effectively.²⁰ Wolsey was the guest of honour at a performance of a now lost interlude, a political allegory, telling the story of how 'lord governance was ruled by dissipation and negligence' to the ruin of 'lay Publike wele'.²¹ Wolsey, interpreting the play as a satire on his own role in government, imprisoned John Roo and gave the young men who played the piece a severe dressing-down. It is perfectly possible that Roo was using the occasion to make such criticisms, though Roo seems to have argued that, because the play was fifty years old, it could not possibly have been written with Wolsey in mind. This may have been a disingenuous strategy, since it is perfectly possible to perform old plays in such a way that they make political points about current regimes. Wolsey's touchiness about the play may equally well have been a symptom of his own paranoia. However, the episode does reveal the powerful effect of staging an interlude before a person with a high political profile. In the case of Roo's play, parallels between Wolsey and the play - whether intended or not - are almost unavoidable, since Wolsey stood in relation to the king almost exactly as the characters 'dissipation' and 'negligence' seem to have stood in relation to 'lord governance' in the play, as trusted advisors, whose counsel was powerfully influential. The simple fact of Wolsey's presence in a place of honour on the dais in Gray's Inn hall may have been enough to generate the political sub-text, without any further effort from the players, though the identification of Wolsey with 'dissipation' and 'negligence' might also have been encouraged through the gestures and movements of the actors.

The arrangement of space in later medieval great halls would have encouraged the identification of Wolsey with the characters of the play. The play itself was performed on

¹⁹Robert Potter, *The English Morality Play: Origins, History and Influence of a Dramatic Tradition* (London and Boston, 1975), p.58.

²⁰Edward Hall, *The Union of the Two Noble and Illustre Families of Lancaster and Yorke* (London, 1809), p.719.

²¹Ibid.

the floor of the hall, while Wolsey would have been seated in his place of honour on the dais.²² Wolsey's position on this raised platform meant that he and others on the dais were peculiarly visible. The dais of the great hall was designed to mark high status by making nobles visible. The dais itself raised them above the level of the hall floor, and features such as the canopy or celure over the dais, the size and disposition of windows at the dais end of the hall, and the fact that decorative features were turned toward the dais, underscored the status of the high end and drew attention to those seated on it.²³ In fact, at the performance of John Roo's play, it was Wolsey on the stage, rather than the actors.²⁴ For one standing at the low end of the hall, the action of the play would have been framed by the backdrop of Wolsey seated in his place of honour on the dais. This visual association was probably enough in and of itself to have encouraged an association of ideas between the counsellor in the play and the counsellor on the dais.

Accounts of performances in the later sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries attended by Elizabeth I and James I suggest that the incorporation of the royal guest of honour in the spectacle of a performance was by that point a common affair.²⁵ For the performance of a Terentian comedy in the chapel of King's College, Cambridge, in 1564, Elizabeth's officials constructed the staging so that the queen was seated on the stage directly facing the players, while the main body of the audience sat at right angles to both the play and the queen.²⁶ The audience was not watching the performance of a play, but were watching the queen watching a play.²⁷ At Christ Church, Oxford, in 1605, James I insisted that his seat be moved from amongst the audience, though it had been carefully

²²On great hall performances, see Meg Twycross, 'The Theatricality of Medieval English Plays', in R Beadle (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval English Theatre* (Cambridge, 1994), pp.37-84 (pp.66-83). On the manipulations of space in interludes, see Jean-Paul Debax, '“God Gyve You Tyme and Space”': Toward a Definition of Theatrical Space in the Tudor Interludes' in J-M Maguin and M Willems (eds), *French Essays on Shakespeare and His Contemporaries: 'What Would France With Us?'* (Newark, NJ, and London, 1995), pp.50-65; and André Lascombes, 'Time and Place in Tudor Theatre: Two Remarkable Achievements - *Fulgens and Lucre*s and *Gorboduc*', in *ibid.*, pp.66-80. For a plan of the typical great hall, see p. 56.

²³Jane Grenville, *Medieval Housing* (Leicester, 1997), pp.111-13.

²⁴Twycross, 'Theatricality', p.67.

²⁵Stephen Orgel, *The Illusion of Power: Political Theater in the English Renaissance* (Berkeley and London, 1975).

²⁶The staging has been reconstructed by Nelson: see Alan H Nelson (ed.), *REED: Cambridge*, 2 vols. (Toronto, 1989), 2:718.

²⁷Orgel, *Illusion of Power*, pp.9-10.

placed to give him the optimum view of the new perspective scenery.²⁸ James preferred to sit on the stage, since he saw himself as an important part of the spectacle. Hall's rather gleeful account of Wolsey's reaction to Roo's play suggests that the responses of the great to plays were an important part of their enjoyment, enough to make this performance remembered when many others had been forgotten. As Walker has suggested, the spectacle of a great lord viewing an interlude was one itself fraught with political significance.²⁹ By watching the play, the lord implicitly accepted the advice and even the criticism which it offered, and so he displayed his ability to accept unpalatable counsel, which in political literature is so often the mark of the good ruler.

Performances of interludes within noble households were framed both temporally and spatially by other kinds of performance on the part of the noble and other household members. As discussed above in Chapter Three, the noble household, both as a body of people and as a physical space, was engaged in the business of producing its lord as noble. For a noble, the occasion of the performance of an interlude, like much of the household routine, served as an opportunity for demonstrating and enacting his or her own noble status. Much of the performance in the great hall was concerned with projecting an image of the noble as an authoritative governor of his household. The Orders for Twelfth Night, thought to have been prepared for the household of the fifth earl of Northumberland, envisage the entertainments of the evening beginning, not with the interlude, but rather with a formal procession of the earl, his family and his household officers into the great hall.³⁰ The procession literally makes the earl central to the proceedings: he is placed in the middle of the procession, and the status of all the other participants is made to depend on him, since they are arranged on either side of the earl in order of importance so that those at the very beginning and the end of the procession are the least significant. It is not only the earl who is performing on this occasion, however. As Lancashire pointed out, the orders are not an account of any one festive occasion, but a set detailed instructions for the benefit of the ushers on duty in the hall.³¹ The ushers were responsible for the practical oversight of

²⁸Ibid., pp.14-16.

²⁹Greg Walker, 'Household drama and the art of good counsel', in idem, *The Politics of Performance in Early Renaissance Drama* (Cambridge, 1993), pp.51-75.

³⁰Ian Lancashire, 'Orders for Twelfth Day and Night circa 1515 in the Second Northumberland Household Book', *ELR* 10 (1980): 7-45 (p.18).

³¹Ibid., pp.16-19.

the hall during the evening's entertainments. They arranged the furnishings of the dais and the hall, they seated the guests in their proper places, and managed the entrances and exits of the performers - both the earl and his procession, as well as the entertainers. The ushers' 'performance' - the swift and efficient dispatch of their duties - will also help to emphasise that this is a well governed household. These various kinds of performances by the earl and his household servants are to do with power. They are an assertion of the noble's right and capacity to wield authority over others.

Just as these forms of performance were centred on the person of the lord on the dais, so it is likely that the performance of the interlude was intended to be understood in relation to that figure. The images of power and authority being developed in the 'real' household are the backdrop against which the story of the fictional young nobleman is told, and the context in which his exploits and those of his household are understood.

As the previous chapter suggested, noble masculinity in the interludes is closely bound up with the exercise of power. The first part of the present chapter examines how the anxiety about noble masculinity apparent in these texts might relate to the social and political position of the nobility at the end of the fifteenth century. The second part of the chapter will consider how age-related masculinities offered a flexible political code for discussing political competence and incompetence in the contexts of specific households. The depiction of young men and their households gave opportunities for patrons, writers and performers to deploy such codes in order to speak to the political situations in which they found themselves.

The politics of noble masculinity

In his recent study of early modern masculinity, Mark Breitenberg points out that masculinities are 'inherently anxious', even paranoid, in that they constantly anticipate threats and dangers which may or may not exist.³² This anxiety about identity is closely related to an anxiety about power:

Anxiety and masculinity: the terms must be wed if only for the obvious reason that any social system whose premise is the unequal distribution of power and authority always and only sustains itself in constant defense of the privileges of some of its members and by the constraint of others...those individuals whose identities are formed by the assumption of their own privilege must also have incorporated varying degrees of anxiety about the preservation or potential loss of that privilege.³³

Far from indicating that social structures are about to disintegrate, this anxiety performs an important function, because it ensures that men of elite standing work to defend their privileges, and to fend off the encroachments of others.

The interludes discussed in this thesis are to a greater or lesser extent trying induce a level of anxiety about noble masculinity. Noble masculinity is under threat in these plays from the youthful natures of young men. *Nature, Youth* and *The Worlde and the Chylde* show that, if unchecked, young men are driven by their unruly bodies into anti-noble forms of masculinity. They are seduced by the fake signs of nobility, in lifestyles of conspicuous consumption. They fail to govern households in an orderly way, and allow themselves to be governed by their own servants. They abandon their households for the tavern life of drinking, violence, sex with prostitutes, and gambling. Youth in *The Interlude of Youth*, Man in *Nature*, and Calisto of *Calisto and Melebea* spend their time pursuing illicit sexual relationships instead of getting married and producing heirs. Manhode in *The Worlde and the Chylde* reduces himself to penury. Though Cornelius of *Fulgens and Lucre*s attempts to marry Lucre, he is rejected in favour of a low-born man.

Noble masculinity is threatened, quite literally, from within - threatened by the perverseness of young nobles themselves, determined by their unruly natures. However, the plays also indicate the existence of other external threats. In *Fulgens and Lucre*s there is the threat of the rising, low-born man, Gaius, who enters directly into competition with the

³²Mark Breitenberg, *Anxious Masculinity in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 1996).

³³*Ibid.*, p.3.

established nobleman, Cornelius. There is also the threat of those men of lower status, those within noble households, who are constantly seeking to manipulate their masters to their own advantage. These men come from a variety of different status groups. Pryde in *Nature*, for example, presents himself as a gentleman of noble ancestry, who owns his own lands.³⁴ Folye in *The Worlde and the Chylde*, on the other hand, has a shifting social identity. He has been a 'craftes man', a tinker, but he has also been 'a seruaunt of the law'.³⁵ These men, in their capacity as servants to young nobles, represent the enemy within, both the sinful aspects of young masculinity, and the manipulative servants of the *familia*. Viewed in this light these texts deliberately evoke the anxieties of mature noble men, who are attempting to make alliances through marriage, preserve family estates, and to show their skill as governors. As Grantley has pointed out, figures such as Youth and Manhode represent every noble father's nightmare, precisely because their antics threaten the continuation of noble lines.³⁶ Gaius makes a similar point when he criticises Cornelius for his complacent reliance on his inherited privileges, rather than carefully constructing a noble masculinity which will justify his possession of those privileges. Cornelius runs the risk that 'nobles of thyn auncetours everycheon / Shall utterly starve and die in the alone'.³⁷ Gaius raises the ghastly prospect of Cornelius's family honours 'dying' with Cornelius, and this raises the spectre not just of the dishonour of a noble family through the behaviour of one of their number, but also perhaps the family losing their noble status over time, or their noble line becoming extinct with Cornelius.

This implies, however, that these texts were written in the interests of the established nobility, not of any class of rising men, such as was proposed by Bevington and Westfall. The anxieties these texts express about the loss of status and wealth through unsatisfactory young noblemen are those of nobles who have much to lose. This kind of anxiety may have been produced in nobles by social competition with those of lower status. As a result of greater levels of disposable incomes in the fifteenth century, those of non-noble status were able to invest in styles of dress and fabrics which had once been the preserve of nobles.³⁸

³⁴*Nature*, I.723-38.

³⁵*Worlde and the Chylde*, ll.537-38, 575.

³⁶Grantley, *Wit's Pilgrimage*, p.138

³⁷*Fulgens and Luces*, II.691-92.

³⁸Christopher Dyer, *Making a Living in the Middle Ages: The People of Britain, 850-1520* (New Haven and London, 2002), p.322.

Urban elites emulated noble manners and invested in courtesy literature and courtly romance.³⁹ The rising men of the later fifteenth century do not adopt a puritan aesthetic which sets them apart from nobles. On the contrary, they seem only too eager to appropriate the trappings of the noble lifestyle.⁴⁰

There is evidence to suggest that in this atmosphere of social competition, it was nobles who felt under pressure. As we saw in the introduction to the thesis, noble elites switched their patterns of consumption in the later fifteenth-century to more exclusive items, as a response to the increasing buying power of other social groups.⁴¹ Jane Grenville has drawn attention to the significant numbers of longer and thinner halls constructed in noble houses in the early sixteenth century, and the increasingly elaborate features which marked the high end of the hall, as ways of putting a greater emphasis on the social distance between the noble and the ignoble.⁴²

However, in the case of the interludes, the internal threat to noble masculinity, in the form of the natural tendencies of young male natures, is a more serious problem than any external threat. It is the young men themselves who put noble status and power in jeopardy through their choices as they grow up. The element of social competition is strongest in *Fulgens and Luces*, though again Cornelius is only vulnerable to such competition because of his own failure to be a noble man. As critics have noticed, this interlude expresses a great deal of anxiety about Luces's choice of the low-born Gaius as husband, rather than the well-born Cornelius.⁴³ The servants A and B, who outline the action at the beginning of the play, take a rather ambivalent attitude toward the action, expressing outrage that a 'gentilman born' should be considered less noble than a 'chorles son' one minute, and then disclaiming their ability to pass judgement the next.⁴⁴ Luces is reluctant to act as a judge between the two suitors to decide which of them is the more noble, wishing to refer the case

³⁹Mark Addison Amos, '“For Manners Make Man”: Bourdieu, De Certeau, and the Common Appropriation of Noble Manners in the *Book of Courtesy*', in K Ashley and RLA Clark (eds), *Medieval Conduct* (Minneapolis and London, 2001), pp.23-48; Felicity Riddy, 'Middle English Romance: Family, Marriage, Intimacy', in RL Krueger, *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval Romance* (Cambridge, 2000), pp.235-52.

⁴⁰Sylvia Thrupp, *The Merchant Class of Medieval London* (Ann Arbor, MI, 1962).

⁴¹Dyer, *Making a Living in the Middle Ages*, p.322.

⁴²Grenville, *Medieval Housing*, pp.107-113.

⁴³John Scott Colley, 'Fulgens and Luces: Politics and Aesthetics', *Zeitschrift für Anglistik und Amerikanistik* 23 (1975): 322-30; Godfrey, 'Nervous laughter'.

⁴⁴*Fulgens and Luces*, I.126-146. See Godfrey, 'Nervous Laughter', pp.87-89.

to the senate or a disinterested party.⁴⁵ She only agrees to do so if her judgement is not taken as a precedent. After she has chosen Gaius as the more noble man, she takes pains to justify her decision to B and hence to the audience.⁴⁶

This kind of painstaking explanation reveals a high level of sensitivity about Lucre's judgement. Usually critics have accounted for this nervousness by seeing it as a tactful form of back-peddalling from a triumphant celebration of the rise of new men, in order to respect the sensibilities of nobles from old established families.⁴⁷ However, far from allaying noble fears, *Fulgens and Lucre* is trying to incite them, as the play deliberately calls attention to the disturbing implications of the action, as far as nobles are concerned. For example, at the beginning of the play, the text exaggerates Lucre's final judgement. When A hears the outline of the action from his friend B, he expresses horror that the play is going to 'afferme that a chorles son / Sholde be more noble than a gentleman born'.⁴⁸ In fact, there is not such a stark contrast between Gaius and Cornelius as A implies. Grantley points out the introduction of the sub-plot, featuring the servants A, B and Jone, serves to emphasise the inherent nobility of both Gaius and Cornelius.⁴⁹ The structure of the play underlines the fact that both Gaius and Cornelius are noble, having more in common with each other than either has with A or B. The action of the play is concerned with the relative nobility of two noble men, rather than categorising one as noble and the other as not noble.

The inducing of anxiety about nobility is intended to give an edge to the play's lessons about noble masculinity. Indeed the 'nervous' sections of the play - those parts concerned to qualify or clarify the message of the play with regard to nobility - stress that the best kind of noble is not actually represented in the play at all. If Cornelius does not stand for the ideal of nobility, then neither does Gaius. When Lucre and B discuss Lucre's decision, Lucre notes that there exists a better kind of nobility, than that represented either by Cornelius or Gaius. B asks Lucre to consider the case of a 'gentilman bore' with 'gode maners to his birth accordyng'.⁵⁰ Lucre replies that:

Suche one is worthy more lawde and praysyng

⁴⁵*Fulgens and Lucre*, II.414-33.

⁴⁶*Ibid.*, II.752-807. See Godfrey, 'Nervous Laughter', pp.89-90.

⁴⁷Colley, *Fulgens and Lucre*, pp.323-324.

⁴⁸*Fulgens and Lucre*, I.130-131.

⁴⁹Grantley, *Wit's Pilgrimage*, p.61.

⁵⁰*Fulgens and Lucre*, II.780-81.

Than many of them that hath their begynnyng
Of low kynred, ellis God forbede! -
I wyll not aferme the contrary for my hede,

For in that case ther may be no comparyson! (II.783-87)

At the end of the play, B concludes that the text's aim is to incite 'gentilmen of name [...] to eschew / the wey of vyce and favour vertue'.⁵¹ The text uses anxiety about noble status as a way of encouraging noble men to work out their noble masculinity, as Gaius does, rather than to take their noble status for granted, as Cornelius does. It uses the threat of a loss of noble privileges in competition with other nobles in order to lend urgency to this task.

Like the other interludes considered in this thesis, *Fulgens and Lucrez* is ultimately reassuring, in that it points to ways in which noble power may be preserved. In *Nature* and *The Worlde and the Chylde*, the operations of male nature ensure that the male characters repent in time to be saved.⁵² In *The Worlde and the Chylde*, man as Age does suffer penury in old age as the result of his youthful wastefulness, but in *Nature*, Man's property and status never seem to be in serious jeopardy. *The Interlude of Youth* indicates the possibility of repentance and reform at a relatively early stage of life.⁵³ There is no indication that Calisto in *Calisto and Melebea* or Cornelius in *Fulgens and Lucrez* are reformed, but these texts do offer positive role-models of noble masculinity in the form of Gaius in *Fulgens and Lucrez*, and the older nobles, Danio in *Calisto and Melebea* and Fulgens in *Fulgens and Lucrez*.

So far this section has discussed the politics of noble masculinity in terms of the maintenance of noble power in a general sense. The re-negotiation of noble masculinity through young male characters apparent in an interlude like *Fulgens and Lucrez* might also relate to the anxieties and uncertainties of individual nobles, in their continual work to consolidate and extend the noble power enjoyed by themselves and their noble line. The remainder of this section will discuss how *Fulgens and Lucrez* might reflect the strategies

⁵¹Ibid., II.891-94.

⁵²Potter, *English Morality Play*, pp.48, 51, 61, 65-66.

⁵³Grantley interprets Pride's references to Youth's 'thin' clothing as evidence that youth has been brought to penury in through his tavern life. See Grantley, *Wit's Pilgrimage*, p.147. This may be an ironic reference: Youth has had no opportunity in the play to don the 'gay' garments which Pride sees as an essential marker of noble status at l.348. Youth's clothes are not particularly poor, but they appear so in Pride's mind in comparison with the splendid garments Pride prefers.

of a noble, and will discuss the interlude in relation to Lady Margaret Beaufort, Countess of Richmond and Derby, and mother of Henry VII. Olga Horner first suggested that the interlude should be read in connection with the figure of Lady Margaret.⁵⁴ Horner noted the way in which the figure of Lucrez dominates the closing section of the play, and showed how Lucrez's role as a judge, or more strictly an arbitrator between Gaius and Cornelius, parallels Lady Margaret's role in arbitration and the administration of justice in midlands and east Anglia.⁵⁵ The motif of a young noblewoman's choice between two suitors may also be intended as a reference to a tale regarding Lady Margaret's personal history, and her choice between two suitors as a girl.⁵⁶ While making persuasive parallels between the play and Lady Margaret's circumstances, Horner did not really go on to suggest how the noble ideologies of the play might be addressing the case of Lady Margaret. How might the question of anxious masculinity be relevant to her?

As many scholars have indicated, *Fulgens and Lucrez* is a play closely engaged with the issue of marital politics. As mentioned above, questions of marriage were of vital interest to nobles, and played a central role in their dynastic strategies.⁵⁷ Successful marriages ensured the continuation of family lines and the preservation of estates. For great nobles they were also almost inevitably a political decision, a means of making or cementing alliances with other families, to the advantage of all. Several readings of the play have focused on the political ramifications of marriage in suggesting their relevance to topical events. Following Boas and Reed's suggestion that *Fulgens and Lucrez* was performed for the Spanish ambassadors to London in 1497, Kipling saw the play as addressing the negotiations for a marriage between prince Arthur and Katherine of Aragorn.⁵⁸ In Kipling's reading, the play is an apologia for the relatively obscure origins of Arthur, the scion of a newly established royal house. This of course depends on the audience reading the low-born but virtuous Gaius in the play as representing Arthur. It is perhaps unlikely that Henry VII would have approved of his son and heir being portrayed in such a disparaging light, even

⁵⁴Olga Horner, 'Fulgens and Lucrez: An Historical Perspective', *METH* 15 (1993): 49-86.

⁵⁵Ibid., pp.67-71.

⁵⁶Ibid., p.71.

⁵⁷Kate Mertes, 'Aristocracy', in R Horrox (ed.), *Fifteenth-Century Attitudes: Perceptions of Society in Late Medieval England* (Cambridge, 1994), pp.42-60 (pp.45-47).

⁵⁸Gordon Kipling, *The Triumph of Honour: Burgundian Origins of the Elizabethan Renaissance* (Leiden, 1977), pp.20-21.

indirectly. Godfrey, on the other hand, explains the high degree of tension about the issues of nobility and marriage in the play with reference to the marriage in 1515 of Charles Brandon, the newly created duke of Suffolk, to Mary Tudor, the recently widowed queen of France, and sister to Henry VIII.⁵⁹ In his reading the play acts as a kind of apologia for Brandon's presumption in marrying Mary, given the disparity between them, and more particularly given the fact that they married without Henry's permission.

Lady Margaret Beaufort was also a figure closely engaged in the business of marital politics. She took a leading role in the festivities for royal marriages. She gave a dinner for Katherine of Aragon's entourage at the Coldharbour in London following Katherine's arrival in England in 1501.⁶⁰ The entertainments included performances by two companies of actors. The celebrations for Margaret Tudor's marriage at Lady Margaret's manor at Collyweston in 1503 also included dramatic performances.⁶¹ A performance of a play like *Fulgens and Luces* in Lady Margaret's festivities for Katherine and Margaret might therefore function in as a way of celebrating a noble woman who had made (in terms of Tudor policy) the right choice in marriage, and had thereby contributed towards notable foreign policy successes.

Lady Margaret was, however, also a key player in the making of other marriages, particularly of high-born aristocratic women to her more modest kin. Jones and Underwood have suggested that Margaret was the driving force behind the marriage of her kinsman John Welles to Cecily of York, daughter of Edward IV, in 1487.⁶² There is direct evidence of Margaret's involvement in the aftermath of Cecily's next marriage to Thomas Kyme of Friskney in 1502.⁶³ Not only did Cecily arouse the king's displeasure by marrying without permission, but she chose to marry a gentleman of low degree. Kyme was only an esquire. Margaret protected the couple by allowing them to live at Collyweston, and negotiated an agreement with the king which secured Cecily and her husband both an exemption from the fines which would otherwise have been imposed, and property on which to live.⁶⁴ In another

⁵⁹Godfrey, 'Nervous Laughter', pp.91-95.

⁶⁰Michael K Jones and Malcolm G Underwood, *The King's Mother: Lady Margaret Beaufort, Countess of Richmond and Derby* (Cambridge, 1992), p.166.

⁶¹Ibid, p.84.

⁶²Ibid., pp.126-27.

⁶³Ibid., pp.134-35.

⁶⁴Ibid., p.162.

case, Margaret helped to organise what Jones and Underwood described as the 'extraordinarily advantageous match' between her relative Richard Pole and Margaret Plantagenet, daughter of the duke of Clarence.⁶⁵ These marriages certainly seem to illustrate Margaret's promotion of suitors of relatively undistinguished birth, and support for an aristocratic woman who has made an independent choice of such a suitor. *Fulgens and Luces* may in other words represent a justification of what might otherwise look like Margaret's practice of advancing her kinsmen through ambitious marriages to aristocratic women.

While it is clear that *Fulgens and Luces* would speak to Lady Margaret's role in marital politics, it is perhaps less obvious that someone like Lady Margaret would feel the painful interest in the problems of noble masculinity as discussed above. Quite apart from the fact that she was not a man, there were no doubts about her nobility. However, as we have seen above, noble masculinity is bound up with questions of power and the exercise of power; and anxieties about noble masculinity may be regarded as anxieties about the maintenance of power. Again, it might seem that Lady Margaret had little to be anxious about since, following the accession of her son, she had enjoyed an almost unparalleled position as a power in the land. She had been a great heiress in her own right, but the Great Grant of lands to her by the king in 1487 made her one of the richest nobles in England.⁶⁶ Lady Margaret was regarded as a trusted confidante of the king,⁶⁷ so much so that her household at Collyweston, in Northamptonshire was established as the headquarters of an 'unofficial council of the midlands' between 1499 and 1505.⁶⁸ And yet Lady Margaret was afflicted by anxieties about the maintenance of her position and that of the new Tudor dynasty. In his month's mind sermon after her death, Fisher describes Lady Margaret's fears that the prosperity the new dynasty enjoyed would not last. At times of great rejoicing, she would 'say that some aduersyte wolde folowe - when she was in prosperite she was in drede of the aduerste for to come'.⁶⁹ Although the reign of Henry VII has often been characterised as introducing a new stability to English government, particularly by historians of royal

⁶⁵Ibid., p. 82.

⁶⁶Ibid., p. 100.

⁶⁷Ibid., pp. 75-76.

⁶⁸Ibid., pp. 86-90.

⁶⁹John Fisher, *The English Works of John Fisher, Bishop of Rochester*, EETS, ES 27 (1876), pp. 305-30.

finances and household administration, Henry VII's position was by no means secure.⁷⁰ Polydore Vergil's account of the reign of Henry VII, the first version of which was written in 1512-13, gives the impression of a reign lurching from one crisis to another, as Henry fends off insurgents and pretenders, political threats from abroad, and skirmishes on the borders of Scotland and Wales.⁷¹ The anxious masculinities of *Fulgens and Lucrez* might then represent the dynastic anxieties of the Tudors, concerned with justifying their new royal status and maintaining their line.

Lady Margaret also had to negotiate legal and political ideologies in assuming so much political authority for the governance of the midlands. Henry VII and Lady Margaret used various means to construct an identity as a political governor. Margaret was provided with the basis for her political power in the Great Grant of lands in 1487.⁷² This land provided her with the basis of power, since it automatically necessitated political relationships of good lordship and service between Lady Margaret and people in the locality.⁷³ However, Lady Margaret, as the wife of Thomas Stanley, earl of Derby, was in terms of legal and political ideologies in a notably powerless position. Under the common law, for example, married women were regarded as merged with the person of their husband, so that all legal business had to be conducted through him. Noblewomen only came into their own as lords of their own lands as widows. Lady Margaret and Henry VII took several steps to establish Lady Margaret as a power in her own right. The first parliament of Henry's reign conferred on her the status of *femme sole*.⁷⁴ This legal status was one which had been adopted up until this point only by married women of the middling sort, because it allowed them to trade as if they were single women.⁷⁵ This gave Margaret the right to sue, to have lawful title and property, to take and receive feoffments, deeds, presentments and sales of property.⁷⁶ In other words, it gave Lady Margaret the opportunity

⁷⁰John L. Watts, 'Introduction: History, The Fifteenth Century and the Renaissance', in idem (ed.), *The End of the Middle Ages? England in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries* (Thrupp, Gloucs., 1998), pp. 1-22.

⁷¹Dennis Hay (ed. and trans.), *The Anglica Historia of Polydore Vergil, 1485-1537*, Camden Society, Third Series 74 (1950).

⁷²Jones and Underwood, *King's Mother*, p. 100.

⁷³Mertes, 'Aristocracy', pp. 49-50.

⁷⁴Jones and Underwood, *King's Mother*, p. 99.

⁷⁵Caroline Barron, 'The "Golden Age" of Women in Medieval London', *Reading Medieval Studies* 15 (1989): 35-58.

⁷⁶Jones and Underwood, *King's Mother*, pp. 98-99.

to manage her estates in her own person without reference to her husband. However, Lady Margaret had no need of the economic benefits *femme sole* status, as the women of London did. In her case, it also had an important symbolic function: by ensuring her unfettered authority over her property, *femme sole* status also signalled her capacity to exercise without reference to a husband's authority the political agency that went with the ownership of great estates.

Margaret Beaufort's independence of her husband was further emphasised through a vow of chastity taken in 1499.⁷⁷ Jones and Underwood suggest that her vow is an indication of Henry VII's suspicion of the Stanley family's loyalty: the vow is a symbolic way of distancing her from them.⁷⁸ This action coincides with Lady Margaret's establishment of a separate household at Collyweston.⁷⁹ The rebuilding of the manor house at Collyweston was itself a political act, which emphasised that Lady Margaret's new household was fitted for her role as a political governor of the region. The new building incorporated a new council chamber and a prison, and so was clearly designed in practical terms to facilitate the business of Lady Margaret's council as the 'unofficial council of the midlands'.⁸⁰ Lady Margaret's vow, and the rebuilding of Collyweston can be seen in terms of a series of strategic moves, designed to create an ideological as well as a physical space in which Lady Margaret could operate as an independent political ruler. The fact that they needed to be undertaken at all reveals a level of anxiety about gender and power. They are the tactics of those who are attempting to forestall any attacks on Lady Margaret's authority on the basis of her gender and married status.

How might Lady Margaret's anxieties about power be related to the negotiations of noble masculinity in *Fulgens and Lucretia*? As we have seen above, the ability to exercise political authority is thoroughly gendered, since it is related to the development of male bodies. Young men represent political incompetence, because their reason - the intellectual facility which enables men to be wise, prudent and so on - is underdeveloped. They are ruled instead by their passions, incited by the humoral make-up of the young male body, while old male bodies produce the qualities connected with effective rule. In this discourse, women

⁷⁷Ibid., pp. 153-54.

⁷⁸Ibid., p. 154.

⁷⁹Ibid., pp. 154-70.

⁸⁰Ibid., pp. 154-70. See also Michael K Jones, 'Collyweston: An Early Tudor Palace', in D Williams (ed.), *England in the Fifteenth Century* (Woodbridge, 1987), pp. 129-41.

were often equated with the young in terms of their ability to rule, because of their natural lack of reason. Trevisa's translation of Giles of Rome's *De regimine principum* states that:

In sum wise femeles ben, oþer semeþ þat þei ben in comparisoun to maules as children of inparfit age to men of fol age [...because] children cunneþ not so moche resoun as men of ful age, for a child is as it were a man not compleet and parfit.⁸¹

The text continues:

Wymmen counsaile is feble as it is iseid, primo Poeticorum. for as a child hap vnparfit3 counsaile for he faileth of perfeccioun of man, so a womman hap feble counsaile for þei ben feble of complexioun and failen of þe strengþe of man.⁸²

Female bodies render women unfit for rule, just as male bodies produce political aptitude. The text, however, suggests that women enter old age more quickly than men, in both body and mind, so that they are able to give counsel sooner.⁸³ Lady Margaret would have considerable difficulty in calling on the discourses of good government to support her new role as a governor, indeed they would provide scope for calling her governance into question, and this might account for the unusual features of *Fulgens and Lucre* comparison with the other interludes of youth, discussed here.

Fulgens and Lucre does not work by presenting the life-course of a young man as *Nature*, *The Worlde and the Chylde*, and *The Intlerude of Youth*, which relate the young man's inability to rule closely to his physical development. Instead *Fulgens and Lucre* presents two young male characters who are diametrically opposed: Cornelius, the well-born but vicious nobleman; and Gaius the low-born but virtuous nobleman. *Fulgens and Lucre* is unusual in presenting us with Gaius who is a positive role model of how to be a noble man, alongside Cornelius who conforms in many respects to the models of aberrant young masculinity depicted in other plays.

⁸¹DC Fowler, CF Briggs and PG Remely (eds.), *The Governance of Kings and Princes: John Trevisa's Middle English Translation of the De regimine principum of Aegidius Romanus* (New York, 1997), p.197, ll.1-24.

⁸²Ibid., p.206, ll.32-35.

⁸³Ibid., p.207, ll.16-20.

As Horner notes, aspects of both Cornelius's concept of nobility, and that of Gaius's are evident in Lady Margaret's way of living.⁸⁴ Like Gaius she devoted herself to 'study', a quality to which Fisher draws attention in his month's mind sermon for Lady Margaret.⁸⁵ She was a translator of several devotional books, the owner of others, and was associated with the printing of texts.⁸⁶ This was not purely intellectual activity, but was also the expression of Lady Margaret's piety. Her religious devotion and charity took many other forms, such as the daily round of observances in her household, her patronage of scholars and colleges, her links with the Carthusian order, her devotion to the name of Jesus.⁸⁷ Like Gaius she could say that 'I have borne unto God all my daies / His laude and prayse with my due devocion' and shown 'charitable affeccyon' to her neighbours.⁸⁸ If Gaius is able to justify the fact that he 'rulyd the comen wele' by appealing to these moral virtues, then so could Lady Margaret.⁸⁹

Nonetheless, Lady Margaret also had a great deal in common with Cornelius.⁹⁰ She was able to trace her noble lineage back to John of Gaunt (though this connection was tainted by illegitimacy and adultery), and her pride in her family line is evident from commissioned a collection of pedigrees.⁹¹ Like Cornelius, she had inherited substantial estates which made her into one of the great heiresses of England. Like Cornelius, Lady Margaret understood the importance of house-holding to noble power. She was certainly not afraid to show the magnificence expected of a ruler, as accounts of her hospitality and daily way of life indicate.⁹² However, unlike Cornelius, Lady Margaret's consumption was

⁸⁴Horner, *'Fulgens and Lucrez'*, pp.73-74.

⁸⁵Fisher, *English Works*, pp.291-92. See also Horner, *'Fulgens and Lucrez'*, p.73.

⁸⁶On Lady Margaret's literary activities, see Jones and Underwood, *King's Mother*, pp. 180-81. See also Jennifer Summit, 'William Caxton, Margaret Beaufort and the Romance of Female Patronage', in L. Smith and JHM Taylor (eds), *Women, the Book and the Worldly* (Cambridge, 1995), pp.151-65; and Susan Powell, 'Lady Margaret Beaufort and her Books', *The Library*, Sixth Series 20 (1998): 197-240.

⁸⁷Jones and Underwood, *King's Mother*, pp. 171-229. See also Malcolm G Underwood, 'Politics and Piety in the Household of Lady Margaret Beaufort', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 38 (1987):39-52.

⁸⁸*Fulgens and Lucrez*, I.672-75.

⁸⁹*Fulgens and Lucrez*, I.97.

⁹⁰Horner, *'Fulgens and Lucrez'*, p.74.

⁹¹Jones and Underwood, *King's Mother*, pp.17-35.

⁹²*Ibid.*, pp.154-59, p.166.

carefully counterbalanced by a rigorous round of religious observance in the household, along with prudent financial control of her income.

The political ideologies implicit in *Fulgens and Lucre*s allow a figure like Lady Margaret to disclose her own noble nature and by extension her capacity to govern in relation to Cornelius and Gaius. In fact, the play allows her to position herself as superior both to Cornelius and to Gaius. She is able to display the nobility of moral virtue, which is fundamental to political competence in Aristotelian thought, and so is a better kind of governor than Cornelius, absorbed in his lifestyle of conspicuous consumption. At the same time, she enjoys the nobility of ancestry and inherited wealth, and this makes her superior to Gaius. She is that better kind of noble that the interlude defines as 'worthy of more lawde and praying / Than many of them that hath their begynnyng / Of low kynred'.⁹³ Her superior nobility is at the same time a justification for her exercise of political authority.

The benefit to Lady Margaret of the kind of negotiation of noble identities played out in *Fulgens and Lucre*s is that it avoids the kind of biological essentialism so apparent in the interludes *Nature* or *The Worlde and the Chylde*. These plays relate vice and virtue, and by extension the ability to manage servants and households and kingdoms, to the operations of male bodies. This is not a discourse on which Lady Margaret could easily call. Like Gaius, she had to show that she had transcended a nature inimical to good rule. Where Gaius disciplined his essentially youthful nature and made himself into a mature man, Lady Margaret had to transcend her female nature and made herself into a mature noble man: that is, one able to exercise political authority in a competent way. Unlike traditional noble masculinity based around the martial prowess, the nobility based on political virtues is one which a woman can appropriate - not easily perhaps, but still it is possible to do so. This may also be the reason that Gaius's ability as a soldier and commander is only alluded to briefly in *Fulgens and Lucre*s, and there is much greater emphasis on piety and study. Like Gaius, Lady Margaret would be able to draw attention to these kind of activities as evidence of the reformed inner nature, and in turn her ability to wield the political power with which she had been invested.

⁹³*Fulgens and Lucre*s, II.783-85.

The politics of youth

As we have seen, political competence is both gendered and age-related in interlude texts. The fact that male life-cycles are invested with political significance makes them suitable to be appropriated in high political contexts in order to make oblique references to personalities and politics. This means, then, that a play like *Nature* has the potential to serve as a sophisticated politically allusive drama, rather than simply being a dull morally didactic piece. Its political allusiveness would have been more easily apparent in performance in a high political context, where meanings would be brought to the audience's attention through the disposition of space, the gestures of the actors and the associations which prominent political figures in the audience carried with them. This part of the chapter will explore how the politics of youth, inherent in *Nature* and in *The Interlude of Youth* might have operated in performance in the households of Cardinal John Morton, Archbishop of Canterbury and Henry Algernon Percy, earl of Northumberland respectively.

In the course of a long and eventful political career, John Morton had often found himself at the centre of political controversy.⁹⁴ In fact, there is some evidence that Morton was used to being the focus of political drama. A record survives of one at least one quasi-dramatic performance before Morton, long before Morton was established as Henry VII's counsellor and chancellor, which suggests how the presence of this high-profile politician was used to call forth particular political meanings from an apparently innocuous didactic text. At Morton's installation as Bishop of Ely in 1478, the banquet held in his honour was accompanied by a subtlety which has come to be known as *Pastor bonus*.⁹⁵ The subtlety included a dialogue between two characters: Pastor Bonus (Christ) and a Bishop, whom Christ charges to look after his sheep, following Christ's injunctions to Peter.⁹⁶ The Bishop acts as a kind of proxy for Morton, who is not only being enjoined to fulfil his duties well,

⁹⁴For Morton's career, see AB Emden, *Biographical Register of the University of Cambridge to 1500* (Cambridge, 1963), pp.412-13; Christopher Harper-Bill, *The Register of John Morton, Archbishop of Canterbury, 1486-1500*, 3 vols., Canterbury and York Society 75, 78, 89 (1987, 1991, 2000), 1:vii-x.

⁹⁵The text has been transcribed and edited by Anne Brannen: see eadem, 'Intricate Subtleties: Entertainment at Bishop Morton's Installation Feast', *Records of Early English Drama Newsletter* 22 (1997): 2-11.

⁹⁶John 21:15-17.

but is made to utter a promise to do so through this character. As Anne Brannen has suggested, given the political context of the installation it seems likely that there are political undertones to this proto-drama. Due to his support for the Lancastrian cause Morton had been included in the Bill of Attainder of November 1461, but following the Battle of Tewkesbury received a royal pardon in 1471.⁹⁷ After the reversal of his attainder in 1472, Morton became master of the Rolls, and was a royal councillor by the end of 1473. The subtlety reminds Morton that he owes his appointment to the ‘habundant grace / Of king Edward’ as much as to Christ.⁹⁸ In representing the Bishop as making promises of faithful service to Pastor Bonus, the subtlety may also be reminding Morton of his obligation of faithful service to his earthly king. The Bishop’s promise to ‘expel al rebel’ from the church, for example, looks like a particularly pointed reference to Morton’s own past rebelliousness towards Edward.⁹⁹ This reading of this simple dialogue is only possible because we know that Morton was present, and that he was a figure charged with political significance from his eventful past. Understanding Morton’s personal history and recent political adventures, it might well have been difficult for audiences not to read a political interpretation into these lines.

By the end of the fifteenth century, when *Nature* may have been performed before him, Morton was a political ‘player’ of even greater importance, indeed he was one of the most influential figures in England. Following the death of Edward IV, Morton had escaped imprisonment at the hands of Richard III, and allied himself with the Lancastrian cause during a period of continental exile.¹⁰⁰ Under Henry VII, Morton became Lord Chancellor and Archbishop of Canterbury in 1486, and in 1493 was created cardinal priest of St. Anastasia. Contemporary observers viewed him as one of a very few who had any significant influence over the king.¹⁰¹ During this period of his life, there is some further evidence of Morton’s patronage of the arts, for political ends. As Archbishop of Canterbury, Morton was the patron of entertainers who were rewarded for their performances by towns in Kent. Musicians under his patronage (described in the records as ‘mynstrell’ or ‘ministrall’) are

⁹⁷Harper-Bill, *Register*, 1:viii.

⁹⁸Brannen, ‘Intricate Subtleties’, p.6.

⁹⁹Ibid., p.7.

¹⁰⁰Harper-Bill, *Register*, 1:viii-ix.

¹⁰¹MM Condon, ‘Ruling Elites in the Reign of Henry VII’, in Charles D Ross (ed.), *Patronage, Pedigree and Power in Later Medieval England* (Gloucester, 1979), pp.109-42: see pp.128-29.

recorded as having visited Dover in 1498-90, and New Romney in 1498-99, 1499-1500 and 1500-01.¹⁰² This patronage is associated with Morton's lordship of the estates of Canterbury. By the fifteenth century wealthy bishops were managing their estates in ways similar to secular noble households, and using the income from them to express their status through the household, as secular nobles did.¹⁰³ The payment of Morton's entertainers was one way in which the towns of Kent acknowledged his good lordship, and the touring of his entertainers acted as a way of managing his relationships with towns in the locality.

Other evidence of entertainments within Morton's household is anecdotal and creates an image of the household as a centre of intellectual life. In the well-known anecdote from the *Life of More*, Roper illustrates More's precocity as a young man, by describing his acting in entertainments before Morton.¹⁰⁴ Roper reports that Morton commented on the 'wit and towardness' which More demonstrated by ad libbing his lines. The anecdote suggests that dramatic performance may have been a regular feature of Morton's household life, rather than just a seasonal entertainment, possibly performances intended to promote the rhetorical skills of the young men being educated in his household. Later in the sixteenth century, young scholars at schools and universities acted in Terentian plays in order to further their education.¹⁰⁵ Barclay also praises Morton for his patronage of the arts, and presents him as a model 'Maecenas' for later and less generous patrons, though he does not indicate the kinds of artistic endeavour which Morton patronised.¹⁰⁶ *Nature* is a sophisticated play which fits into this sophisticated intellectual milieu.

Nature is also, however, a discussion of different kinds of rule and government, and this preoccupation is evident from the range of references to different forms of authority at

¹⁰²James M Gibson (ed.), *REED: Kent: Diocese of Canterbury*, 3 vols (London and Toronto, 2002), 2:384, 756-57.

¹⁰³FRH Du Boulay, *The Lordship of Canterbury: An Essay on Medieval Society* (London, 1966), pp.251-64. See also Felicity Heal, *Of Prelates and Princes: A Study of the Economic and Social position of the Tudor Episcopate* (Cambridge, 1980), p.4; eadem, 'The Archbishops of Canterbury and the Practice of Hospitality', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 33 (1982): 544-63; eadem, *Hospitality in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 1990), pp.246-48; CM Woolgar, *The Great Household in late Medieval England* (New Haven and London, 1999), pp.1-7.

¹⁰⁴William Roper, *The Lyfe of Sir Thomas Moore, Knighte*, ed. Elsie Vaughan Hitchcock, EETS, OS 197 (1935), p.5.

¹⁰⁵Grantley, *Wit's Pilgrimage*, pp.48-54.

¹⁰⁶Alexander Barclay, *The Eclogues of Alexander Barclay from the Original Edition by John Cawood*, ed. Beatrice White, EETS, OS 175 (1928), I.494-550, IV.498-518. See also Fox, *Politics and Literature*, pp.47, 52.

the beginning of the play. Nature describes herself as god's 'mynyster', a term which denotes a servant or more specifically an official carrying out specific functions on behalf of one of higher authority.¹⁰⁷ Nature appoints Reason to 'governe' Man.¹⁰⁸ Man is, according to *The Worlde*, 'ordeyned to regne here in thys empy' of the natural world.¹⁰⁹ As discussed above in Chapter Three, the young Man's choice of the evil counsellor over the good, and his failure to govern his servants effectively are short-hand references to later medieval political discourses, where the evaluation of counsel is a key test for rulers. In this discourse, the rule of the body (in terms of maintaining moral self-discipline) and the rule of the household come to stand for the rule of the kingdom. *Nature* links the rule of the body with the rule of the household by presenting the sins who afflict Man as the members of a noble household. The discussion of different kinds of rule in the play also implies a discussion of political competence, if we understand rule of the body and the household as symbolic of political governance, as it is in later medieval political discourse.

These discussions were relevant to Morton in a number of ways, and it is possible to interpret a number of elements as partially veiled references to potentially sensitive issues in which he was concerned. Morton, like many of the characters in the play, was a governor and a ruler in a number of different senses. He was the head of his own noble household, like Man; but in political terms his functions were more akin to those of other figures in *Nature*. As Lord Chancellor, he was responsible, under the king, for the administration of justice in equity. As Horner has pointed out, the judgement of Lucre in *Fulgens and Lucre* is modelled on legal procedures familiar to Morton in his capacity of a judge in the equity courts of Chancery, Star Chamber, and the royal council.¹¹⁰ Courts of equity were considered to be courts of 'conscience', where it was incumbent on judges to give judgements in accordance with the spirit or 'mind' of the law, with a view to righting manifest wrongs, rather than the letter of the law.¹¹¹ That is, they were intended to offer redress on a case-by-case basis to any who had been unable to obtain justice in other courts,

¹⁰⁷*Nature*, I.4. See also MED, q.v. 'ministre' (n.).

¹⁰⁸*Nature*, I.101, 159, 160.

¹⁰⁹*Ibid.*, I.422.

¹¹⁰Horner, '*Fulgens and Lucre*', pp.61-64. See also Nicholas Pronay, 'The Chancellor, The Chancery and the Council at the End of the Fifteenth Century', in H Hearder and HR Loyn (eds), *British Government and Administration Studies Presented to SB Chrimes* (Cardiff, 1974), pp.87-103.

¹¹¹Horner, '*Fulgens and Lucre*', p.62.

or whose case lay beyond the scope of the legal codes which operated there. Morton's function as a judge in equity is commented on in *Nature*, when early in the play Sensualyte petitions The Worlde that Reason should be removed from his position as Man's chief counsellor. Sensualyte's request for redress request takes a form strongly reminiscent of the petitions which were customarily addressed to Morton in the court of Chancery.¹¹² Such petitions alleged a wrong done to the plaintiff by a named individual or individuals, and requested a remedy for that wrong.¹¹³ Sensualyte's petition follows this form in alleging that Reason 'hath done me wrong' and requesting a remedy, that the Worlde should 'adnull the sentence / That Nature gave unto me by Reason's advyse'.¹¹⁴ Sensualyte even adopts a pose familiar from Chancery petitions of being poor and powerless in the face of a wealthy and powerful oppressor: he complains that Reason 'hath kept great estate / And had of me the overhand and strengar'.¹¹⁵ The court of Chancery existed to ensure that the advantages of wealth and power on the part of one party did not skew justice in his favour.

The depiction of The Worlde is a negative *exemplum* of a judge in equity. The Worlde, as the judge of this proceeding does not seem to be swayed by the dictates of conscience, but by those of his long-standing relationship of good lordship with Sensualyte. Sensualyte appeals to The Worlde because of their relationship of mutual obligation, as a noble and a member of his affinity.¹¹⁶ As Sensualyte says, the Worlde 'hath ben my good mayster meny a day', and this relationship engenders in Sensualyte confidence of redress.¹¹⁷ The Worlde's partiality is evident when he grants Sensualyte's petition without inviting Reason to respond to it, whereas it was standard Chancery practice to summon a defendant to reply to the charges before a judgement was given.¹¹⁸ A performance of *Nature* in the presence of Morton therefore almost inevitably acts as on one level as a piece of counsel, exhorting him by means of a negative example to fulfil his judicial duties according to the dictates of conscience, rather than those of personal interests.

¹¹²*Nature*, I.540-53. See William Paley Baildon, *Select Cases in Chancery, AD 1364 to 1471*, Selden Society Publications 10 (1896).

¹¹³Baildon, *Select Cases in Chancery*, pp.xii-xv.

¹¹⁴*Nature*, I.540-546.

¹¹⁵*Ibid.*, I.551-53. See Baildon, *Select Cases in Chancery*, pp.xxii-xxiii.

¹¹⁶Horrox, 'Service', pp.65-66; Mertes, 'Aristocracy', pp.47-49.

¹¹⁷*Nature*, I.244.

¹¹⁸Baildon, *Select Cases in Chancery*, pp.xiv-xv.

This part of the play alludes to principles with which Morton apparently wholeheartedly agreed. He is credited with a number of *dicta* which develop the idea of Chancery as a court of conscience, for example.¹¹⁹ In his capacity as the president of the court of Star chamber, Morton was the royal official to whom information on maintenance - the illegal retaining of followers by lords - was to be laid.¹²⁰ The Worlde's dealings with Sensualyte illustrate the evils of maintenance, in the form of the perversion of justice. One of the concerns of the legislation establishing the court of Star Chamber was that offences such as retaining worked to nullify the beneficial effects intended in the laws of the land.¹²¹ Rather, they produced instability, where there is no confidence in the law to protect one's person or one's property. In similar way, the relationship of mutual obligation between The Worlde and Sensualyte, perverts justice, because Sensualyte enjoys a greater degree of influence over the legal procedures of Chancery than Reason has. Maintenance renders Chancery practice inequitable, so that it becomes part of the abuses of the powerful, rather than a place of redress *against* the abuses of the powerful.

The play's depiction of the good and bad counsellors of a lord charged with the rule of an 'empry' takes on a particular resonance in the context of Morton's household. Morton was a member of Henry VII's Privy Council, and reputedly one of his most influential counsellors at that.¹²² As we have seen above in Chapter Two, the choice of counsellors and the evaluation of counsel was one of the defining characteristics of a king in later medieval political discourse. The capacity to deal with counsel and by extension to rule competently is, furthermore, age-related. In *Nature*, the young Man is a good example of the incompetent governance associated with young men, as he readily accepts all kinds of unsuitable counsellors, is open to manipulation through their flattery and their appeal to his baser instincts. Man rejects the good counsellor, Reason, and instead fills his household with evil counsellors, Sensualyte, Worldly Affeccyon and the deadly sins. The natural development of male bodies, however, ensures that Man attains the characteristics of a good governor over time. His sensual desires die away naturally as his body ages, and at last Reason is able to rule him. This conventional attribution of particular qualities - moral, intellectual, and political - to particular ages of man's life sets up an opposition between

¹¹⁹Horner, *'Fulgens and Lucrez'*, p.62.

¹²⁰Pronay, 'The Chancellor', p.99.

¹²¹Horner, *'Fulgens and Lucrez'*, p.52.

¹²²Condon, 'Ruling Elites', p.128.

youth and old age. Old age here stands for moral self-discipline, good household order, and an aptitude for the exercise of political authority.

How might the age-related concepts of counsel and good governance relate to Morton as a political figure? The depiction of the male life cycle in *Nature* is political in the widest sense that it supports a social system where positions of power are reserved for mature men. Late fifteenth- and early sixteenth-century society was resolutely gerontocratic, as social institutions, particularly in urban contexts, such as life-cycle service and apprenticeship kept young men and women under the authority of older men and women for an extended period, and delayed life-cycle events such as marriage.¹²³ The age-related political ideology of *Nature* justifies the exclusion of young noblemen from political office by referring to their essential nature: young men are simply incapable of ruling others. However, the play also provides young men with a reason to acquiesce in their own exclusion. According to *Nature*, the natural process which at first debar young men from positions of authority will, in time, guarantee their suitability for these same positions. Probably born c. 1420, Morton was in his seventies in the 1490s.¹²⁴ In all likelihood he was bearing the physical markers of age, which *Nature* invests with such significance. The play in effect glosses Morton's advancing years as a guarantee of his political aptitude.

There was good reason why Morton might have wanted to assure the wider world of his political trustworthiness during this period, and this is connected to *Nature*'s oblique references to the sin of covetousness. As discussed above in Chapter Two, *Nature* alludes briefly to this vice in connection with aging Man, as the only one of his sins-cum-servants who attends him into old age. However, as we saw in Chapter Two, *Nature* attempts to minimize the role of this sin, by making only a glancing reference to the vice in the form of

¹²³On the later medieval period, see PJP Goldberg, 'Marriage, Migration and Servanthood: The York Cause Paper Evidence', in idem, *Woman is a Worthy Wight': Women in English Society, c. 1200-1500* (Stroud, 1992), pp.1-15; idem, 'Masters and Men in Medieval England', in DM Hadley (ed.), *Masculinity in Medieval Europe* (London and New York, 1999), pp.56-70; Barbara A Hanawalt, *Growing Up in Medieval London: The Experience of Childhood in History* (Oxford, 1993); eadem, 'The Childe of Bristowe' and the Making of Middle-Class Adolescence', in eadem and D Wallace (eds), *Bodies and Disciplines: Intersections of Literature and History in Fifteenth-Century England* (Minneapolis, 1996), pp.155-78. On the early modern period, see Keith Thomas, 'Age and Authority in Early Modern England', *Proceedings of the British Academy* 62 (1976): 205-48; Susan Brigden, 'Youth and the English Reformation', *Past and Present* 95 (1982): 37-67; Ilana Krausman Ben-Amos, *Adolescence and Youth in Early Modern England* (London, 1994); Paul Griffiths, *Youth and Authority in England, 1560-1640* (Oxford, 1996).

¹²⁴Harper-Bill, *Register*, 1:vii.

the character Covetyse in the space of a few lines, and by not presenting covetousness as a fully realized stage presence, as is the case with the other deadly sins. The absence of covetousness from the stage is especially glaring in comparison with *The Castle of Perseverance* where the character Covetyse dominates the old age of the central character, Humanum Genus. The minimal presentation of covetousness in *Nature* is on one hand a further way further way of stressing the superiority of old age, at the expense of the period of youth.

The sin of covetousness disrupts *Nature*'s depiction of old age as the ideal period of a man's life, particularly the life of a governor. Like the other sins, covetousness in *Nature* has a political significance, in that it is evidence of the inability of the character Man to rule both himself and his household effectively. The fact that Man has to keep Covetyse's continued service in his household a secret from Reason is evidence that Man's body is not completely under the control of his rational powers, and that he is practising a form of self-deception with regard to his own moral character. This lack of self-governance is potentially symbolic of a continued inability to rule others effectively. Covetousness was, however, identified specifically in later medieval political texts as a political vice. In these texts covetousness is a characteristic of a bad ruler, and is opposed to the kingly virtue of magnificence, a liberal expenditure of money which reflects royal status.¹²⁵ In this system of thought, covetousness or avarice is a falling off from the ideal of magnificence, just as prodigality of money is. Magnificence is the moderate mean between these vices. In fact, the English translation of *De regimine principum* claims that if a king cannot be magnificent, it is better that he be a prodigal rather than a miser, in part because it views prodigality and covetousness as age-related conditions: prodigality, the characteristic of the young man will be cured naturally over time, as the man's body ages.¹²⁶ There is no such remedy for covetousness, which strikes just as the physical development of a man has run its course.

In the context of *Nature* and its performance in Morton's household, the covetousness of old age takes on a political symbolism, just as the sinfulness of youth does.

¹²⁵For discussions of magnificence, prodigality and avarice, see Horner, '*Fulgens and Lucrez*', pp.55-56; Walker, 'A Domestic Drama'; Scattergood, '*Skelton's Magnyfycence*'. Ferster discusses the political importance of concepts of magnificence to Henry IV and Henry V: see Ferster, *Fictions of Advice*, pp.139-47.

¹²⁶Fowler et al (eds.), *Governance of Kings and Princes*, p.77, ll.31-35.

As Bevington has noted, the issue of covetousness had a particular resonance for both Henry VII and Morton.¹²⁷ Henry VII was, according to chroniclers, accused of avarice by his contemporaries. Polydore Vergil, for example describes the king's rigorous exploitation of his prerogatives as proceeding 'ex cupiditate principis'.¹²⁸ Vergil also reports that in the last few years of his life Morton, along with Reginald Bray, began to be blamed for encouraging, or at least failing to curb his excesses. Vergil claims that Cornish rebels against the imposition of tax for campaigns against Scotland demanded the execution of Morton and Bray, 'illos malos...consiliarios'.¹²⁹ These passages reveal the ways in which criticism of royal policy is couched in terms of the language of political vice and virtue; and how critics habitually turned to the criticism of evil counsellors as a way avoiding a direct attack on the person of the king. Criticism of Henry VII could not be couched in terms of the political incompetence of young kings, as was the case with fourteenth-century criticism of Richard II.¹³⁰ Richard II's critics referred to the traditional inability of young men to evaluate counsel and counsellors in order to construct an image of him as a bad king. This strategy was not available to critics of Henry VII, since Henry was not conspicuously young. Instead they seized on the traditional political failings of old age, and recast accusations against the king's counsellors to suit this situation.

In *Nature*, the deliberate minimizing of the sin of covetousness as a sin of old age works to deflect criticism of royal policy, and of Morton's role in its implementation. Covetousness is, in this play, a temporary condition hardly, worthy of note. Nonetheless the text is careful to establish that Man keeps his chief counsellor, Reason, ignorant of Covetyse's service. As Sensualyte puts it, 'Reason may not thereof know'.¹³¹ This is a way of absolving Reason of any responsibility for Covetyse. *Nature* may act in one sense as a kind of *apologia* for Morton, a protestation that he, though councillor to the king, is not responsible for the king's political failings. It may, on the other hand, be intended as a more hard-hitting form of political counsel for Morton. *Nature* implies that, had Man's counsellor

¹²⁷Bevington, *Tudor Drama and Politics*, pp.53-54.

¹²⁸Hay (ed. and trans.), *Anglica historia*, p.26, l.22. Vergil makes further references to 'cupiditas' and 'avaritia' at ll.23, 27.

¹²⁹Ibid., p.92, ll.10-13. See also ibid., p.134, ll.1-3. See also CL Kingsford, *Chronicles of London* (Oxford, 1905), p.216.

¹³⁰Ferster, *Fictions of Advice*, pp.108-26.

¹³¹*Nature*, II.982.

Reason known about the continuing presence of Covetyse in Man's household, he would have taken forceful action against him. Covetyse is only secure while Reason remains ignorant of his on-going service. This acts as an oblique reminder to Morton of his own duties to the king. He - assumed to be fully cognizant of Henry's avaricious tendencies - has an over-riding obligation as the king's councillor to combat them, no matter how unpleasant or difficult a task this may be.

It is clear that the positive connotations of old age might work to the benefit of any mature nobleman, who wished an interlude like *Nature* to affirm his political competence. As we have seen in the discussion above, however, the conventional characteristics of old age might also be exploited to introduce potentially uncomfortable criticism - particularly when, as in the case of Morton, it is apparent that others apart from interlude writers were seizing on motifs from political discourse in order to voice their own criticism. Conversely, it is also clear that the negative connotations of youth offer a powerful vehicle for criticising young kings and young noblemen. As Ian Lancashire has pointed out, despite the fact that the depiction of Youth in *The Interlude of Youth*, is in many ways utterly conventional, nonetheless it has the potential to offer a powerful critique of young rulers. Lancashire located the performance of the interlude in the household of Henry Algernon Percy, fifth earl of Northumberland, and in this context the negative depiction of Youth can be understood as a critique of a young Henry VIII and his policies in the north, or as a critique of a young Lord Henry Percy and his youthful excesses.¹³²

The Interlude of Youth can also be understood as exploiting the political rhetoric of youth for positive ends: that is, in order to construct an image of both the earl and his son as competent rulers. Northumberland, it has been argued, was in the early part of the sixteenth century engaged in a process of bidding for political office.¹³³ He evidently felt he possessed a strong claim to offices such as the lieutenancy of the north, held by his father the fourth earl. The fifth earl's lifestyle of conspicuous consumption centred in his residences at Leconfield and Wressle, and his attempts to project an image of a well-ordered household through his investment in household ordinances, can be understood in this context as ways

¹³²Ian Lancashire (ed.), *Two Tudor Interludes: Youth and Hick Scornor* (Manchester, 1980), pp.28-29, 53-57.

¹³³ME James, *A Tudor Magnate and the Tudor State Henry Fifth Earl of Northumberland* (York, 1966).

of advertising his ability to undertake such offices.¹³⁴ Through his household Northumberland displayed the resources in terms of wealth and manpower which would enable him to undertake such roles; and he displayed his political competence through the orderly conduct of household life.

How might *The Interlude of Youth* contribute to this kind of political image-making in the Northumberland context? Lancashire has pointed out that the inclusion of Riot in the play may well function in a Northumberland context as an oblique reference to the earl's grievances. As Youth's companion, and one who incites him to violence and disorder, Riot stands not only for the instability conventionally associated with the young, but for political instability in the north.¹³⁵ The play hints that such unrest may only be assuaged by the strong hand of someone like the earl of Northumberland, rather than the licence permitted by the young king.

As we saw in Chapter Three, *The Interlude of Youth* is also a text attuned to political discourse of the princely mirror. The character Youth is a type of the bad governor, as well as the type of the sinful man. The text alerts us to the political significance of the figure Youth by presenting him as one who chooses evil counsel over good; and as one who submits to the manipulation of his own servant, rather than ruling his servant effectively. Youth's failures bespeak a political incompetence which ought to debar him from the political offices to which Northumberland aspired. However, as we saw in Chapter Two, the narrative of Youth's progress differs significantly from those depicted in *Nature, The Worlde and the Chylde* and the earlier *Castile of Perseverance*. *Youth* focuses on only one stage of life. This Age - youth - becomes the key Age in the life-cycle, where man faces the defining crisis of his life, as Youth repents and makes a decisive break with his previous way of life. In *Nature, The Worlde and the Chylde* and *The Castle of Perseverance*, the repentances of the young are unsatisfactory and short-lived, as the central characters soon lapse. In these plays, only the repentance of old age is true and lasting. By locating a true

¹³⁴Ruth Larsen, 'Expressions of Nobility: Conspicuous Consumption and Segregation in the Household of the Fifth Earl of Northumberland' (MA diss., University of York, 1998). The Northumberland household books are discussed above in Chapter Three. One of these texts has been published in Thomas Percy (ed.), *The Regulations and Establishment of the Household of Henry Algernon Percy the Fifth Earl of Northumberland* (London, 1770, repr. 1827). On the 'second' ms., see DM Barratt, 'A Second Northumberland Household Book', *Bodleian Library Record* 8 (1967-72): 93-98; and Ian Lancashire, 'Orders for Twelfth Day and Night circa 1515 in The Second Northumberland Household Book', *ELR* 10 (1980): 7-45.

¹³⁵Lancashire (ed.), *Two Tudor Interludes*, pp.56-57.

and lasting repentance in the period of youth, *The Interlude of Youth* therefore rebuts the age-related norms which associate male youth with sinfulness. Young men may be naturally prone to sin, but that does not mean that young men must remain sinful, and that old age is the only period appropriate to holy living, as Riot and Pride contend. The figure of Youth is not therefore a wholly negative one. Rather Youth manages to transcend his natural sinful nature, in an unusual and admirable way. Youth's capacity to reform himself is figured in his dismissal of Pride and Riot.¹³⁶ Youth shows the ability to discipline his own moral nature, putting from him his sinful inclinations. But since the sinful aspects of his nature are represented as Youth's servant and companion, Youth's moral reformation is also a household reformation. These actions, by extension, demonstrate a capacity for effective governance.

This clearly has implications for the kinds of political messages *The Interlude of Youth* might be sending. If we read presentation of Youth in the early part of the play as a satire of Henry VIII, then its conclusion acts as a form of counsel for the king. It proposes a course of action to remedy personal, household and public disorder, which begins with a personal reform by king. Once the king has set the realm of his body in good order, by disciplining his unruly youthful nature, then a household reform will follow, in the form of a repudiation of evil influences, whether evil servants or intimate friends. These reforms imply that by extension good order may then be established at the level of the kingdom.

In fact, Henry VIII was receiving advice couched in similar terms at around the time of the first performance of the interlude, in an English translation written in 1513-14 of Frulovisi's *Gesta Henrici Quinti*.¹³⁷ The prohem of the translation rather self-consciously denies that the text is intended for 'reproof of vice nor defaulte of vertue' in Henry, but nonetheless it presents the life of Henry V as a positive *exemplum* for Henry VIII to follow.¹³⁸ The translation's primary aim is that Henry VIII 'maie in all thinges concerninge his person and the reigement of his people conforme himselfe to his [i.e. Henry V's] life and manners, wch he vsed after his coronacion, and be councelled by the example of his greate

¹³⁶*Interlude of Youth*, ll. 742-61. References are to Lancashire (ed.), *Two Tudor Interludes*.

¹³⁷On Henry VIII's reception of counsel, see Greg Walker, *Persuasive Fictions: Faction, Faith and Political Culture* (Aldershot, 1996), pp. 14-26.

¹³⁸Charles Lethbridge Kingsford (ed.), *The First English Life of King Henry the Fifth* (Oxford, 1911), p. 3.

wisdom and discretion in all his common and particular Acts'.¹³⁹ This text implicitly links self-rule with the rule of nations, and implies that moral reform of the kind evinced in the story of Henry V's reformation at his coronation makes a better ruler. Moreover, the Translator urges Henry VIII to emulate specific kingly virtues demonstrated by Henry V: the virtues of justice, sexual continence, and humility.¹⁴⁰ As in princely mirrors, these virtues are not just those associated with good men, but they are political virtues 'most necessarie to euerie prince'.¹⁴¹ Henry V becomes an ideal king in part by undergoing a spiritual process of repentance, after following the promptings of his youthful nature. On changing his life, he confesses his past excesses to a 'vertuous Monk' and 'in all things...reformed and amended his life and his manners'.¹⁴² His acts no longer show 'youth nor wildnes' but the 'grauitie and discretion' of a mature man.¹⁴³ He summons his former friends, and though he rewards them, urges them to repent if they wish to remain in the court. He forbids his presence to any who refuse to forsake their old ways.

This piece of political advice literature indicates how easily a moral discourse elides with a political one in the sixteenth-century, and shows how readily *The Interlude of Youth* might be read as a kind of princely mirror. Like the English life of Henry V, *The Interlude of Youth* promotes sexual continence and humility, which can be presented as political virtues. It depicts a young nobleman undergoing a process of repentance, and commitment to a life of prayer and the instruction of others, which may have a political significance as much as a moral one. The depiction of moral reform in *The Interlude of Youth* could well act as a piece of political counsel for the young Henry VIII, as much as that in the life of Henry V. It teaches him how to make himself into a better ruler; and, perhaps more importantly, how to signal his political competence to a watching world, in a political language which the political establishment would understand.¹⁴⁴

¹³⁹Ibid., p.4. The second aim of the text is encourage Henry to pursue war with France.

¹⁴⁰Ibid., pp.4-5.

¹⁴¹Ibid., p.5.

¹⁴²Ibid., p.17.

¹⁴³Ibid.

¹⁴⁴Walker has argued that Skelton's *Magnificence*, which also depicts a process of moral and political reform by a prince, is a way of advertising Henry VIII's political competence, by drawing attention to Henry's household reform in the 'Expulsion of the Minions' of 1519. See Walker, 'A Domestic Drama'.

The ideology of youth apparent in *The Interlude of Youth* might equally have a more immediate application to the Northumberland household. The earl was adept at appropriating the literature of youth and noble education to transmit messages about the political competence of himself and his heir. Several verse texts apparently directed at the young with didactic purpose were added in the early sixteenth century to the Percy manuscript London, British Library, Royal MS 18.D.II while it was in the possession of the earl.¹⁴⁵ Like the earl's household books, this text was intended for display as much as instruction of the young: he was responsible for the addition to the manuscript of elaborate miniatures in Flemish style, and the new texts were written in display scripts.¹⁴⁶ The rubrics to the educational texts in the manuscript indicate that they were also displayed, as inscriptional verse, on the walls of Northumberland's manors at Leconfield and Wressle. Clearly the earl was interested advertising his investment in this style of literature.

In part the texts in the manuscript help to convey an impression of the earl's household as a well-ordered and efficiently governed institution. For example the, lyric 'Drede god and fle from syn', advises the reader carefully to regulate his behaviour within the household.¹⁴⁷ Though these injunctions are framed in moral terms - in terms of the pursuit of vice and the suppression of virtue - they promote behaviours familiar from fifteenth-century courtesy texts discussed in Chapter Two. The text instructs the reader to be restrained in speech: to 'Speke thy wordis discretely'; to 'Speke littill and trewly'; to 'Talke at thy dyner honestly', and to 'Discretly kepe thy tunge still'.¹⁴⁸ It encourages people to 'After thy degree pretend', a command which advises the young man to know his place.¹⁴⁹ The lyric also expresses a disapproval of boastfulness:

Avaunt neuyr of thy degree
If thoue haue a goode properte
Let other men commend & prayse the.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁵The ms. is described in George F Warner and Julius P Gilson (eds.), *Catalogue of the Western Manuscripts in the Old Royal and King's Collections*, 4 vols. (London, 1921), 2:308-10. The verses are printed in Ewald Flügel, 'Kleinere Mitteilungen aus Handschriften, 3: Die Proverbs van Lekenfield und Wresil (Yorks.)', *Anglia* 14 (1892): 471-97.

¹⁴⁶Warner and Gilson, *Catalogue of the Western Manuscripts*, 2:310.

¹⁴⁷Flügel, 'Kleinere Mitteilungen', pp.485-87.

¹⁴⁸Ibid., pp.485, 487.

¹⁴⁹Ibid., p.486.

¹⁵⁰Ibid., p.487.

The text demonstrates that Northumberland subscribes to the values of self-control and observance of rank. This in turn reflects on the earl's ability to regulate the behaviour of his household, and promotes an image of him as an able governor. A performance of *The Interlude of Youth* in the Northumberland household offers further opportunities to draw attention to the good manners exhibited by the earl's household, since the behaviour exhibited by Youth in the play stands in such stark contrast with these standards of behaviour. Youth's boastfulness and vaunting of his own status, his ambition for a status to which he has no real claim, and his violence towards Charity draw attention to the social conventions of great hall space by breaching them in a spectacular fashion.¹⁵¹ The figure of Youth throws the good order of the earl's household into sharp relief.

However, the reforming narrative of *The Interlude of Youth*, as a kind of princely mirror, may well have been addressed to Northumberland's heir, Lord Henry Percy. At least one of the verse texts from the Percy Manuscript is specifically associated with him, and is exploited in order to construct an image of him. The rubric at the beginning of this text - 'He that made this hous for contemplacion' - tells us that the original was inscribed on 'the rouf of my lorde percy closet' at Leconfield Manor.¹⁵² The text is presented as educational one, intended to encourage the young nobleman in the 'exercyse of lernynge and vertuus occupation', the activities for which the closet has been explicitly designed according to the opening lines of the text.¹⁵³ The manuscript text goes out of its way to create an image of the young Percy pouring over his books in the private space of the closet. In other words, it makes visible activities which by their very nature would remain invisible to others. As the text itself makes clear, these activities are connected with the obtaining of political offices, of the kind to which the earl aspired for himself and his son.

Moreover, 'He that made this hous...' relates learning and the obtaining of offices to a narrative of repentance. Like *The Interlude of Youth* is, the verse text is a debate which centres on the issue of whether repentance, and the pursuit of learning and virtue, is necessary and possible for the young nobleman. It takes the form of a dialogue between two voices. The first voice advocates learning. The second acts as a devil's advocate, arguing that such learning is unnecessary, particularly for a young nobleman, and that it can

¹⁵¹*Interlude of Youth*, ll.57-59, 308-10, 591-96.

¹⁵²Flügel, 'Kleinere Mitteilungen', pp.482-85.

¹⁵³*Ibid.*, p.482. On closets as private rooms for study and devotion, see Mark Girouard, *Life in the English Country House: A Social and Architectural History* (New Haven and London, 1978), p.56.

be postponed to a more a later period of life. This debate mirrors the concluding scenes of *The Interlude of Youth*, where Charity and Humility urge repentance upon Youth, while Riot and Pride insist that repentance is unnatural to the young man, and in any case may be put off to a more convenient season.¹⁵⁴

In the verse text, both voices assume that powerful age-related norms apply to the young. The second voice in this poem refers to the same body of knowledge about the moral nature of young men as Riot and Pride do in *The Interlude of Youth*, in order to argue that young nobles need not pursue, or can afford to postpone, their application to learning and virtue. He contends that 'youth of nature is inclynede to play' and that the young 'by supposycion too sport will applye'.¹⁵⁵ Instead he presents old age as the age appropriate to study and virtue:

Youthe in his flowres may llyue at liberte
In age it is convenient to grow to gravite.¹⁵⁶

The first voice of the Percy poem certainly regards the young man as naturally inclined to sin, since he says that 'It is supposed by olde practyse that youthe will folow sensualite'.¹⁵⁷ However, he asserts that the young man is still educable, in both the intellectual and the moral sense. In advocating study and self-discipline in youth, he is concerned with the future of the young man. He bases his concern for the young on the assumption that what one is in youth determines what one is in age:

As youthe is ordorid and accustomeded in his yeris grene
So after warde in his olde age it shall be sene.¹⁵⁸

This is an attitude familiar from other moral texts, particularly those urging parents to take the moral education of their children seriously.¹⁵⁹ Study is in this sense a disciplining activity which combats idleness, the 'moder of all vice'.¹⁶⁰ Through it one may construct oneself

¹⁵⁴*Interlude of Youth*, ll. 589-795. See especially Riot and Pride's speeches at ll. 612-17 and 640-46. These passages are discussed in detail in Chapter Three.

¹⁵⁵Flügel, 'Kleinere Mitteilungen', p.482.

¹⁵⁶Ibid., p.483.

¹⁵⁷Ibid., p.482.

¹⁵⁸Ibid.

¹⁵⁹See the discussion of the association of youth and sinfulness in Chapter Two.

¹⁶⁰Flügel, 'Kleinere Mitteilungen', p.482. See also Gaius on study as a cure for idleness and, by extension, sin in *Fulgens and Lucretius*, ll.679-80.

into ‘youthe of condiciones aunciente’: that is, one who in imitating the manners and adopting the values of the mature has made himself into an old man. He stands in opposition to ‘them which in age be yonge and negligent’: those individuals who, even late in life, are trapped in the behaviours associated with the young. It is possible, in other words, to transcend the natural inclinations of young bodies as a young man. This is exactly the process which Youth in *The Interlude of Youth*, becoming at the end of the play a soberly dressed man, committed to a life of prayer and the instruction of other sinful men.¹⁶¹

Comparison with *The Interlude of Youth* shows that it puts forward a similar message, and uses a similar means to so. Instead of an exchange between two characters, the interlude presents a conflict between two groups of characters: the representatives of good (Charity and Humility); and the representatives of evil (Riot and Pride). While these groups are at loggerheads throughout the play – indeed Pride and Riot lay violent hands on Charity and stock him – the climactic scene of the play features all four characters seeking to sway Youth through argument and counter-argument. Charity and Humility appeal to Youth to repent. Riot and Pride attempt to refute their arguments by calling on ideas of what is natural to young and old men. Riot appeals to the ‘young saint old devil proverb’, to emphasis that sin is natural to young men, and that it would be unnatural to repent at this age.¹⁶² Both texts seek to discredit these assumptions by putting them in the mouth of the agents of evil, and by demonstrating that it is quite possible for the young man to take on the qualities associated with the old man. They assert that the holiness in the young is not some monstrous aberration but something which each young man ought to set his mind to attaining.

However, unlike the interlude, the poem goes on to make the pursuit of learning and virtue into an issue of status and power. The second voice (the opponent of virtuous occupation) proposes that the pursuit of ‘cunninge and lernynge’ may be good in themselves, but ‘Yet nobilnes nedithhe not so myche as pore degre’.¹⁶³ This voice presents learning as a pragmatic accomplishment – a professional qualification, only required by those who need to earn a living through it. He stigmatizes learning by associating it with labour:

¹⁶¹*Interlude of Youth*, ll.762-80.

¹⁶²*Ibid.*, ll.612-15.

¹⁶³Flügel, ‘Kleinere Mitteilungen’, p.483.

Where plente is what nedith travayle
 For hym thatt hathe littil lernynge dothe well.

The young nobleman, it is implied, should be characterised by his leisured lifestyle. This argument reminds us of Cornelius in *Fulgens and Lucrez*, who draws disparaging comparisons between his own life of leisure, the need of his rival Gaius to work for a living.¹⁶⁴ Youth of *The Interlude of Youth* also has negative associations with learning. For Youth, these negative associations do not arise out of a link between learning and labour, as much as a link between learning and a clerical identity. Youth associates Charity's Latin 'gibb'rish' with being 'clerkish'.¹⁶⁵ Youth's hostility to Charity appears to arise because he suspects Charity of attempting to make him 'clerkish' too.¹⁶⁶ This kind of learning finds no place in Youth's conception of his noble identity.

These views stand in opposition to the attitude to learning and noble status articulated by the first voice in 'He that made this hous'. This speaker counters the arguments of the second voice by pointing to the fact that the nobility have an equally pragmatic use for learning and for the pursuit of virtue. He maintains that 'cunnyng with the vertu makithe nobilnes more excellent', just as gold sets off a precious stone.¹⁶⁷ Virtue and learning are excellencies which are not just fitting to noble birth, but somehow intensify it, so that the virtuous and learned nobleman is a better kind of nobleman. The first voice also maintains that it is 'a great lac' if a nobleman does not have an accomplishment that a 'pore man' has.¹⁶⁸ Learning and virtue are necessary for the nobleman to maintain his claim to his innate superiority to those of low status. However, in addition, they offer him an opportunity to demonstrate through visible gestures superiority to other men of noble status who are vicious and ignorant. The first voice goes on to spell out the concrete benefits of cultivating learning and virtue in terms of the competition for advancement. He points out that:

He that hathe litill yet by lernynge may

¹⁶⁴*Fulgens and Lucrez*, II.543-70.

¹⁶⁵*Interlude of Youth*, ll.113-14.

¹⁶⁶*Ibid.*, ll.155-22. See also Grantley, *Wit's Pilgrimage*, p.141.

¹⁶⁷Flügel, 'Kleinere Mitteilungen', p.483.

¹⁶⁸*Ibid.*

Cum to greate honoures we se euery day.¹⁶⁹

The attainment of learning enables the low-born or poor man to encroach upon the kinds of offices which noblemen also desire. Such 'honoures' - positions of authority and influence which confer honour on their holder - would be the privilege of the nobleman automatically, if only he possessed the necessary quality intellectual qualitates. As the first voice puts it:

As noblenes withoute cunnynge is dyssolate
So cunnynge withoute maners is reprobate.¹⁷⁰

In this passage, 'maners' stands as a kind of synonym for 'noblenes'. 'Maners', the modes of courtly behaviour, are presented as the natural preserve of the nobleman, presumably because the text assumes that noble nature expresses itself naturally through a particular set of gestures. Because the nobleman possesses these naturally, he will always enjoy an advantage over the low born man, but only provided that nobleman also cultivates his intellectual abilities. The nobleman's social accomplishments are on their own insufficient to win him the honours which otherwise he might be entitled to claim as his due. Only learning will guarantee him an absolute advantage over the 'pore man', and indeed over other noblemen who have not had the good sense to acquire it.

Both the verse text and *The Interlude of Youth* open an opportunity for the earl of Northumberland to make a powerful statement about his own and his son's capacity for the 'honoures', those offices which are the due of learned noblemen, capable of moral and intellectual self-discipline. These texts establish the earl's commitment to the pursuit of learning and moral virtue through the very fact of his investment in them. As we have seen, the earl advertised his ownership of educational verse texts by putting them on show in a display manuscript, and on the walls of the earl's residence. A performance in the Northumberland household of *The Interlude of Youth*, which also asserts the importance of the self-disciplining man, would of course also represent a very public statement of the earl's identification with these principles.

Youth's progress can also be interpreted as a piece of counsel or a kind of princely mirror offered to Lord Henry Percy, Northumberland's heir. As Northumberland's Orders for Twelfth Night show, the earl's procession into the hall on this festive occasion served

¹⁶⁹Ibid.

¹⁷⁰Ibid.

to draw attention to the young Henry Percy, through his proximity to his father. Once he had come of age Henry Percy would have followed immediately after his father, as one of the earl's brothers or sons.¹⁷¹ This arrangement emphasises the importance of the male line for the continuance of the family and the preservation of the family estates, and the Percy power in the North; but it also stresses the importance of the legal age of majority for status and authority. The text of *The Interlude of Youth* offers Henry Percy advice on how to comport himself once he has inherited his lands from his father. The play works to emphasise the importance of the self-disciplining model of noble masculinity for Percy's benefit. However, the verse text 'He that made this house' implies that Henry Percy was already this kind of self-disciplining young nobleman, by inviting us to imagine the young Lord Henry secluded in this private space, devoting himself to the study of this or other similar texts. In this context, *The Interlude of Youth* may act less as a piece of advice literature, intended in all earnest to reform an aberrant young man, than as a way for Northumberland to draw his audience's attention to the fact that Percy has already overcome his youthful nature - at least, as a text like 'He who made this house' would have us believe. This in turn draws attention to the fact that Percy is already demonstrating a fitness for government and political office. In this sense the text may as part of Northumberland's programme to obtain for important political offices in the North for his son, as much as for himself, and reflects the earl's attempts to appropriate the political 'court idiom' to press his claims to these honours.¹⁷²

The discourses of youth are useful to interlude writers because they allow them to discuss political issues in symbolic terms. Like much of later medieval political literature the symbolic values of youth are developed in the context of works which are ostensibly pragmatic, educational texts directed at the young. However, the problematic transitions to noble adulthood and the anxious masculinities the interludes depict can be read, on the one hand as expressions of noble anxieties about the preservation of aristocratic status, power and privilege in the face of social change. The representations of young nobles can also be understood as part of a system of political shorthand which enables writers to make comments on politics and personalities in an allusive, oblique and often highly ambiguous

¹⁷¹Lancashire (ed.), 'Orders for Twelfth Day', pp.32-33.

¹⁷²James, 'A Tudor Magnate', p.26.

way. These works employ familiar features of political rhetoric - references to the concepts of rule and governance, good and evil counsel, the old and the young - in a way which treads a fine line between criticism and flattery. It is possible to view depictions of the young rulers of the plays as truth-telling criticism with urgent exhortations for reform, and as insinuating favourable images of noble patrons. In other words they exhibit exactly the same 'combination of deference and challenge' which Ferster sees as characteristic of much later medieval literature of advice.¹⁷³

¹⁷³Ferster, *Fictions of Advice*, p.3.

Conclusion

The aim of this thesis has been to study the representation of young noblemen in a select group of early Tudor interludes, from the end of the fifteenth century and the beginning of the sixteenth century: *Nature* and *Fulgens and Lucrez* by Henry Medwall, *The Worlde and the Chylde*, *The Interlude of Youth*, and *Calisto and Melebea*. The thesis set out to address the issue of why these texts should show such a marked interest in young noblemen, often a type of highly unsatisfactory young noblemen. Though many scholars have discussed the interest of these texts in the definition of nobility, none have really considered the texts' interest in age and gender, and how these relate to questions of nobility. It is clear that the texts mark particular behaviours as not commensurate with a noble identity, and scholars have tended to see this as reflecting the social and political tensions between two groups of nobles: members of long-established noble families, and 'rising men' of Tudor political life. These accounts have not really considered why ignoble behaviours are associated specifically with young noblemen, but have tended to assume, along with the texts, that it is both natural and obvious that young men should behave badly.

The opening chapter demonstrated the ways in which the plays link the ageing of men to the discussion of nobility. *Nature*, *The Worlde and the Chylde* represent the complete life-course of the noble, male characters Man and Infans; and *The Interlude of Youth* presents one section of that life-course. *Fulgens and Lucrez* and *Calisto and Melebea* establish concepts such as old and young, male and female, noble and ignoble by setting up a series of binary oppositions between characters. The plays are actively engaged in creating categories like youth which are neither natural nor obvious but are shaped by ideologies of gender. Like the classical and medieval Ages of Man tradition, the interludes *Nature*, *Youth* and *The Worlde and the Chylde* construct thoroughly gendered age categories with reference to the development of male bodies. Texts refer, for example, to the external signs of age, such as the thick bushy hair of the young versus the grey hair of the old man, which are also visible signs of the inner and unseen processes of male ageing, understood by medieval natural philosophy and medicine in terms of changes in bodily humours and complexion.

The depiction of young men in the plays, as of the old, is grounded in biological essentialism. The behaviours and character traits of male characters, as much as their appearance, are determined by their age and physical development. The theory of the

complexion and the humours which underpins depictions of the Ages of Man explains the moral character and behaviour by reference to their physiognomy. This tradition associates young men with the sanguine temperament, and the preponderance of heat in the young male bodily economy dictates characteristics like quarrelsomeness and sexual desire. Interludes adopt the principle that young male natures determine particular kinds of behaviours.

The close relationship between male bodies and masculine behaviour is implicit not only in texts from medieval scientific traditions. Chapter Two showed that this principle was fundamental to the descriptions of young men in later medieval moral literature, courtesy literature and political literature, which also informed the presentation of the young male protagonists of the interludes. Youth was in this sense not only a specifically male biological category, but also a moral category. In later medieval moral discourse, youth comes to represent the human tendency to sinfulness. In *Nature, Youth and The Worlde and the Chylde*, the period of male youth is coterminous with a period of fallenness from which man must later repent. This tendency to sin is a product of the development of young male bodies, of the balance of the humours and the development or lack of development of reason. In the discourse of courtesy and conduct, the young man is characterised by instability and lack of self-control, where gestures such as uncontrolled gazing, or uncontrolled speech, as much as characteristics like greedy eating are the expression of the unruly body he inhabits. In political discourse, the young man is one unable to discipline his own body, to suppress vice or promote virtue, and this comes to represent a failure of government which is a sign of his unsuitability to rule others. Just as in courtesy literature, the young man's unruly nature may be read from external signs - not only his own physical gestures, but his inability to choose counsellors and evaluate counsel, and his disorderly household. In these texts, the dysfunctional household symbolises both the body which the young man cannot subdue, and the kingdom which he is incapable of governing.

Even while they establish the power of the inborn male nature to determine masculinity, these didactic works also assert that young men may re-construct themselves. The natural masculinity of young men is not a desirable one. Instead, moral, courtesy and political texts set out ways in which young men may consciously put off young masculinity, and construct for themselves an adult masculinity. The disciplines of repentance and religious devotion, of study, of gestures, and of bodily regimens to regulate intake of food and drink are advanced as practical methods of reforming masculinity. Above all, these

discourses make the processes of self-disciplining central to adult and noble masculinity, since they are presented as equivalent to political competence. In other words, the ideology of youth is part of an elaborate justification for the reservation of important privileges for men of a social elite.

The youth of young male characters of the interludes is shaped by social practices, as well as the workings of their bodies. There is a specifically noble youth, and their progress towards an adult and noble masculinity is marked by life-cycle events like the inheritance of property, being dubbed a knight, the establishing of a noble household, and marriage. Chapter Three discussed the way the plays present the acquisition of an adult and noble masculinity as a difficult and sometimes an extended process. *Fulgens and Lucrez* and *Calisto and Melebea* present as the goal of youthful development the noble masculinity represented by the old noblemen Danio and Fulgens and the young nobleman, Gaius. These exemplary noblemen stand for adult masculine values like modesty, piety, self-discipline, and the good governance of households. Gaius, the successful suitor for the hand of Lucrez in *Fulgens and Lucrez*, and the repentant Youth of *The Interlude of Youth*, are the only young men of the plays to have achieved the transition to this model of masculinity so early in life. Gaius is a model of the self-disciplining nobleman who has subdued his own moral nature, and the unruly body which produces it, and is therefore fit to rule others. Gaius's self-control is evident in his controlled gestures, his avowedly modest and uncontentious speech, his commitment to plain-speaking and truth-telling, and his unexceptional dress. Youth also models the self-disciplining process of repentance, and his reform of his moral character is accompanied by a reform of his household. Gaius and Youth demonstrate that the young nobleman should be able to transcend the demands of young male bodies.

In *Nature* and *The Worlde and the Chylde*, on the other hand, the capacity for reform is firmly located in old age, and is linked to changes in ageing male bodies which render them controllable. Left unchecked, the young male body dictates a masculinity which is inimical to that represented by mature noblemen. Indeed, it disrupts any smooth transition to adult masculinity, unless subjected to discipline. This is apparent in the interludes when young noblemen consciously attempt to construct a noble identity on and through the body. Cornelius in *Fulgens and Lucrez*, Youth in the early part of *The Interlude of Youth*, and Man in *Nature* attempt to perform their noble identity through the manipulation of outward signs, such as clothing or the numbers of servants who attend on them. Their attempts to perform a noble masculinity fail, as the young nobles only succeed in transmitting much

stronger messages about their undisciplined moral state. Their gestures disclose an essentially sinful, uncouth nature, albeit in status-related terms. However, since self-governance is marked as the essentially noble characteristic, the characters' lack of this ability reveals them, paradoxically, to be essentially ignoble.

Chapter Three also showed that interludes make households and householding central to the performance of noble identities. Noble masculinity is predicated on the idea of rule - the ability to govern both oneself and others - and that ability (or inability) is demonstrated in the plays through the interaction of young noble masters with household servants. In *Fulgens and Lucretia*, the text makes a distinction between the way in which Gaius and Cornelius deal with their servants A and B. Whereas Gaius treats his prospective servant A with caution and reserves the right to pay wages only in accordance with the servant's desert, Cornelius carelessly employs for the purpose of expediting his private business with Lucretia the first person who presents himself. On a more serious level, other young men like Calisto of *Calisto and Melebea*, Man in *Nature*, Youth in *The Interlude of Youth* and Manhode of *The Worlde and the Chylde*, readily accept the counsel of unworthy servants, servants who deploy flattery and play on their masters' desires in order to manipulate them for their own ends. These dysfunctional relationships represent inversions of the natural order of things, where servants control masters, and servants employ masters for their profit, rather than the other way round.

In *Nature*, *The Interlude of Youth* and *The Worlde and the Chylde* the link between the rule of noble households and the rule of noble bodies is figured in the fact that the servants who gradually control the young nobleman are also sins which gradually degrade man's soul. This emphasises the close link between moral self-discipline and the ability to exercise authority: the adult nobleman should be the one who suppresses vice and promotes virtue in his own person, an ability which would enable him to keep his servants in their place. The metaphor of sins as servants also stresses the symbolic power of servants and household life, who also act as kinds of gesture transmitting messages about his noble nature. In fact, the plays emphasise the importance of the household as a site of noble signification to the exclusion of other elements of traditional noble masculinity. There is not much room in these interludes for - for example - martial prowess and military exploit. While the exemplary Gaius has been responsible for several military successes, these are alluded to only briefly. In *The Worlde and the Chylde*, Manhode's military exploits on foreign fields are presented in a very negative light, since he is driven by a quest for worldly

glory. Where violence is shown directly in the texts, it is the dangerous and disruptive violence of unruly young men. Man in *Nature* perpetrates, and Youth in *The Interlude of Youth* is complicit in, a physical attack on an old and wise counsellor. Manhode in *The Worlde and the Chylde* is goaded into a wrestling match with Folye designed to mark masculine aggression and competition as inappropriate, even ridiculous.

Though the interludes seem designed to raise anxieties about young noblemen and their transitions to adulthood, they are ultimately reassuring. The texts allude to the worst case scenarios that might follow from a failure to achieve the right adult and noble masculinity. Young noblemen adopt the fake signs of nobility, as gallants; they spend their inheritances wastefully; they fail to marry; and they abandon the household, a move which hints at the collapse of noble identity, divorced from the structures designed for its production. However, for some, such as Man in *Nature* and Manhode in *The Worlde and the Chylde*, the operations of the ageing process ensure the eventual transitions to mature masculinity in old age. In both plays, but particularly in *Nature*, there is strong sense that youthful waywardness is inevitable, but that bodily development will ensure that noblemen will eventually attain the goal of a mature noble masculinity. *The Interlude of Youth*, on the other hand, vigorously asserts that young nobles may change their life, and are not bound to follow the dictates of their young nature. *Fulgens and Lucrez* presents a forceful contrast between two young noblemen, who have constructed very different noble masculinities, while *Calisto and Melebea* presents a contrast between an ill-regulated young nobleman and a well-taught young noblewoman.

Chapter Four discussed the political meanings of the representation of youth in the interludes. The texts' concern with noble masculinity is political in the sense that it stems from a desire to defend noble status and privilege. The texts deliberately incite anxiety about young noblemen, and through them about the future of noble masculinity, in order to stimulate nobles to preserve their privileges by constantly performing their noble masculinity. It seems likely that this kind of anxiety should be located in the established nobility: those, in other words, with the most to lose from the erosion of noble privilege. Seen from this point of view, the interludes represent an attempt to redefine and reinforce noble identities in the face of social competition from other groups at the end of the fifteenth-century and beginning of the sixteenth century. Noble lifestyles were being appropriated by an increasingly wealthy population, and this represented a substantive threat to nobles and nobility, precisely because historically the

question of who was noble had depended so much on being able to live like a noble.¹ The efforts of these plays to reorientate noble masculinity away from display and conspicuous consumption and towards the rule and government of a noble household shows a recourse to an alternative set of signs for a noble nature, which is born to rule others. In this system, the noble household is important not so much as a place of extravagant expenditure, but as a place where the nobleman can disclose his noble nature through the maintenance of order and harmony in household space, and through the quality of the service rendered to him. The household and the decorous, ceremonious style of living practised by it comes to represent the essential noble nature of the nobleman at its head. It is a valuable sign of nobleness, precisely because it is difficult for those of lower status to appropriate it, in the way in which they can appropriate noble dress, noble manners or even noble offices.

Chapter Four also showed that the ideology of youth provided a flexible political code, which enables the texts to comment on early Tudor personalities and the political situations in which they found themselves. Since anxiety about noble masculinity is an anxiety about noble power, it is possible to read the negotiations of what noble masculinity is as a means for addressing obliquely the problems of exercising power. The anxious discussions of noble masculinity in *Fulgens and Luces*, for example, speak to those nobles, like Margaret Beaufort, who were attempting to establish or extend their political power. In the case of Margaret Beaufort, the anxiety of the play would relate to anxieties about the newly established Tudor dynasty, as well as to her own difficulties as a female ruler in constructing an identity as a political authority when traditional political discourse consistently related political ability to maleness and masculinity. A play which represented the key to noble masculinity and noble power as the disciplining activities of religious devotion and study (while minimizing references to military prowess and male biology), helped to construct the pious and learned Lady Margaret as an effective governor of herself and by extension of others. In presenting the admirable Gaius as fitted for the privileges of nobility because he transcends his youthful nature, the play allows Lady Margaret to position herself as fitted for the functions of lordship through the transcendence of her female nature.

¹Howard Kaminsky, 'Estate, Nobility, and the Exhibition of Estate', *Speculum*, 68 (1993): 684-

In a similar way, the association of the period of youth with political incompetence, and of the period of a old age with political competence, allows interludes to engage with current political debates. This is possible given the fact that the literature of political advice current in the period offers political commentary couched in similar terms. So criticism of Henry VII's taxation policies is expressed in moral terms, as criticism of the age-related sin of avarice; in terms of attacks on evil counsellors, in the person of individuals like John Morton. A performance of the interlude *Nature* in the presence of Morton then becomes politically charged. It may be read as a defence of Morton, an assertion of his political competence, guaranteed in life, as it is for Man in the play, by the advancing years. It also represents an attempt to minimize the significance of the avarice of the old as a potential political failing of Henry's regime (both of himself and his kingdom), and to assert that the positive connotations of age override this flaw. In addition, the use of the rhetoric of counsel in the play, and in particular the association of the good counsellor Reason with Man's old age appears as a defence of Morton's role as a loyal and trustworthy counsellor.

In *The Interlude of Youth*, on the other hand, the capacity of the young nobleman to reform himself is also invested with powerful political meanings. In the context of the Northumberland household, the progress of Youth in the play may well represent political counsel for the young Henry VIII, on how to govern himself, his household and by extension his kingdom. Alternatively, the play can be seen in terms of the attempts of the earl of Northumberland to attain important political offices under the crown for himself and his son. In this context, Youth's reformation in the play draws attention to the capacity of the earl and his heir for the government of themselves and others, in line with the image the earl of Northumberland constructed of himself and his son through his investment in other educational literature and household ordinances.

This study of the representation of noblemen in early interludes has revealed some of the multiple, inter-related meanings of youthful, aristocratic masculinity in fifteenth and early-sixteenth century England. It has also emphasised that moral interludes like *Nature* cannot be understood in narrow generic terms, as simply referring to a well-defined body of morally didactic literature, but that these plays represent the confluence of many different kinds of discourse. These texts can be seen in the context of what seems to modern eyes the 'dull' literature of the fifteenth century, which as David Lawton has suggested, actually represents a lively and communal intellectual culture,

based on discussion and debate.² In the later middle ages, noble households are often represented as places where the reading aloud and discussion of chronicles, romances, morally improving works, and other worthy texts takes place.³ The young noblemen of the plays are a discursive site where ideologies of conduct, moral virtue, and politics meet, and which seem designed to provoke comment, and to offer audiences the opportunities of reading their own sub-texts into them, rather than closing down meanings. The performance of household interludes is a natural complement to this kind of activity - a rehearsal of apparently conventional but potentially subversive ideas, in a convivial setting amongst a community of individuals. Perhaps the printing of these early interlude texts even reflects their usefulness as reading material in this kind of communal context, outside the festive seasons when interludes were performed.

The patchy survival of interlude texts makes it impossible to say how representative these examples are of the drama which we know was regularly performed in noble households, religious houses, inns of court and by touring companies in towns. However, the content of these texts makes it clear that they reflect considerable continuities of thought between what have come to be known as the later medieval period and the early modern period. It is possible to see that the sort of self-fashioning which Stephen Greenblatt has seen as a characteristic of the essentially modern sixteenth-century was in fact a familiar concept to medieval audiences of courtesy texts and princely mirrors.⁴ Posner's study of early noble concepts of nobility focuses on the 'imperative of display' incumbent on Elizabethan nobles who had constantly to perform their nobility to a watching world, by making visible their otherwise invisible noble natures; but this was also a fact of life for fifteenth-century nobles.⁵ What this thesis suggests, in line with these early modern studies, is that far from being secure and eternal concepts, the idea of nobility and the concept of noble masculinity were always unstable

²David Lawton, 'Dullness and the Fifteenth Century', *Speculum* 54 (1987): 761-99.

³Joyce Coleman, *Public Reading and the Reading Public in Late Medieval England and France* (Cambridge, 1996), pp.128-40. See also Michael K Jones and Malcolm G Underwood, *The King's Mother: Lady Margaret Beaufort, Countess of Richmond and Derby* (Cambridge, 1992), p.176, on the reading and discussion of devotional texts in the household of Margaret Beaufort.

⁴Stephen J Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare* (Chicago, 1980).

⁵David M Posner, *The Performance of Nobility in Early European Literature* (Cambridge, 1999).

and precarious. Noble masculinity had constantly to be re-negotiated in the face of threats, real or imagined: and it always had to be re-made in the lives of individuals, and through intellectual theorizing.

The idea of noble masculinity advanced in the interludes of youth is innovative in some senses. It attempts to re-interpret some traditional aspects of medieval nobility, such as conspicuous consumption, as essentially ignoble, though it is worth noting that the texts are rather vague on what should be considered excessive consumption for nobles, and what is appropriate consumption to display the noble virtue of liberality. They place a strong emphasis on governance as the defining activity of the noble man, where increasingly the discipline of one's own body and inner nature is related to wider spheres of rule. The effective management of a household comes to stand for a political capacity to govern civil society. Noble masculinity relies less in these texts on traditional associations with military prowess, and this probably reflects a broader change in English society, as the political turmoils of the fifteenth century die away. Just as noble houses increasingly deploy architectural features like crenellations for symbolic reasons, rather than practical, military ones, so military prowess, though still prized as a marker of nobility, becomes less and less important to the actual day-to-day business of being noble. Nonetheless, the idea that governance of oneself and others is central to nobility is not itself new, but it recurs in political and educational literature throughout the later medieval period. This harking back to long-standing concepts is of course a vital strategy to make noble identities *appear* to be ahistorical and unchanging, even while they are being reconstructed.

As this thesis has suggested, the figure of the young nobleman in the early interludes is particularly useful as a site for the renegotiation of noble masculinity in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, because it is capable of embodying competing and even contradictory ideas. The young nobleman is naturally fitted to rule as a man and a nobleman, yet naturally comes to represent disorder and an inability to rule; he represents the future for noble families and their dynastic strategies, yet he himself is the strongest threat to the continuity of the noble line and the preservation of noble power and wealth. The young man is the natural site for disclosing anxieties about social and political change and influence because he is conventionally the symbol of instability and transience. He is, paradoxically, a safe place to put the formless fears of those mature noblemen with the greatest investment in appearing solid and stable.

This discussion has only been able to explore some of the meanings of youth in this period, however. There are many opportunities for further research in this area. This discussion has not touched at all on the positive depictions of noble male youth in later medieval romance and courtly poetry, which stand in stark contrast to the negative values ascribed to youth in moral and political discourses. It remains to be seen to what extent these texts deliberately position themselves as competing ideologies of youth against those texts which value the rather more unattractive virtues of self-discipline and industry.

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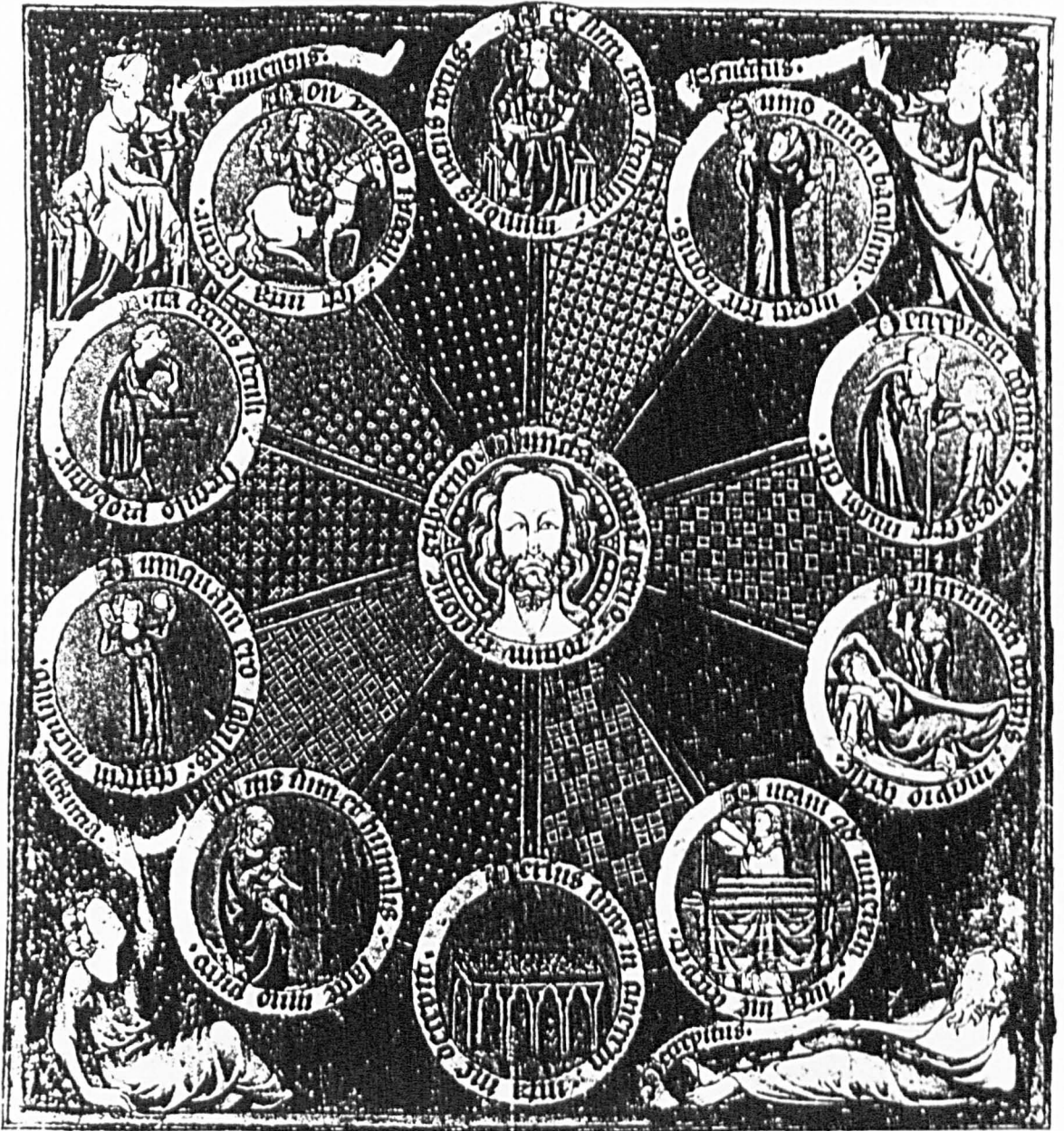
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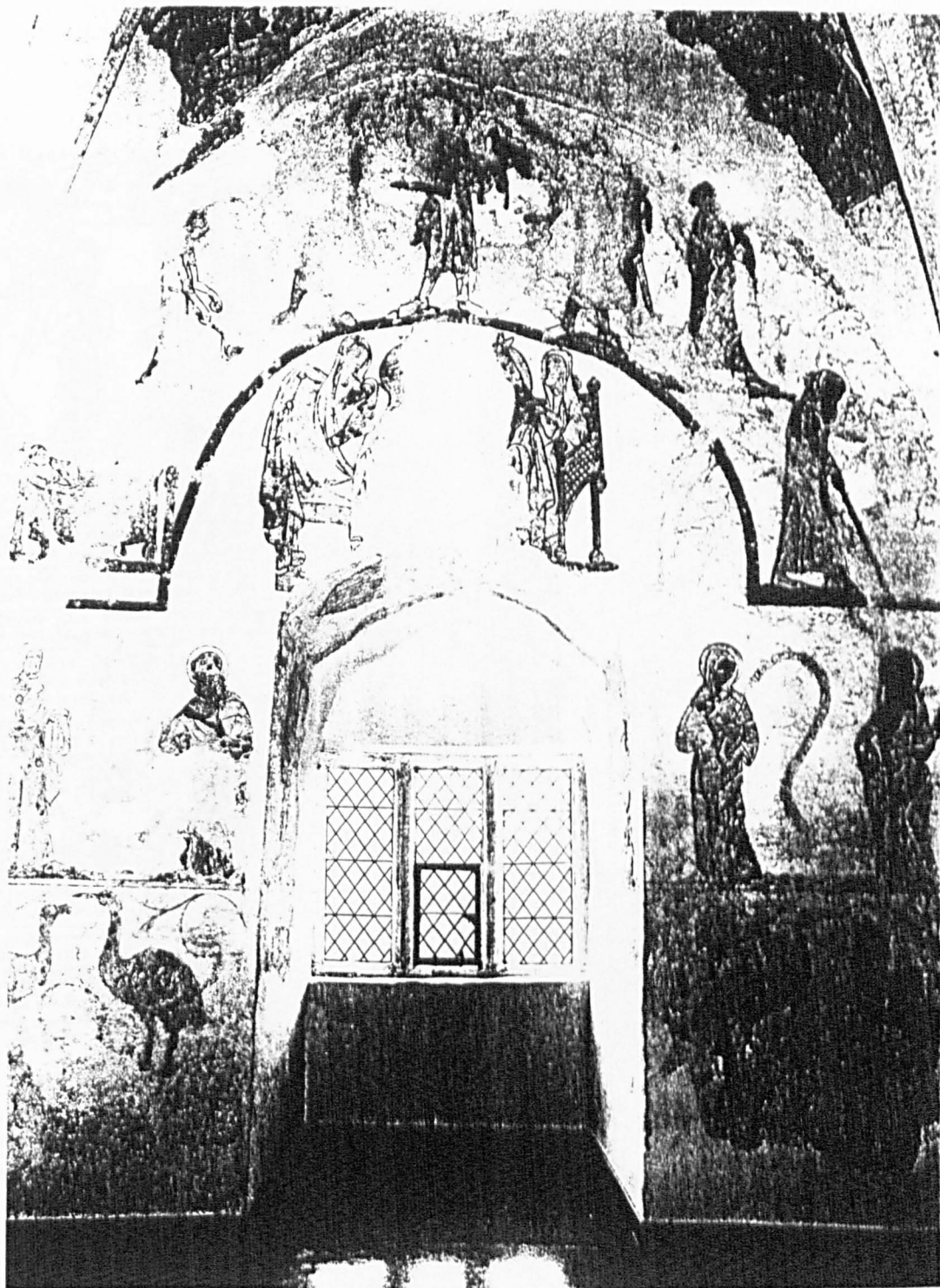
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1. Stained glass of the six Ages of Man. From Elizabeth Sears, *The Ages of Man: Medieval Interpretations of the Life Cycle* (Princeton, 1986), pl.19.



2. Wheel of life illustrating the ten Ages of Man, from the De Lisle Psalter. London, British Library, MS Arundel 83, fol.126v. From Sears (ed.), *Ages of Man*, pl. 87.



3. Wall painting of the seven Ages of Man, from Longthorpe Tower, Northamptonshire. From Sears (ed.), *Ages of Man*, pl.78.

Of the seven ages note take ye first of y^e first age
+ ye first



ye child speke to hym selfe & sayd as a chylde dooth

ye goode angel saye to ye childe & aduise
whyd n^e to y^e worldis y^e am bome y^e...

ye kinde jape & chyn p^r not a bytelt more & more
yeu sel yon forme on hys face

ye kinde iⁿ dyl go playe dyl my felede
ye kinde iⁿ goode vertues take yon byde

ye kinde iⁿ jape saye alle deuell is me alle felede
ye kinde iⁿ jape to byde gode iⁿ...

ye kinde iⁿ jape to hie selfe & saye
whyd n^e to y^e worldis y^e am bome y^e...

ye kinde iⁿ jape to hie selfe & saye
whyd n^e to y^e worldis y^e am bome y^e...

ye kinde iⁿ jape to hie selfe & saye
whyd n^e to y^e worldis y^e am bome y^e...

ye kinde iⁿ jape to hie selfe & saye
whyd n^e to y^e worldis y^e am bome y^e...

ye kinde iⁿ jape to hie selfe & saye
whyd n^e to y^e worldis y^e am bome y^e...

ye kinde iⁿ jape to hie selfe & saye
whyd n^e to y^e worldis y^e am bome y^e...

ye kinde iⁿ jape to hie selfe & saye
whyd n^e to y^e worldis y^e am bome y^e...



Of y^e first age y^e first age
ye kinde iⁿ jape to hie selfe & saye
whyd n^e to y^e worldis y^e am bome y^e...



ye kinde iⁿ jape to hie selfe & saye
whyd n^e to y^e worldis y^e am bome y^e...



ye kinde iⁿ jape to hie selfe & saye
whyd n^e to y^e worldis y^e am bome y^e...

ye kinde iⁿ jape to hie selfe & saye
whyd n^e to y^e worldis y^e am bome y^e...



ye kinde iⁿ jape to hie selfe & saye
whyd n^e to y^e worldis y^e am bome y^e...

ye kinde iⁿ jape to hie selfe & saye
whyd n^e to y^e worldis y^e am bome y^e...



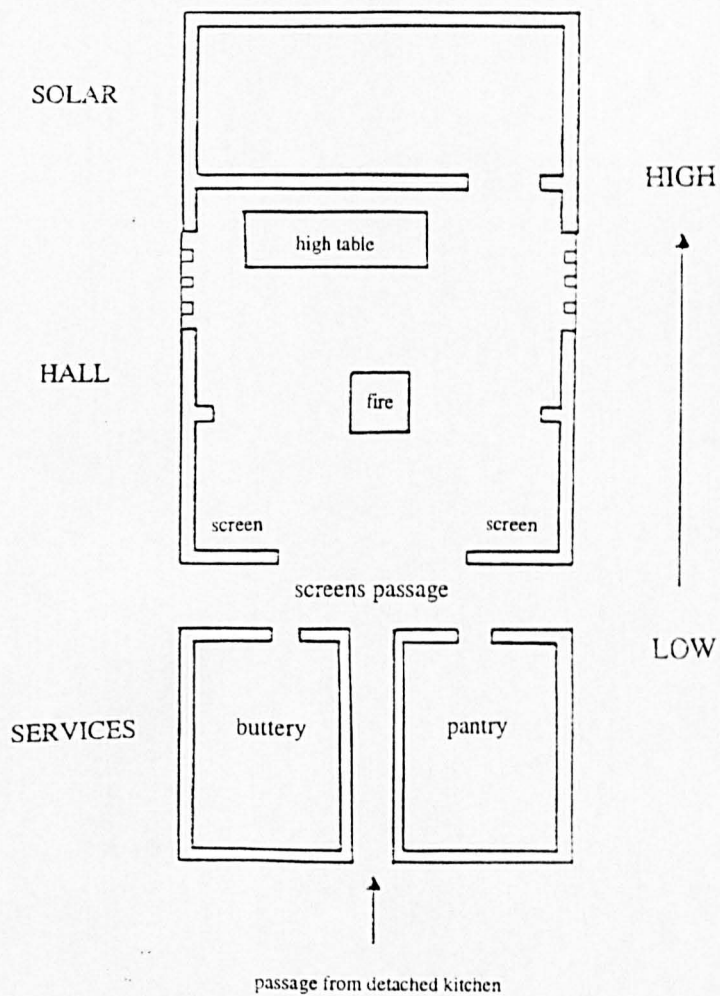
ye kinde iⁿ jape to hie selfe & saye
whyd n^e to y^e worldis y^e am bome y^e...

ye kinde iⁿ jape to hie selfe & saye
whyd n^e to y^e worldis y^e am bome y^e...

4. Manuscript illustrations accompanying 'Of the seven ages'. London, British Library, MS Additional 37049, fols.28v-29r. From Sears (ed.), *Ages of Man*, pl. 81.



5. The Three Living and the Three Dead, from the De Lisle Psalter. British Lib., MS Arundel 83, fol. 127. Source: British Library Images Online.



6. Plan of the typical later medieval hall. From Jane Grenville, *Medieval Housing* (Leicester, 1997), fig. 4.1, p.90.